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Nurse Internship in Washington...A Rehab Nurse Perspective

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Abstract

As a proud recipient of the Association of Rehabilitation Nurses (ARN) Nurse in Washington (NIWI) scholarship, this presentation will share my experience, and the knowledge I gained when I went to Capitol Hill. One of the goal areas in ARN's strategic plan is to impact public policy as a leader in the field of rehabilitation. The board of directors is committed to helping ARN achieve that goal through a variety of activities, including sponsoring two ARN members to attend Nurses in Washington Internship (NIWI) each year. NIWI is a 3-day program held each spring in Washington, DC, and is "an opportunity for nurses to learn the skills needed to be effective advocates for themselves and their patients." The Association of Rehabilitation is member of the Alliance. The Nurse Organizations Alliance is a coalition of nursing organizations united to create a nursing voice. The Alliance provides a forum for identification, education, collaboration and building on issues that are common for the nursing and that help advance our profession. The Alliance does not have delegated authority to speak for nursing or any member of the alliance. The Alliance is to address current and emerging nursing and health care issues. There are over 3.1 million nurses in the United States. One in 45 voters is a nurse. Nurses make up the largest sector of the healthcare workforce. The 2014 Gallop on ranking the level of "Trust in a profession", Nursing was ranked number1 in Trust. Nurses political path started with Florence Nightingale, as the American Society of Superintendants of Trade Schools for Nurses which evolved into the National League for Nurses, the Nurses Association Alliance of United States and Canada, evolved into the American Nurses Association. I have learned if we don't advocate for our profession, no one else will. We run the risk of decisions made regarding the nursing profession, being made by others who are not nurses. As nurses, we need to control our profession, make decisions, advocate for patient care, our education and our scope of practice. Many things reflect our decisions, values attitudes and beliefs. I learned how nurses can get involve, influence policy at local, state and national levels. I was taught how a bill becomes a law and how guidelines and regulations are developed. We need to be watchful for loopholes in this process as policies are made Members of our elected congress are pulled in many directions. They are influenced by those who contribute and those who have had relationships made. "Ten people who speak make more noise than ten thousand who are silent." We must speak up for our nursing profession. Our United States Congress is made up of one hundred senators, four hundred and thirty five House of Representatives. I was able to meet with my states congressman and staff of my states senators. I was able to learn how to schedule, plan and complete a meeting with them. I learned how the legislative staff to advance policy agendas. There are many ways nurses can get involved, grass root efforts, letter writing, being involved with committees and board members. In order for nursing to have a voice they must get involved in political action. Let's show that nurses have a voice. Let's get heard!

Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI)

- An excellent opportunity for nurses to learn to be effective advocates for themselves and their patients.
- Scholarship by ARN awarded to any RN or student interested in an orientation to the legislative process.
- Learned lessons of NIWI are applicable at the federal local and state level.



The NIWI Experience Agenda

- Advocacy 101/201 Breakout Sessions: Overview of Public Policy Process
- Advocacy Training
- Panel Session with Professional Nurse Advocates
- Congressional Staff Panel Session
- State Team Break Outs for Hill Preparation
- Networking with other nurses with similar clinical and political interests
- Lobbying with your representative and senators



Nurses Political Past to Nurses Political Future



Let Your Nursing Voice Be Heard

- One in every 45 voters is a nurse, meaning that one nurse truly can make a difference by getting involved with a campaign at any level, from local to federal.
- Voting is the most fundamental form of advocacy.
- Being an RN voter and advocate who engages and participates in the election process helps empower voters in the overall political process American Nurses Association).

Why Me?

- Control our profession
- Make decisions about patient care
- Education
- Scope of practice



The "ASKS" to the US Senate & House of Representatives

- Asks that the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Program receives \$244 million in FY 2016.
- Asks that the National Institute of Nursing Research receives \$150 million in FY 2016.
- Asks to Ensure veterans have access to high quality care, support the modernization of the VHA Nursing Handbook, finalization & implementation.

What Rehab Nurses Can DO?

- Find the passion
- Stay involved professionally, collaborate
- Get involved with your professional organization
- Be involved on a board
- **VOTE**



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