Fiscal Year 2011: Federal Funding Update

Congress is still working to finalize the Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 appropriations process. On February 19, 2011, the House of Representatives passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) (H.R. 1), by a vote of 235-189 that would fund the federal government for the remainder of the fiscal year. The CR proposed to cut the Nursing Workforce Development and Health Professions Programs (Title VIII and VII, Public Health Service Act) by $145.1 million, a 29% decrease in funding over FY 2010 levels. Additionally, the CR proposed a reduction of $1.6 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which includes the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR). However, on March 9, 2011, the Senate defeated H.R. 1 by a vote of 44-56.

Prior to the March 9, 2011 vote, the Senate Appropriations Committee released a CR that would finalize FY 2011 and included an 11.7% increase over the FY 2010 level of $243.872 million for Title VIII. This seven-month CR would have cut federal funding by $51 billion below the President’s FY 2011 request, but failed to pass in the Senate by a vote of 42-58.

After passing a second continuing resolution (H.J. Res 48) in the last month that has cut federal spending by a total of $10 billion, the House and Senate have prevented a government shutdown and have until April 8 to complete their negotiations for the remainder of this fiscal year.

The current continuing resolution does not impact Title VIII or NINR, but given the ongoing discussions in Congress to reduce the deficit, level funding for nursing programs would be a success.


Act Now: Sign a Petition to Protect NIH Funding

More than 9,200 individuals have signed the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research on line petition opposing the NIH funding cut. Potential cuts to the NIH budget will impact the momentum of basic, translational, and comparative effectiveness research that seeks to improve the health of our nation. Take a moment and consider joining the nearly 10,000 stakeholders who are asking Congress not to diminish NIH funding.

The petition is available at: [http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/preservenihfunding](http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/preservenihfunding)
The Voices of Over 1,000 Nurses Reach Capitol Hill

On Monday, March 21, 2011, AACN hosted both an in-person and virtual advocacy day requesting members of Congress to protect funding for Title VIII and NINR in FY 2011 and to increase funding for these programs in FY 2012. With 799 messages sent virtually to Capitol Hill by advocates in over 30 states and the District of Columbia, as well as nearly 300 nursing deans, directors, and students making personal visits, Congress is now better informed on the important role these programs play in supporting access to high quality, cost effective care.

The top five states that engaged in AACN’s first virtual advocacy day include Georgia with 108 messages sent, California with 80 messages sent, New Jersey with 73 messages sent, Minnesota with 66 messages sent, and Missouri with 66 messages sent. To prepare for AACN’s inaugural virtual advocacy day, deans were asked to inform their students and faculty. From their efforts, AACN’s grassroots network grew by 32.2% in two weeks! AACN continues to build our grassroots network to ensure the powerful and united voice of nursing education and research can be heard on Capitol Hill. If you would like to join AACN’s network see: http://capwiz.com/aacn/mlm/signup/

For AACN member deans, directors, and chairs who visited Capitol Hill earlier this week, please remember to log your visits at http://capwiz.com/aacn/lrm/feedback.tt

AACN Leadership Attends the PCORI Stakeholders Forum

AACN Secretary Julie Sebastian, PhD, RN, FAAN, joined over 80 stakeholders, nearly 20 of whom were nurses, at the regional Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) Stakeholders Forum held in St. Louis. Other constituencies represented included business, healthcare, public health and community-based clinics, industry, and consumer groups. The agenda for this meeting included the PCORI project funding framework and criteria for the 2010-2011 cycle, Public Affairs and Communications Committee report, and the Methodology Committee report. Additionally, the stakeholders present were charged to provide input into potential priorities for the PCORI research portfolio. The next meeting is scheduled for May 18-19, 2011 in New York. For more information on PCORI, see: http://www.pcori.org/home.html

Changes to State Authorization of Distance Education Programs

On October 29, 2010, the U.S. Department of Education (DOEd) released a Federal Register notice that changes the regulation for state authorization of distance education programs. The new rule that will go into effect on July, 1, 2011, states:

“If an institution is offering postsecondary education through distance or correspondence education to students in a State in which it is not physically located or in which it is otherwise subject to State jurisdiction as determined by the State, the institution must meet any State requirements for it to be legally offering postsecondary distance or correspondence education
in that State. An institution must be able to document to the Secretary the State’s approval upon request.”

For more information see:  
http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getpage.cgi?dbname=2010_register&page=66946&position=all

In a letter from the American Council on Education (ACE) to the DOE, which was signed by AACN, the higher education community expressed concern with this new rule:

“The regulation could subject religiously affiliated institutions to new state regulation, opening the door to state involvement in the curricular affairs of these institutions. Moreover, the expectations for what constitutes an appropriate authorization of an institution or an adequate complaint process are so ill-defined that institutions, accreditors and states do not feel confident in their ability to identify practices and policies that will be accepted by department regulators. The portions of the state authorization regulations dealing with distance education are particularly confusing. Because of these uncertainties, this new rule could force campuses to pull back on legitimate and creative distance education programs, leaving the students most in need behind.”

ACE has written to DOE Secretary Duncan and requested that these two provisions be rescinded. With no response, ACE has reached out to Representative Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Chair of the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training, House Education and the Workforce Committee, requesting her assistance in delaying these provisions for one year. At AACN’s Spring Annual Meeting, members were encouraged to contact their institution’s presidents to discuss the impact this will have on their nursing programs and to contact Suzanne Begeny, AACN’s Director of Government Affairs with the specific details at sbegeny@aacn.nche.edu. AACN will continue to monitor and engage in the work to change these provisions through the leadership of ACE.

**AACN Joins the Effort to Raise Awareness of Healthcare Decisions**

April 16, 2011 has been designated a National Healthcare Decisions Day (NHDD). The National Healthcare Decisions Day Initiative is a collaborative effort of national, state, and community organizations committed to ensuring that all adults with decision-making capacity in the United States have the information and opportunity to communicate and document their healthcare decisions. For more information, visit www.nationalhealthcaredecisionsday.org.

AACN is proudly participating in this event along with a broad array of other organizations. We hope that you will participate with us to raise awareness about these important issues across the country. If you have not already done so, please sign up your organization at: http://www.nhdd.org/p/join-campaign-for-nhdd.html and confirm your participation.
The success of this event depends largely on activities at the state and local level. The event organizers are currently seeking volunteers to serve as state liaisons for this event. This is a wonderful opportunity to work collaboratively with other healthcare organizations and a great chance to gain increased recognition for your organization. If you are interested in serving in this role, please follow the “sign up” link.

For additional information or questions about this initiative, please contact the chair of NHDD, Nathan Kottkamp, nkottkamp@mcguirewoods.com or 804-775-1092.

**National Strategy for Quality Improvement in Health Care**

On March 21, 2011, the Department of Health and Human Services released its National Strategy for Quality Improvement in Health Care. According to the report to Congress:

“The National Quality Strategy will promote quality health care in which the needs of patients, families, and communities guide the actions of all those who deliver and pay for care. It will incorporate the evidence-based results of the latest research and scientific advances in clinical medicine, public health, and health care delivery. It will foster a delivery system that works better for clinicians and provider organizations—reducing their administrative burdens and helping them collaborate to improve care. It is guided by principles (available at [www.ahrq.gov/workingforquality](http://www.ahrq.gov/workingforquality)) that were developed with input by stakeholders across the health care system, including Federal and State agencies, local communities, provider organizations, clinicians, patients, businesses, employers, and payers. Most importantly, the implementation of this Strategy will lead to a measurable improvement in outcomes of care, and in the overall health of the American people (HHS, March, 2011).”


**HHS Announces $100 Million in Grants to Prevent Disease**

According to the press release on February 24, 2011, HHS announced $100 million in Medicare grants, made possible through the Affordable Care Act, to pay incentives to enrollees who adopt health habits, such as quitting smoking or losing weight.

“Keeping people healthy is an important goal of the Affordable Care Act,” said HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. “One way to reach that goal is to encourage all Americans to make better choices about diet, exercise and smoking to avoid potentially disastrous outcomes down the road like heart disease, cancer or diabetes.”

“Under the Act, states may apply to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for grants to fund programs that demonstrate changes in health risk and outcomes, including the adoption of healthy behaviors. The program focuses on those behaviors that can cause some of the most critical chronic conditions that together affect millions of Americans for example:

- Tobacco use is responsible for more than 430,000 deaths each year, and is the largest cause of preventable morbidity and mortality in the U.S.
- Overweight and obesity have been shown to increase the likelihood of certain diseases and other health problems, and are important concerns for adults, children, and adolescents in the U.S.”

For more information, see: [http://www.cms.gov/MIPCD](http://www.cms.gov/MIPCD)