

President's Message

Connie J. Perkins, PhD, RN, CNE



In case you missed it, the American Nurses Association (ANA) kicked off the year with a special proclamation marking 2026 as "The Year of the Power of Nurses" celebrating ANA's founding 130 years ago. Every June, the ANA hosts a Membership Assembly in Washington, DC, and this time we all celebrated in a big way honoring our past, present, and future. This important event brings together ANA's constituent member organizations (C/SNAs) (i.e. ANA-NY), Individual Member Division (IMD), organizational affiliates, and members of the ANA Board of Directors. This equals roughly 400 people each year, plus members who are there to observe. Representing ANA-NY, besides myself and Jeanine Santelli were Kimberly Velez, Lee Mancuso, Verlia Brown, Christina Bierling, Beverly Karas-Irwin, and Giselle Gerardi. We also had ANA-NY members who came as observers and others from NY representing ANA organizational affiliates. It was a wonderful opportunity to get to know more of you and hear about the work our members are doing for our profession. Just ahead of Membership Assembly, ANA's Lobby Day occurred which brought together over 500 nurses from 49 states plus territories. There were even some nursing students from local universities participating this time. We started off with a powerful fireside chat with Representative Lauren Underwood (one of the only nurses in Congress) and ANA President Jennifer Mensik Kennedy.

The message was clear: Don't just advocate today in Washington but do so at home at your local members' offices and do so often. This is certainly something we can all do in-person, via phone, or email throughout the year. On the hill, we worked together in groups to tell impactful personal stories. I am proud to say that NY showed up in a big way with 18 nurses in my first meeting alone! We advocated for the following:

- Improving Care and Access to Nurses (I CAN) Act (H.R. 1317/S. 575). This would remove arbitrary, outdated barriers in the Medicare and Medicaid programs that currently prevent Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) from practicing to the full extent of their education and clinical training.
- Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs (H.R. 3593/S. 1874). This is a straight reauthorization of funds through 2030 for nursing education, nursing workforce development, and nursing research.
- Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act (H.R. 2531/S. 1232). This would require the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue standards requiring health care and social service employers to write and implement a workplace violence prevention plan.

Nursing is a professional degree is the

final piece of advocacy discussed, which deserves more than a bullet point. I've written to you all about this issue before, so here's the update: Despite the tremendous efforts of ANA to classify nursing as a professional degree ensuring our graduate students have access to ample educational loans, it didn't happen. However, ANA (and several other nursing organizations) didn't give up or slow down. Instead, they did what nurses do best: problem solved. Ready for us to take to the hill was a detailed list of three options that would fix that problem: 1. Nursing is a Professional Degree Act (H.R. 8691/ S. 4568) which would correct the Department of Education's classification for nursing alone. 2. H.J. Res. 189/ S.J. Res. 196, which is a resolution that uses the Congressional Review Act process to repeal the entire rule for all affected professions. 3. Professional Student Degree Act (H.R. 6718) which would expand the definition of professional degree to include nursing, physician associates, social work, physical therapy, occupational therapy, public health, and education programs. This wasn't the only thing ANA did to try to fix this either. They are one of ten national nursing organizations that filed a nurse-forward lawsuit against the department of education in May. While I don't know what the outcome will be just yet, I am hopeful that we are part of a powerful organization that will stop at nothing to advocate for nursing just as much as each



of us advocates for our patients.

At the end of lobby day, we all gathered for the 2026 National Awards and President's Awards Ceremony where our very own Josephine Agyei served as the host. We had four award winners from NY:

- Rebecca deDufour, MSN, RN, CCRN, won the Distinguished Direct Patient Care award.
- Lo-Ruchama Hilaire, BSN, RN and Moshelle Jules, BSN, RN, each won the Early Nurse Career Leader award.
- Fernand De Los Reyes, PhD, RN, PMH-BC, won the Foundation of Nursing Practice award.

As Membership Assembly continued, many important topics were discussed and decisions were made. Three topics (incivility in nursing education practice environments,

nurses leading sustainability, and integrating cannabis nursing competencies into education and practice) were brought forward for membership discussion during the dialogue forum and I am proud to share that NY nurses braved the microphone to speak about each topic sharing their expertise and experiences. All three topics were approved by the membership for continued work, so be on the lookout for valuable and thoughtful resources. Although it was not a "bylaws year," we had two topics that were sent back to ANA for continued refinement from last year's Membership Assembly. I am pleased to share that impressive work was done, and every concern was addressed by work groups on apportionment (how the number of votes are distributed) and LPN/LVN membership. Both passed by a landslide. What a privilege it was to be in the

room when LPNs/LVNs were approved to join ANA; talk about The Power of Nurses™! At the ANA level, they will pay the same rate and have the same access to member resources as RN and APRN members do. Each state can still decide to follow suit or not, so please share your opinion of opening ANA-NY's membership to our LPN/LVN colleagues via email (president@anany.org). To finish this wonderful gathering, we elected a new ANA president, secretary, two directors-at-large, a director-at-large staff nurse (congratulations to Josephine Agyei for winning another term), and three seats on the nominations and elections committee (congratulations to Kimberly Velez for finishing a term as chair). The Power of Nurses™ was palpable with so much to look forward to in the next 130 years of ANA. ■

From the Desk of the ED

Jeanine Santelli, PhD, RN, AGPCNP-BC, Faith Community Nurse, FAAN



We can't wait to see you in Troy at our 2026 Annual Conference! Your staff have been working tirelessly to develop yet another exciting line-up of speakers on topics that will enhance your ESP (Effective, Social, and Professional) Skills.

If you can, join us for an optional ticketed tour of the beautiful state capital building followed by lunch at a local brewing company on Thursday morning. Thursday afternoon features a pre-conference workshop on the peer support program, SPAN. Thursday continues with exhibits, the poster blitz tease, escape rooms, and the official poster session and welcome reception.

Friday begins with breakfast with the exhibitors followed by our keynote "Moving from Panic to Purpose" with Amy Waninger. Then we want to hear from you during our strategic planning dialogue forum facilitated by Avi Olitzky. Let us know what you LOVE about ANA-NY and what unmet needs we can address as we begin planning for the next three years. We have rearranged the schedule this year to have our awards ceremony included in your conference registration, so that everyone can celebrate our ANA-NY award recipients. It will be a lovely plated luncheon with a chance to meet new people and celebrate long time friends. You will have another opportunity to participate in an escape room on Friday. We will also be hearing from our lovely lobbyist, Amy Kellogg as she recaps the good, the bad, and the ugly of this legislative year and explains our legislative priorities for 2027-2028. Scattered through-

out the day will be concurrent sessions by our members. You can select your area of interest: clinical, education, or research. Optional ticketed events Friday evening including the ANA-NY PAC reception and the Foundation's Nightingale Gala. Robert and Stephanie from Y.E.S. will be the entertainment again this year so make sure you bring your dancing shoes!

Don't stay up too late on Friday because Saturday morning begins with the Nurses House walk. Speakers on Saturday include Dr. Jessica Varghese, RN, recipient of the 2025 Center for Nursing Research Rising Nurse Researcher Award; Dr. Phyllis Quinlan, RN, our colleague who has been working with our members as a professional coach for many years to rave reviews; and Dr. Carrie Barber, RN, who will enlighten us about entrepreneurship in nursing. Please be sure that your travel plans include staying for governing assembly which is our annual membership meeting. This will be the time for you, as ANA-NY members, to meet the new 2026-2027 Board of Directors; receive reports from the standing committees and officers; hear from special guests; approve the 2027-2028 Legislative Priorities; validate the results of the dialogue forum; and honor our colleagues who have passed with the Nurse Honor Guard.

Whew! This will be another fantastic conference that you won't want to miss! ■