

# Headlines from the Hill

## Welcome to the 110th Congress

By Angela Song

**AS THE NEW U.S. CONGRESS** convenes this January, the ANA will present our legislative agenda with a noted advantage. Through the combined efforts of thousands of nurses supporting the American Nurses Association Political Action Committee (ANA-PAC), we were able to endorse and contribute to over 100 Congressional races across the country. We have many friends on the Hill who will help advance nursing issues, but our work isn't done. ANA's political strength depends on *YOU!* Go to [www.anapoliticalpower.org](http://www.anapoliticalpower.org) to read more about ANA's policy positions, learn more about ANA-PAC, and join N-STAT, the premier grassroots network for nurses.

Angela Song is PAC Administrator at ANA's Department of Government Affairs.

## CMA lobbyists plan to protect nurses, patients, and public from harmful chemicals

By Rebecca Clouse, MS, RN

**FOR THE THIRD** consecutive year, the American Nurses Association (ANA) Constituent Member Association (CMA) lobbyists met in September for an Environmental Health Workshop before the annual CMA Lobbyists meeting in Alexandria, Virginia. Representatives from 22 state nurses associations attended, thanks to the generous support provided by the Beldon Fund.

A major focus of the workshop was the 2006 ANA House of Delegates (HOD) Resolution, "Nursing Practice, Chemical Exposure, and Right-To-Know." This resolution addresses the major occupational and environmental health concerns associated with U.S. chemical policy. Every day, nurses, patients, families, and communities are exposed to thousands of chemicals that are known or suspected to be toxic or that have not been adequately tested for toxicity. Currently, there is no requirement to notify the public about these exposures in our workplaces and homes, nor is there a requirement to use safer substitutes. The ANA supports actions that will streamline the elimination of toxic chemicals, require the use of safer alternatives when possible, support full disclosure about adverse health effects, and demand adequate information on the health effects of

chemicals before they enter our workplaces and homes.

The workshop began with a progress report on "Eliminating Mercury in Healthcare," part of the ANA Nationwide State Legislative Agenda. As of June 2006, 15 states had enacted legislation to ban mercury fever thermometers, and 5 states have enacted comprehensive legislation that will phase out the use of other medical devices that contain mercury. The extensive time and resources expended to eliminate the unnecessary use of this single chemical illustrate the need for broad chemical policy reform.

Presentations by several chemical policy experts not only educated attendees but also provided information needed to engage constituents, promote involvement in coalitions, and educate legislators. Presenters included occupational and environmental health nurses, CMA environmental health task force representatives, nursing faculty, an environmental health research scientist, an environmental attorney, a broad-based coalition leader, and legislative leadership.

CMA lobbyists developed strategies for CMA and ANA advocacy and grassroots organizing based on the "Nursing Practice, Chemical Exposure, and Right-To-Know" HOD Resolution. Participants identified the need for CMA member education about the Resolution to expand nurse advocacy efforts. Educational and legislative tools are now available on the ANA website. Executive Directors will be briefed on the Resolution, the use of these tools, and strategic progress in a teleconference in February.

ANA and CMA leadership also cited activities related to the HOD resolution. In July 2006, the ANA hosted a meeting of ANA, CMA, and environmental health coalition leaders to explore chemical policy and grassroots efforts on chemical policy reform. In August 2006, during the National Conference of State Legislators in Nashville, Tennessee, the ANA collaborated with the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators to brief state legislators about the need for chemical policy reform. The panel of presenters included Washington State Representative Dawn Morrell, RN, who spoke about her experience with environmental legislative reform.

For questions, comments, or information about how you can become involved, please contact Rebecca Clouse at [rebecca.clouse@ana.org](mailto:rebecca.clouse@ana.org). For educational tools, visit ANA Center for Occupational and Environmental Health at [www.nursingworld.org/coeh/chemicals.htm](http://www.nursingworld.org/coeh/chemicals.htm), and for legislative tools, visit ANA.net at [www.nursingworld.org/anet](http://www.nursingworld.org/anet).

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