



# Advocacy agenda

Collective action reaps rewards in public policy.

**ADVOCACY**—the process of influencing public policy—occurs at all levels of government and has real-world consequences; it's not an abstract exercise of democracy. Given today's extreme stress on healthcare and social systems, the dockets of not only federal but also state and even local jurisdictions are brimming with proposals and actions that impact nurses. Recent American Nurses Association (ANA) meetings with our constituent and state nurses association (C/SNA) representatives have highlighted this flurry of activity.

While Congress debates additional funding to support public health measures and mental health protections for healthcare professionals, states are allocating American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 funding and continuing to implement pandemic responses such as vaccination requirements and emergency staffing regulations. States also are proposing mental health legislation, introducing hoped-for nursing workforce remedies, addressing workplace violence, and more.

Nurses, still burdened after 2 years of service during the pandemic, could argue legitimately that they don't have time to care about these measures and the process of developing public policy, especially given the slow pace of federal legislation. However, I encourage them to reconsider.

Nurses live and work where decisions are being made about our practice, working conditions, and the healthcare systems where we're employed. With or without our involvement, decision-makers—possibly far removed from nursing—could dictate how we practice our profession, how we develop workforce solutions, and our role in closing healthcare disparities and meeting public health needs.

For these reasons, having nurses participate in advocacy at all levels of government is essential to achieving public policies that align with our priorities, code of ethics, and standards of practice.

That said, I want to reassure all nurses that advocating for solutions that benefit our profession won't necessarily add time and stress to their already pressed circumstances. ANA and our C/SNAs offer straightforward and seamless ways to make our voices heard.

Working on our members' behalf, ANA closely

monitors, analyzes, and acts on federal legislation, policies, and rulemaking and collaborates with C/SNAs on how federal actions might impact state and local jurisdictions ([nursingworld.org/practice-policy/advocacy/](https://nursingworld.org/practice-policy/advocacy/)). In turn, C/SNAs closely follow activities in their states and communities, and they apprise ANA about these developments so that together we have a global picture of policy and regulatory trends that affect the nursing profession. We also learn about successes and challenges in the advocacy process to better shape our efforts. In addition, C/SNAs work diligently for members and invite them to engage as they can given their time, availability, and interest.

As part of these efforts, ANA sponsors an annual Hill Day and many C/SNAs hold state lobby days during which members meet directly with legislators and their staffs. Nurses who relay their lived personal experiences can have a substantial impact on advocacy outcomes. Even seemingly small efforts, such as emailing federal or state representatives, repeated by many members, can make a significant difference.

For members who have the time and desire to become more involved, some C/SNAs offer legislative bootcamps for honing skills. Members who prefer can contribute to C/SNA political action committees (PAC) to support candidates whose legislative positions align with C/SNA priorities. ANA's PAC does the same with federal candidates.

Many state legislative sessions opened earlier this year and will have bills and actions unfolding over the coming months. This means there's still time to participate and make your voice heard.

Consider how you can become involved and embrace the collective power of nurses. Our colleagues in states with full practice authority can attest that engaging in the policy-making process—muddy and arduous though it might be—can reap big rewards.

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