

Headlines from the Hill

Election Day 2006: It's nurses' time to be heard!

By Rachel Conant

ON NOVEMBER 7, Americans will choose 435 members of Congress and 33 U.S. senators. In the next Congressional term, legislators will confront many issues affecting nursing and healthcare, such as nurse education funding, staffing, and healthcare reform. To elect legislators who will pass nurse-friendly legislation, we need maximum voter turnout from members of the American Nurses Association (ANA), their friends, families, colleagues, and even patients. (See *U.S. Senate races to watch*.)

This is a midterm election—but that doesn't mean it's not important. In the 2002 midterm election, Congressman Bob Beauprez won his Colorado congressional race by a margin of just 121 votes. In 1994, Sam Gejdenson won his Connecticut congressional seat by a mere 21 votes.

Will next month's elections feature similarly tight races? Possibly, but the ANA believes two things about this election: It doesn't have to be close, and it can bring pro-nursing advocates to Washington, D.C.

With some races being decided by just a few hundred votes, it's imperative that ANA members vote on November 7. Be aware that many states allow residents to vote early to avoid long lines on Election Day. On the other hand, if you know you'll be out of town that day, find out how to obtain an absentee ballot. (For information on these and other voting questions, visit www.anapoliticalpower.org.)

Urge family, friends, and colleagues to vote

To encourage others to vote, consider holding a contest to see who votes earliest on Election Day: After you've voted, send an e-mail to family, friends, and colleagues telling them what number you were at your polling place, and ask them to do the same. Of course, it doesn't matter whether someone's the fifth or 1,555th person to vote. The whole idea of the contest is to engage people to cast their votes.

Don't forget your elderly relatives and neighbors. If necessary, arrange a ride to their polling places.

Other ways to get involved

There are many other ways ANA members can get involved and make a difference in this year's election. Learn about the candidates running for office in your district or state. Find out where they stand on nursing-related issues, and start to build a relationship with them—especially if they aren't incumbents.

Here are some other ways you can support the pro-nursing candidate in your community:

- Make a financial contribution to the candidate's campaign.
- Invite colleagues and friends to your home for an informal forum on the election.
- Volunteer for campaign work. Volunteer jobs run the gamut from distributing campaign literature, making

U.S. Senate races to watch

State	Democratic candidate	Republican candidate
Missouri	Claire McCaskill	Jim Talent*
Montana	Jon Tester	Conrad Burns*
New Jersey	Robert Menendez*	Tom Kean, Jr.
Ohio	Sherrod Brown	Mike DeWine*
Pennsylvania	Bob Casey, Jr.	Rick Santorum*
Washington	Maria Cantwell*	Mike McGavick

* Incumbent

phone calls urging people to vote, and helping with town hall meetings to providing assistance at the polls.

Make your voice heard

By voting on November 7, ANA members can help ensure that our voices will be heard on issues important to nurses. For ANA's continued legislative success, it's vital that we help elect pro-nursing candidates to Congress. Our foot is already in the door, and we have a connection in your district—YOU!

Let's make nurses' voices the difference in the midterm elections. Make sure you, your family members, friends, and colleagues are registered to vote. Vote on November 7!

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