

The Politics of Caring

State News

The ANA gathered constituent member association (CMA) lobbyists from all over the nation for the fifth annual ANA-CMA lobbyist meeting, “Think Nationally, Act Locally,” in Washington, DC, September 29 through October 1, 2004. The group met to plan the implementation of the 2005 Nationwide State Legislative Agenda on Staffing that builds on a successful coordinated agenda started five years ago by the ANA and its constituent members to combat the nurse staffing crisis.

The two main policy issues discussed at the meeting were environmental health and safe patient handling and movement. The ANA received a one-year grant from the Beldon Foundation to support a day-long environmental health session at the lobbyist meeting. (The Beldon Foundation also provided support for a part-time nurse expert to educate the various nursing organizations on environmental health issues and prepare talking points for their use.) Renowned environmental health speakers Susan Wilburn, MPH, RN, senior occupational health and safety specialist, Center for Occupational and Environmental Health, ANA; Barbara Sattler, DrPH, RN, director, Environmental Health Education Center, University of Maryland School of Nursing; and Peter Orris, MD, MPH, professor, Division of Occupational and Environmental Health Sciences, School of Public Health, University of Illinois at Chicago, provided lobbyists with information on environmental health concepts and issues that affect public health in order to help educate members, prioritize collaborative work with environmental organizations, and facilitate participation in policy formation.

Participants met with national representatives from environmental health

Rose Gonzalez is the director of government affairs and Susan Whittaker is the associate director of state government relations at the ANA.

ajnl@ww.com

Federal Update

On November 18, 2004, the ANA endorsed the **Flu Protection Act of 2004** (S 2038, HR 3758). Senators Evan Bayh (D-IN), Larry Craig (R-ID), Mary Landrieu (D-LA), and Richard Durbin (D-IL) have championed the bill in the Senate; the House sponsors are Rahm Emanuel (D-IL), John Shimkus (R-IL), Diana DeGette (D-CO), and Elliot Engel (D-NY). The act would use tax incentives and the guaranteed market to help ensure that an adequate amount of effective flu vaccine is available every year. It also would encourage the Department of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to conduct public awareness campaigns and outreach programs to increase awareness of the importance of receiving the vaccine. The bill also would provide for the education of health care professionals and, through the director of the CDC, work to establish a protocol to help prevent, prepare for, and respond to an influenza pandemic or epidemic. The Senate Special Committee on Aging held a hearing on this bill on November 18, 2004. The legislation is expected to be reintroduced and to pass in the next congressional session.

organizations at a reception hosted by the ANA to explore ways the organizations could work together on state environmental health legislative initiatives and other issues important to nurses.

Participants also heard from Audrey Nelson, PhD, RN, FAAN, director of the VHA Patient Safety Center, in Tampa, Florida, on policy considerations related to musculoskeletal injuries. Nelson outlined emerging technologies for safe patient handling and movement as well as evidence-based practices to enhance patient and caregiver safety during the performance of high-risk nursing tasks. Lobbyists discussed initiatives and legislative strategies that could be used in state legislatures to protect nurses against musculoskeletal injuries. Nine states—Alaska, California, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Washington, and West Virginia—have committed to move this initiative forward in 2005.

Other presentations and discussions focused on nursing scope-of-practice issues, future health care priorities for the federal government related to state government priorities, and ANA products and services that could aid lobbyists in their work. In addition, lobbyists discussed state leg-

islation they had pushed for enactment (prohibition of mandatory overtime, nurse staffing plans, whistleblower protection, collection of nursing workforce data, nursing quality indicators, funding for nursing education, and protection of the title “nurse”) related to the Nationwide State Legislative Agenda on Staffing and how it has affected nurses’ work life and patient care. The agenda was initiated during the 2001 state legislative session because the ANA and its affiliated state nurses associations wanted to achieve even greater successes than they had previously achieved in the state legislative arena. Through jointly developing state legislature proposals, holding coordinated press conferences on the national and state level, enacting state legislation, sharing strategies and resources, and promoting the agenda at national meetings of state legislators, many planned goals have been realized in state legislative arenas.

To see the state legislative and regulatory victories related to the agenda, visit ANA’s Nursingworld Web site at www.nursingworld.org/gova/state.htm. ▼