Nurses and Politics: Promoting Change

Donna Zankowski MPH RN
“I always wondered why somebody didn’t do something about that, then I realized, I was somebody”

Lily Tomlin
Goal for Today

Occupational Health Professionals will have the knowledge, skills and tools to advocate for themselves at the State and Federal Level, on issues of importance to Occupational and Environmental Health
Agenda for Today

• The legislative process – how the sausage gets made: brief description of the legislative process, how a bill becomes a law, legislative committees, etc.

• One small voice – how you can interact with your legislators: how to make contact, schedule a meeting, define your “ask”, write a one-pager, navigate D.C., follow-up on legislation, etc.

• The value of friends – how to network: joining legislative committees, advocacy groups, keeping informed on issues through list-serves and social media, etc.

• Current legislative issues of importance to occupational health
The Legislative Process – how the sausage gets made

A brief description of the legislative process, how a bill becomes a law, legislative committees, etc.
The legislative branch drafts proposed laws, confirms or rejects presidential nominations for heads of federal agencies, federal judges, and the Supreme Court, and has the authority to declare war.

*Senate*—There are two elected Senators per state, totaling 100 Senators. A Senate term is six years and there is no limit to the number of terms an individual can serve.

*House of Representatives*—There are 435 elected Representatives, which are divided among the 50 states in proportion to their total population. There are additional non-voting delegates who represent the District of Columbia and the territories. A Representative serves a two-year term, and there is no limit to the number of terms an individual can serve.
How a Bill Becomes a Law

1. A member of Congress introduces a bill.
When a senator or representative introduces a bill, it is sent to the clerk of the Senate or House, who gives it a number and title. Next, the bill goes to the appropriate committee.

2. Committees review and vote on the bill.
Committees specialize in different areas, such as foreign relations or agriculture, and are made up of small groups of senators or representatives.

The committee may reject the bill and “table” it, meaning it is never discussed again. Or it may hold hearings to listen to facts and opinions, make changes in the bill and cast votes. If most committee members vote in favor of the bill, it is sent back to the Senate and the House for debate.

3. The Senate and the House debate and vote on the bill. 
Separately, the Senate and the House debate the bill, offer amendments and cast votes. If the bill is defeated in either the Senate or the House, the bill dies.

Sometimes, the House and the Senate pass the same bill, but with different amendments. In these cases, the bill goes to a conference committee made up of members of Congress. The conference committee works out differences between the two versions of the bill.

Then the bill goes before all of Congress for a vote. If a majority of both the Senate and the House votes for the bill, it goes to the President for approval.

4. The President signs the bill—or not.
If the President approves the bill and signs it, the bill becomes a law. However, if the President disapproves, he can veto the bill by refusing to sign it.

Congress can try to overrule a veto. If both the Senate and the House pass the bill by a two-thirds majority, the President's veto is overruled and the bill becomes a law.

Committees of the U.S. Congress

Profile pages for committees active in the current congress are listed here. Committee Name History includes information about terminated committees and commissions authorized to interact with the Congress.gov data sets. The Committee Consideration tutorial explains committees within the context of the legislative process.
The General Assembly is Maryland's legislative body. The state has 47 districts represented by 47 Senators and 141 Delegates, each with a 4 year term.

The Legislature:
• Enacts laws necessary for the welfare of the State's citizens and certain laws dealing with counties and special taxing districts.
• Proposes amendments to the Maryland Constitution, which must be ratified by the voters during the general election.
• Meets in regular session for 90 calendar days each year beginning the second Wednesday in January to act on more than 2500 pieces of legislation and the State's annual capital and operating budgets.
• Meets in special session when called by the Governor or when a majority of each house petitions the Governor.
• Maryland also has 2 Senators in the U.S. Senate, and 8 Representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives
One Small Voice – How You Can Interact With Your Legislators

How to make contact, schedule a meeting, define your “ask”, write a one-pager, navigate D.C., follow-up on legislation, etc.
The Five Conversations Your Legislators Want to Have

• What is the Local Impact of an issue

• Real-Life Stories that shed light on the issue

• What Legislative Action will make you happy

• How is Money related to this issue being Spent where you live

• Who Do You Know – what are your connections to the community

Adapted from The One-Hour Activist by Christopher Kush. 2004. Illustration 2.1.
How to Make Contact

• **Visit USA.GOV** to find your elected officials: [https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials](https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials)

• **By Phone** – ask to speak to the Legislator or Legislative Assistant in charge of your issue. It’s ok to leave a message, or ask for a call-back.

• **In Person** – schedule a meeting with the Legislator or Legislative Assistant in charge of your issue (can be in D.C. or a district office).

• **By Email** – send your composed letter or comment
What Are You Asking For?

• **Know your Issue** - as much as possible

• **Know what you are asking for** – what do you want the Legislator to do?

• **Prepare a Personal Story to tell** – what does this issue mean to you

• **Create a one-page explanation of your position on the issue** (which can be emailed or given in person)

• **Be prepared to continue the conversation** – i.e. follow-up
MARYLAND NURSES ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS
HB 710 - HEALTH CARE FACILITIES
WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PROTECTION PROGRAM

Overview of the Bill

• This bill would require that healthcare facilities address the problem of workplace violence by establishing a workplace violence prevention committee (consisting of management and employees); have a written policy to prevent workplace violence; conduct an annual assessment; establish a process for reporting and tracking; and conduct regular violence prevention training.

The Issue of Violence in Healthcare

• According to the American Nurses Association, more than 50% of emergency room nurses experienced violence by patients on the job. In 2009 alone, there were 2,050 assaults and violent acts reported by RNs, requiring an average of four days away from work. Of these acts, 1,830 were injuries inflicted by patients or residents (ANA. Bullying and Workplace Violence. 2014).

• OSHA has stated that “health care and social service workers have faced a significant risk of job-related violence. Assaults represent a serious safety and health hazard” (OSHA. Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence for Health Care & Social Service Workers. 2004).

• There is no Federal Standard that requires specific workplace violence protections. To address this issue, many states (including CA, CT, IL, ME, NJ, NY, OR, WA and WV) have already enacted legislation to require employers to study the issue, gather reporting data, or create workplace violence prevention programs (ANA. Workplace Violence. 2013).

Why this Bill is Important

• The Maryland Nurses Association is committed to the health and safety of all healthcare providers. Protecting healthcare workers and patients from violence is essential to ensuring quality patient care, reducing financial loss, and preventing healthcare workers from leaving the profession. Workplace violence can be prevented.

• This legislation would help healthcare facilities comply with the Joint Commission’s Environment of Care Standard that requires they “provide for the security of patients, staff and visitors” (The Joint Commission. Issue 45. Preventing Violence in the Healthcare Setting. 2010).

PLEASE SUPPORT HB 710 AND KEEP MARYLAND HEALTHCARE WORKERS SAFE!
Looking up a Bill

H.R.5223 - Health Care Workplace Violence Prevention Act
115th Congress (2017-2018) | Get Alerts

Summary: H.R.5223 — 115th Congress (2017-2018)
A summary is in progress.
The Value of Friends – How to Network

Joining legislative committees, advocacy groups, keeping informed on issues through list-serves and social media, etc.
Legislative Committees

• AAOHN Legislative Affairs Advisory - http://aaohn.org/page/public-affairs

Advocacy Groups

Environmental Issues:
• Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments - https://envirn.org/
• Climate for Health - http://climateforhealth.org/about-climate-for-health
• Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families - https://saferchemicals.org/

Occupational Safety and Health
• National Council for Occupational Safety and Health - http://www.coshnetwork.org/about-us
• Public Citizen - https://www.citizen.org/
Public Health Issues:

• American Nurses Association - https://ana.aristotle.com/SitePages/issues.aspx

• American Public Health Association - https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy

• Physicians for Human Rights - https://phr.org/about/
List Serves, Newsletters and News Briefs

• CDC – Emergency Preparedness and Response, Health Alert Network - [https://emergency.cdc.gov/HAN/](https://emergency.cdc.gov/HAN/)


• Politico – Employment daily brief - [https://www.politico.com/tag/employment-immigration](https://www.politico.com/tag/employment-immigration)

• Protecting Workers Alliance (Google Group, send email to sign-up) - [protecting-workers@googlegroups.com](mailto:protecting-workers@googlegroups.com)

• The Pump Handle - [http://www.thepumphandle.org/about/#.W8fu2unQaM8](http://www.thepumphandle.org/about/#.W8fu2unQaM8)
Social Media

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
• AAOHN
• Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
• American Nurses Association
• CDC
• Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
• Johns Hopkins ERC (JHU ERC)
• Migrant Clinicians Network
• NIOSH
• OSHA
• Safer Chemicals – Healthy Families
• The Joint Commission
• U.S. Chemical Safety Board
Additional Advocacy Training for Nurses


• The American Nurses Advocacy Institute - ANAI of ANA: https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/advocacy/
Current Legislative Issues of Importance to Occupational and Environmental Health

EPA

- Director of Office of Children's Health Protection (OCHP) placed on administrative leave
- Roll-back of Clean Air and Clean Water regulations (i.e. coal fired plants, powerplant emissions)
- Limiting the studies that can be used for rulemaking (only use publicly available)

NIOSH

- Funding for NIOSH
- Funding for the ERCs
Current Legislative Issues of Importance to Occupational and Environmental Health (cont.)

OSHA


• Hire an Occupational Health Nurse for the Office of Occupational Health Medicine and Nursing

• Rollback of “Electronic Recordkeeping” Rule

U.S. Chemical Safety Board (CSB)

• CHEMICAL SAFETY AND HAZARD INVESTIGATION BOARD, Sunshine Act Meeting, October 24, 2018, 10:00 a.m., 1750 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Suite 910, Washington, DC 20006, Open to the public.

• Maintain independence and funding for the CSB (a Federal program)
The most important thing you can do is...

VOTE!

Early voting in Maryland is October 25th to November 1st

If you have not yet registered, you can register at any early voting site with the proper identification.

For more info go to:
https://elections.maryland.gov/voting/index.html
League of Women Voters Guide can be found at: https://www.vote411.org/
Contact me at: pdzank@verizon.net