

Engagement for Effective Policy Work

Margaret Farrell Daingerfield, EdD, RN, CNE, NJSNA President



Mission: The mission of the New Jersey State Nurses Association is to promote the profession of nursing, advance the practice of nursing, and advocate for nurses.

Vision: Creating the future through advocacy, leadership, and public policy.

When reflecting on the topic of this message, I considered the strong focus of NJSNA on advocacy and so explored relevant literature to identify guiding frameworks for influencing health policy. In the process, I encountered an article published in the *American Journal of Nursing* (AJN) that details the application of the Patton Zalon Ludwick Policy Assessment Framework.

The Patton Zalon Ludwick Policy Assessment Framework provides a foundational structure for analyzing and advancing policy initiatives. This Framework outlines three key dimensions critical to effective policy work: engagement, partnership, and reach. My focus here is engagement.

The engagement dimension is a cornerstone of the Framework, underscoring the necessity of stakeholder involvement throughout the policy process. Within the New Jersey State Nurses Association (NJSNA), this principle is integral to effective policy work, as it ensures that members are not only aware of policy issues but are actively participating in shaping outcomes. Active engagement is encouraged among all NJSNA members by focusing on three essential areas: literacy, advocacy, and influence.

Literacy marks the beginning of this engagement journey. As part of its commitment to supporting members in understanding legislative matters, NJSNA has revised its website to include the Legislative University link. This addition

is intended to help members strengthen their knowledge about New Jersey bills, providing a valuable resource for those seeking to build policy literacy. To access this resource and learn more, please visit <https://njsna.org/legislative-university/>.

It is admirable to recognize the dedication of members who devote their time and energy to understanding public policy and legislative developments in New Jersey. Their involvement on key committees—such as the Legislative Committee, Legislative Awareness and Advocacy Committee, Congress on Policy and Practice, and the Interested Nurses Political Action Committee (INPAC)—serves as a vital platform for building policy literacy. Through participation in these committees, members enhance their understanding of policy processes and issues, including NJSNA's priority bills. This experience equips them to be informed and prepared, enabling meaningful contributions to the policy process. The commitment demonstrated by these members highlights the value of being knowledgeable and ready to engage, reinforcing the critical role that engagement plays in advancing policy initiatives within the association. If you are interested in building literacy, consider joining one of these groups.

The advocacy level builds on policy literacy and its goals are to “back, support, or advance a desired policy, person, or group” (Zalon, Ludwick & Patton, 2024). Our members, through individual and collective action, raise awareness and act to support and advance the NJSNA priority bills in the New Jersey legislature. The Interested Nurses Political Action Committee plays an essential role in advancing NJSNA's advocacy efforts by conducting interviews with candidates regarding their positions on issues important to the

nursing profession. Through these interviews, the INPAC team gains valuable insights into each candidate's perspectives and priorities. Based on the outcomes of these discussions, INPAC formulates endorsement recommendations, which are then presented to the NJSNA Board of Directors for consideration. This process ensures that the Association supports candidates whose views align with its mission to promote and advocate for nurses and nursing practice.

The highest level of engagement within the policy process is influence. Individuals at this level are recognized as influencers, typically occupying leadership positions in various New Jersey nursing organizations, as well as in non-nursing organizations that actively support nursing and issues related to nursing practice. These leaders serve as prominent voices, advocating for the interests of nurses and the nursing profession. Influencers may choose to run for or hold elected office, further amplifying the representation and impact of nursing perspectives in legislative and public policy discussions. ■

References

Zalon, M. L., Ludwick, R., & Patton, R. M. (2024). Strengthening Nurses' Influence in Health Policy. *The American Journal of Nursing*, 124(9), 28–36.

During the preparation of this work, the author used Microsoft copilot to structure and refine the writing.