

2017 Nurse In Washington Internship

By Amy Berardinelli DNP RN CPAN NE-BC

The Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI) provides an orientation to the legislative process for nurses at all levels of education, students to doctorate level. I had the honor of attending NIWI 2017 to represent nurses from the state of Ohio, as well as my specialty, perioperative nurses. I owe this to my professional organization, American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses (ASPAN), for choosing me as one of two scholarship recipients.

The three day internship included an advocacy breakout session on public policy process, panel sessions with professional nurse advocates, Congressional staff panels, state team breakouts, in which we role played in preparation for Capitol Hill, and networking with nurses with similar clinical experiences and political asks. Nurses came from as far as California, including RN students to PhDs who practiced in a number of specialty areas, from pediatrics to the operating room, at the VA, not-for-profit hospital systems, or as university professors. The diversity was vast, but the “asks” were the same. As representatives of the Nursing Community, our Congressional requests to promote the health of Americans and increase access to care for 2018 were; \$244 million for the Title VIII Workforce Development Programs, \$160 million for the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR), and for our Congressmen and women to please join the Nursing Caucus.

Title VIII Workforce Development Programs assist registered nurses and advanced practice nurses by placing educational needs at the forefront to ensure a stable workforce, especially in rural communities that are medically underserved. This program has been in effect for over 50 years, helping meet the nation’s demand for nurses. In the Academic Year 2014-2015, the Title VIII Advanced Nursing Education Grants supported over 9,000 graduate nursing students and partnered with more than 4,200 clinical training sites with 45% in medically-underserved regions (Health Resources and Services Administration, 2016).

The Nursing Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) is one of twenty-seven institutes in the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The NINR is dedicated to improving quality care by funding nurse-led research to promote health and prevent disease. The NIH is requesting \$2 billion for medical research, in which the NINR request of \$160 million is included in that amount.

The third request, to join the Nursing Caucus, was an easy ask for the Ohio nurses, as Representative David Joyce (R-OH) is a co-chair of this bi-partisan Congressional Caucus. Rep. Joyce’s wife has worked as a RN in the northeast Ohio area for over 25 years. The Nursing Caucus discusses the nursing profession helping to develop ideas and solutions to the professions’ challenges.

The number one take away from NIWI is that our biggest voice is in our local communities. Get involved at the local level. Join your local nursing specialty chapter. Meet with your district representatives. Run for office! Rep. Gale Adcock (D-NC), MSN, RN, FNP-BC, FAANP is the first advanced practice nurse to be elected to the House of Representatives and we had the pleasure and honor to hear her speak. Rep. Adcock began her career in politics serving two four-year terms on the Cary, North Carolina, Town Council. In her second term, she was also the Mayor of Cary, NC, which led to her to the 2014 election into the House of Representatives. Rep. Adcock gave us great advice: “Best way to predict the future is

to create it, “and “What a great feeling to be nervous. Let your heart pound. Let your palms sweat. This equals personal growth. Guess what? It won’t kill you!”

Nurses do more before 10 am than most people do in a day. With that being said, be courageous, be vulnerable and be a nursing advocate! Join ASPAN in establishing guidelines for practice standards. Join the ANA as a voice for health care legislation. Get involved!

Thank you to the Nursing Organizations Alliance (NOA), a coalition of nursing organizations that creates strength in numbers, for holding the annual NIWI, promoting and developing nurse’s advocacy skills and passions.

Reference

Health Resources and Services Administration. (2016). *Justification of estimates for appropriations committees*. Retrieved from: <https://www.hrsa.gov/about/budget/budgetjustification2017.pdf>.