

2022 Nurse In Washington Internship Report

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The Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI) “is open to nurses, nursing students, and nurse organization leaders that are interested in an orientation to the legislative process.”¹ This outstanding informational program is sponsored by the Nursing Organizations Alliance (NOA) which, “exists to connect elected and staff leaders of professional nursing organizations to inspire, collaborate, and provide a forum for information exchange and the sharing of resources and best practices.”¹ NIWI benefits and objectives are simple with an understated importance. Understanding our governmental process, how to be an informed and an involved advocate for nursing, networking to build and sustain relationships, and so much more.

My Journey to NIWI

After serving on my state board for WISPN as Governmental Affairs Liaison for the 2nd term, I saw the ASPAN NIWI scholarship and thought what a wonderful educational experience that would be. Never did I think I would be awarded the opportunity. Well, two years later, here I am, a small-town Wisconsin perianesthesia floor nurse in Washington DC.

NIWI Education

We had a diverse group of nurses from all over the country. The amount of education and experience we had representing nursing was impressive. However, we all have the similar commonality and goals: we are nurses that want together learn more on our governmental processes and use our skills to make a difference.

Over the course of the internship, I had learned so much but wanted to specifically share some simple takeaways that I feel would benefit each individual reader. First of all, we are all people. Our government was chosen by us and works for us. If we do not share our nursing expertise and experiences in our story telling, no one will know. Decisions will be made for us and not with us. Relationship building is vital. Become a resource to your governmental servants. Share your nursing expertise that has been built over the years to educate and make positive changes with these elected officials.

Secondly, a particular skill that I am taking away from this internship is the ability to create ‘asks’ in a brief and easy manor. We do this in our daily nursing tasks, however, seeing the simplicity of this in writing, applying it is creating a craft that can be used in many situations: from patients, to physicians, leadership and with our political leaders.

A cherry on the top was that our then ASPAN Vice President/President-Elect, Connie Hardy Tabet, was attending as well. Connie and I connected prior to the internship, then were able to meet there. What a wonderful time we had, getting to know each other, sharing our nursing stories and passions, and personal lives. Connie brings many gifts to our ASPAN organization, and I was blessed to spend one on one time getting to know her personally.

My ‘ASK’ of You

It is important to know what is happening in your local communities and states especially around health care issues. My ask of you is that if you do not know who your local, state and federal representatives

are, take 10 minutes and do a little internet research to find out. Take this a step further to check out their website and sign up for email updates. Send a personal letter to your representative introducing yourself, discuss your knowledge and education, and offer to be a resource for nursing or healthcare issues. It is amazing how small of a world it is and you never know what will happen when you put your nursing intention out to the universe.

We have many challenges as nurses in the years ahead. By facing them as a collective whole, we can convey effective solutions to our elected officials and make a difference! I was honored and humbled to attend the NIWI and want to thank ASPAN for this scholarship and opportunity. The enhanced knowledge I have obtained will benefit all of us as I continue my ASPAN and WISPA Governmental Affairs roles.

Reference

1. Nursing Organizations Alliance. <https://www.nursing-alliance.org>. Accessed March 25, 2022.