



AORN ADVOCACY UPDATE

Association of periOperative Registered Nurses

— THE PUBLIC POLICY BRIEFING FOR PERIOPERATIVE PROFESSIONALS —

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AORN Chapters: Advocacy training for a new generation of leaders

By Philip Dunn
Contributing Editor

After AORN grassroots advocacy members in Indiana successfully saw an RN as Circulator law through to fruition, Diana Sullivan, RN, MSN, CNOR, and Teresa Nosek, RN, BSN, CNOR, ONC, sought to tell their colleagues in Indianapolis about it. They were eager to sustain the momentum that they and other AORN grassroots advocacy leaders had built, and looked forward to advancing new legislation.

In talking to her colleagues, Sullivan realized that not all of her chapter members understood what she was talking about.

“Most of these nurses didn’t have the background. They were so caught up with the day-to-day of their work, which of course is so complicated and time-consuming, that they had put limited time into learning how the legislative process works,” Sullivan recalls. “We wanted to have an exciting way of bringing this back, because we thought it was important to keep the members informed and involved.”

So Sullivan took advantage of tools being offered by AORN to teach members how to advocate on behalf of the association and the profession. In August, she showed approximately 45 members of the Greater Indianapolis Chapter the AORN webinar on Advocacy 101—the featured tool in AORN’s arsenal of efforts to extend its grassroots advocacy network by offering tools from the Government Affairs section of its Web site,

www.aorn.org/PublicPolicy/.

Sullivan’s efforts were the latest in an



West Virginia AORN grassroots members watch as Governor Joe Manchin signs HB 4474, which mandates that a “registered nurse as defined in this article, qualified by education, licensed, and experienced in operating room nursing, shall be present as a circulating nurse in each operating room in a hospital, or ambulatory surgical center as defined by section one, article five-b, chapter sixteen of this code, during operative procedures.”

association-wide effort to make advocacy more member-centric by bringing advocacy training straight to chapter meetings. Chapter leaders are being encouraged to make advocacy training a regular part of chapter meetings. The goal: to train a new generation of leaders and make sure that advocacy is always on members’ minds, not just when advocacy alerts are sent.

The webinars, which can help nurses fulfill Continuing Education requirements, are one tool in the arsenal of training members, says AORN Government Affairs Manager Josephine Colacci. The goal: to build the grassroots network such that leadership comes from the grassroots themselves.

“Advocacy is most meaningful when it comes from working perioperative nurses

who understand what it’s like to be in the patient care setting,” Colacci said. “Advocacy may seem intimidating, but it’s only intimidating the first time. Our hope is that AORN members grow so confident with the process that advocating on behalf of the profession and on behalf of patients becomes second nature.”

Other tools that AORN is offering include:

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Advocacy Perspectives

The 'Iowa Model' and advocacy for 2010

By Josephine "Jo" Colacci
AORN Government Affairs Manager

This year we've had great success in advancing the cause that every patient in the United States deserves a perioperative registered nurse for the duration of any invasive procedure—the "RN as Circulator" issue that we've been pushing so hard. We've seen laws enacted in Washington state and in Indiana in 2009, and we're still working in Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. We maintain high hopes in each of these remaining states.

But one state deserves special recognition even though we didn't get a bill passed this year—because it may serve as a harbinger of how we'll proceed in 2010 and following.

The Iowa model

This year in Iowa we teamed up with the Iowa Nurses Association's lobbyist to advance RN as Circulator legislation. Jane Krogmeier, RN, BSN, CNOR, RNFA, the Iowa state coordinator for AORN, was fabulous in working with INA's lobbyist and making sure that AORN's positions were faithfully represented. Our Iowa Senate bill passed the Senate with only nine votes against us. We didn't ultimately get a bill passed and signed—this year. But we are very optimistic about the future in Iowa.

We're calling this the "Iowa Model"—working with state nurses associations and their lobbyists to advance state-level legislation. This model has several advantages:

- It leverages strong relationships that state nurses associations tend to have with their state legislatures
- It conserves AORN resources
- Perhaps most importantly, it promotes the strong professional and personal bonds among registered nurses no

matter their professional focus, much the same as our strategic alliance with the American Nurses Association does.



Josephine Colacci

Don't misinterpret this. We are most decidedly *not* "outsourcing" our advocacy function to another party. But the Iowa Model holds great promise because it allows us to work together with other nurses in several states. The whole process worked better than expected in Iowa.

So we're going for it. In Connecticut our state coordinator, Judith L. Goldberg, RN, MSN, CNOR, has been relentless in her efforts to bring RN as Circulator forward. In Mississippi Beth Gasson, RN, MSN, CNOR, is seeing promising signs ahead. And in Virginia Bonnie Vencill, RN, CNOR, the state coordinator, and Steve Balog, RN, MSN, CNOR, have forged a wonderfully cooperative, collaborative relationship with the Virginia Nurses Association, teaming up on a surgical technologist/surgical assistant issue there in 2009. This relationship development will strengthen our efforts for RN as Circulator legislation in 2010.

Of course we have no guarantee of success in any of these states. But we can guarantee that we'll work every angle with every stakeholder group to advance the cause.

We're fired up about 2010. RN as Circulator legislation should advance in some of these states and in others. We have every reason to feel very optimistic.

Advocacy for 2010

And of course there is health reform. As long as there is a national debate on this

IOWA MODEL continued on 4



Legislative Update

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



Ohio RN circulator bill

COLUMBUS, OHIO – [HB 205](#) requires hospitals and ambulatory surgical facilities to assign a circulating nurse to each procedure performed in an operating room or invasive procedure room. During the week of Oct. 5, Rep. Tom Letson (D) amended the bill to alleviate concerns by other stakeholders with an interest in the legislation. The ambulatory surgical centers were concerned that the legislation would require a RN circulator for non-invasive procedures. Surgeons and surgical technologists were concerned with requiring surgical technologists to work under the direct supervision of circulating nurses. The bill has been amended to reflect these concerns.

Ohio RN honored for decades of service

COLUMBUS, OHIO – The Ohio Senate [congratulated](#) Elouise Hardy, RN, on 50 years of service to Four-H Club. As a volunteer with the Lorain County Four-H program, she has “prepared our young people to assume meaningful, rewarding roles in society.” The Senate applauded her on her “invaluable contributions to the community.”



Mich. RN circulator bill

LANSING, MICH. – [SB 605](#) and [HB 4615](#) state that ambulatory surgery centers or hospitals may assign a qualified registered nurse to be present in the operating room for the duration of each surgical procedure. AORN is working with its Michigan lobbyist, the Michigan state coordinator, and other grassroots members to support this bill in the House and Senate Health Policy Committees through focused calls to key hospitals and physicians. SB 605 will be in the Senate Health Policy Committee on Nov. 4.



Miss. working on RN circulator issue for 2010

JACKSON, MISS. – AORN’s Mississippi state coordinator met with the Mississippi Nurses Association (MNA) to discuss the RN circulator issue. The executive director of the Mississippi Board of Nursing would like the issue to go through the state board of nursing. With the help of the executive director of the MNA, is in the process of setting up a meeting with the board of nursing and the department of health to discuss the issue.

Miss. receives Perioperative Nurse Week proclamation from Gov.

JACKSON, MISS. – In Oct., Mississippi received a [proclamation](#) from Gov. Haley Barbour designating the week of Nov. 8 – 14 as Perioperative Nurse Week.



Penn. Senate passes Perioperative Nurse Week resolution

HARRISBURG, PENN. – On Oct. 5, the Pennsylvania Senate passed [SR191](#) designating the week of Nov. 8 – 14 as Perioperative Nurse Week.



Wis. Receives Perioperative Nurse Week proclamation

MADISON, WIS. – In Oct., Wisconsin received a [proclamation](#) from Gov. Jim Doyle designating the week of Nov. 8 – 14 as Perioperative Nurse Week.



U.S. Senate Finance Committee Passes healthcare reform bill

WASHINGTON – On Oct. 13, the U.S.

Senate Finance Committee passed an \$829 billion health care reform bill on a 14-9 vote. This bill will now move to the floor of the Senate where it will be blended with the Senate HELP (Health, Energy, Labor and Pensions) Committee health reform bill and a similar process is underway in blending the three healthcare reform bills in the House.

OTHER BILLS OF NOTE



Fla. Bill on hospital nurse staffing plans

TALLAHASSEE, FLA. – [SB 188](#) was introduced on Oct. 5. It requires that hospitals establish nurse staffing collaborative councils, that the council produce annual hospital nurse staffing plans, and that the chief nurse executive communicate with the council to ensure appropriate implementation of the nurse staffing plan.

What’s happening in your state?

The [legislative map](#) allows you to select your state to access the most current laws and regulations related to perioperative nursing and surgical safety. You can find your state and regional legislative coordinators, links to nursing organizations and nurse practice acts, and the latest developments on public policy initiatives in your state.



Legislative News

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- An action steps guide for chapter presidents, which helps presidents advise their members on how to get involved in advocacy
- A public policy “road map” to help chapters navigate AORN’s online public policy resources
- Model letters created by chapter presidents to chapter members on advocacy
- A chapter challenge letter identifying tasks that chapter members can achieve to support their state coordinator in legislative activities.

So far, the two webinars—“Advocacy 101: Tips, Tools, and Terminology” and “Legislative Mumbo Jumbo: Tips For Making Sense of it All”—have proven popular and effective as a means of driving the point home.

“The webinar gave an overview in simple terms of a complex process,” Sullivan says. “We localized it to Indiana by telling members about the actions we took, to make it meaningful. It was a way for us to celebrate our success, and reinforce the message that while we were successful, it didn’t just happen—that we followed a series of steps that are by

and large the same steps used across the country.”

The webinars describe the basics of how an idea becomes a bill and how a bill becomes a law. They describe the regulatory and rulemaking process, the importance of offering formal testimony and informal visits to state legislatures, and how important it is to mobilize the grassroots at certain periods. They emphasize the power of constituency—in the ability of everyday nurses and voters to make a difference.

It’s a message that AORN Region 2 state coordinator Edgar L. Nelson, RN, BS, EDM, CNOR, emphasized when he showed the Webinars to members in South and North Carolina. “We’re getting people really interested now, but this is only the beginning,” Nelson says. “These will really pay off when we start calling on people through grassroots advocacy alerts to start contacting their legislators. That’s when the training we’re doing now will bear fruit.”

Read the Public Policy online road map, right, for links to additional information.

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important topic, AORN will actively participate in the discussion. Our goal: to promote the role of the perioperative registered nurse in achieving optimal patient safety.

No matter what happens in Washington, our feeling is that this issue isn’t going away. AORN is starting to wave the flag in state-level discussions on reform implementation, especially with regard to the promotion of standardized data collection at the point of care for comparative effectiveness research.

In 2010 we’ll spend some time looking at health reform from the state perspective. We’d like to target states that already have

RN as Circulator laws, in order to maintain our grassroots advocacy momentum. We’re looking for examples of cities or states that have implemented electronic health records (rather than just the facility level)—so we can document how EHRs help curtail medical errors and improve patient safety and quality, including during surgery.

2009 isn’t over yet and we remain very hopeful about how the last two months will go. But as we wrap up 2009, we’re already looking ahead to what we hope will be an exciting, busy, and ultimately successful 2010.

Public Policy online road map

AORN Government Affairs coordinates grassroots activities in the promotion of AORN’s legislative priorities. One of the most effective methods for influencing public policy is direct communication between constituents and decision makers.

Through the public policy pages of AORN’s [Web site](#), members have access to legislators and the tools needed to effectively communicate AORN’s position on legislative initiatives. Members can also [sign up](#) to be included in the AORN grassroots network, get involved in current legislative initiatives, and find information regarding legislation in their states. All grassroots members receive free the monthly e-mail AORN Advocacy Update to keep informed about all AORN advocacy activities.

Through AORN’s [public policy pages](#), members can get involved by communicating directly with legislators and other decision-makers on public policy issues that affect perioperative professionals. They can also navigate the [legislative map](#) to access the most current laws and legislation affecting perioperative nurses by individual state, as well as to find state and regional legislative coordinators, links to nursing organizations and nurse practice acts and the latest developments on public policy initiatives in each state.

[Lobbying tools](#) and other advocacy resources are also available through the AORN online public policy pages. [Start exploring.](#)



Advocacy News

AORN Government Affairs on Facebook



Visit the new [AORN GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS](#) page on Facebook and join the conversation. The page provides members and supporters a forum to discuss legislative/regulatory issues affecting perioperative registered nurses and to learn what AORN is doing to promote our patient safety initiatives. A Facebook profile is not necessary to view the page; however, in order to participate in the discussion or post on the “wall,” users must have a personal Facebook account. Please pass the link below on to other AORN members!

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/AORN-Government-Affairs/135115188680>

AORN individual awards submission reminder

The Outstanding Achievement in Public Policy Advocacy award category was established in 2008 to recognize accomplishments focused on member activity in the legislative arena. This award honors an individual who has demonstrated outstanding achievement in public policy advocacy contributing to the advancement of perioperative patient care and safety. The AORN Individual Awards Program features 15 award categories, including two new categories for 2010. By submitting a nomination, you may win a free AORN 3-year membership!

Learn more about all awards offered by AORN. Postmark deadline for individual awards submissions is Nov. 13, 2009.

Obtain a Perioperative Nurse Week proclamation

[Perioperative Nurse Week](#) is Nov. 8-14. The Government Affairs Department created [steps on how to request a proclamation](#) (PDF file). Additionally, there is a [sample letter](#) to elected officials requesting a proclamation and a sample proclamation. If there is a signing ceremony for the proclamation, please take photographs and send a copy of the proclamation

Send a letter to a local newspaper in support of Perioperative Nurse Week

[Perioperative Nurse Week](#) is Nov. 8-14. This is a great time to submit a [letter to the editor](#) of a local newspaper in recognition of perioperative nurses. View a sample letter by following the link in the previous news brief. This year the theme for Perioperative Nurse Week is Reaching the Peak of Perioperative Practice: Safety, Quality, Collaboration. Safety in health care is high on the list of national concerns, and you are in an excellent position to communicate how perioperative nurses can positively affect safety.

Feel free to edit the letter or add more information from personal experience. If your letter to the editor is published, send a copy to [AORN Government Affairs](#).

Talk Back?

Government Affairs is looking for examples of activity implementing electronic medical/health records at the city or state level (not just in the facility). After identifying these electronic medical/health records efforts, we are then looking at how it is positioned to achieve patient safety and, of course, examples that may include during surgery. Please contact [Jo Colacci](#).

Call to Action

Government Affairs has a new [Call to Action Alert](#) page. This allows you to access grassroots emails that we have sent out. Simply click on the links and you can send a letter to your elected officials. Please help us spread the word on this new page by letting your Chapter members know.