

# Headlines from the Hill

By Erin McKeon

## Urge Congress to invest in nursing

**THE AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION** (ANA) is seeking an increase of \$25 million in FY 2007 funding for the Nursing Workforce Development programs administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). These programs, authorized by Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act, are the primary means of federal funding for nursing recruitment, education, and retention. The \$25-million increase would bring FY 2007 funding for Title VIII to \$175 million. A bipartisan group of 156 members of the House of Representatives and 52 senators support the increase.

Current funding does not meet the growing need for nurses. Earlier this year, the Department of Labor reported that America's demand for registered nurses (RNs) will grow 29% between 2004 and 2014. Yet, in FY 2005, HRSA turned away 82% of the applicants for the Nurse Education Loan Repayment Program and 94% of the applicants for the Nursing Scholarship program because of insufficient funding. These programs direct RNs into areas of greatest need—including departments of public health, community health centers, home health agencies, nursing homes, and disproportionate-share hospitals. With sufficient funding, these programs could help alleviate the worst shortages.

The current nursing shortage is already costing lives. A study in the January/February 2006 issue of *Health Affairs* shows that if hospitals increased RN staffing, more than 6,700 patient deaths and 4 million inpatient days could be avoided each year.

On May 13, 2006, the House Appropriations Committee approved their version of the FY 2007 Labor, HHS Appropriations bill (H.R. 5647). On July 20, the Senate Appropriations Committee followed suit (S. 3708). Neither bill contains a funding increase for the Title VIII programs. Congress is expected to finalize the appropriation bill after the November elections.

### You can help!

ANA needs your help to convince Congress to invest in nursing! Please contact your congressional delegation and explain the impact that the nursing shortage is having on your ability to provide high quality care. Resource materials and draft letters are available at [www.anapoliticalpower.org](http://www.anapoliticalpower.org).

## Oppose the Healthcare Truth and Transparency Act

**IN JULY**, ANA sent a letter to all members of the House of Representatives, urging them to oppose the Healthcare Truth and Transparency Act (H.R. 5688). ANA asserts that this legislation, an outcome of the American Medical Association's (AMA's) recent campaign to restrict the practice of advanced practice registered nurses, is unwarranted and discriminatory.

The Healthcare Truth and Transparency Act would outlaw any act, speech, or practice conducted by a licensed healthcare provider who is not a medical doctor (MD), doctor of osteopathic medicine (DO), doctor of dental surgery (DDS), or doctor of dental medicine (DDM) that leads patients or the public to believe that the healthcare practitioner has the same or equivalent education, skills, or training as a physician or dentist. Under this legislation, the Federal Trade Commission could fine healthcare practitioners \$10,000 per violation.

The findings of this Act assert that "ample evidence exists of providers who are not medical doctors, doctors of osteopathic medicine, doctors of dental surgery, or doctors of dental medicine holding themselves out as such" but doesn't provide any of this evidence.

This Act would impose significant criminal penalties on a select group of licensed providers, while ignoring others. The bill does not address the actions and representations of MDs, DOs, DDSs, and DDMs that fall outside of their education, skills, and clinical training. Nor does it address nonlicensed healthcare workers who represent themselves as something that they are not.

### Get involved!

ANA needs your help in educating Congress about the many flaws of the Health Care Truth and Transparency Act. ANA urges you to write your Representative to explain your opposition to this overly broad and misguided legislation. You can find background information, draft letters, and other helpful materials at [www.anapoliticalpower.org](http://www.anapoliticalpower.org). To learn more about ANA's activities regarding the AMA's campaign to limit the scope of practice of APRNs, please visit [www.patientsrightscoalition.org](http://www.patientsrightscoalition.org). ★

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