ANA Hill Day 2026: Advocating for Nurses, Elevating the Profession, and Engaging Our Members

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The 2026 American Nurses Association Hill Day in Washington, D.C., was more than an event, it was a call to action for nurses across the nation to step into their roles as advocates, leaders, and policy influencers.

On June 26, nurses from every corner of the United States, and US territories, gathered in our nation's capital for the annual Hill Day event hosted by the American Nurses Association (ANA). The purpose was simple but powerful: to ensure that the voices of nurses are heard by the lawmakers whose decisions directly impact our profession and the patients we serve.

Representing South Carolina alongside fellow members of the South Carolina Nurses Association (SCNA), I arrived in Washington eager to learn, collaborate, and advocate. One of the greatest joys of the experience was reconnecting with colleagues and meeting nurses from across the country who are making meaningful contributions in their own specialties and communities. The camaraderie among nurses was inspiring and served as a reminder that although our practice settings may differ, our commitment to improving healthcare remains the same.

Hill Day officially began at 7:15 a.m. with the ANA breakfast, followed by an energizing Call to Action session featuring keynote speaker and registered nurse Congresswoman Lauren Underwood. Her message resonated deeply with those of us in attendance.

Representative Underwood reminded us that while nursing remains the most trusted profession in America, trust alone is not enough to influence policy.

"We cannot assume lawmakers will support nursing simply because they trust us," she emphasized.

Her challenge to us was clear: nurses must maintain a visible and consistent presence on Capitol Hill, not just one day each year, but throughout the year. Other industries and interest groups have representatives advocating for their causes daily. Nursing must do the same if we expect meaningful legislative progress.

She encouraged nurses to build relationships with legislators not only in Washington but also when they return to their home districts. Sharing stories from clinical practice and helping policymakers understand the real-world impact of legislation remains one of the most powerful advocacy tools available to nurses.

Inspired and energized, our South Carolina delegation set out across Capitol Hill for our scheduled legislative visits. The morning air was warm but accompanied by a pleasant breeze as we navigated the halls of Congress, walking from office to office advocating for issues critical to nursing and healthcare.

Among the legislative priorities discussed were:

- **The Nursing Is a Professional Degree Act (H.R. 8691/S. 4568)**, which seeks to restore post-baccalaureate nursing programs to the list of professional degree programs eligible under the federal student aid framework.
- **The Improving Care and Access to Nurses (I-CAN) Act**, bipartisan legislation designed to remove outdated Medicare and Medicaid barriers that prevent advanced practice registered nurses from practicing to the full extent of their education and clinical training.
- **Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs (H.R. 3593/S. 1874)**, which support nursing education, workforce development, and nursing research through continued federal investment.
- **The Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act (H.R. 2531/S. 1232**), legislation requiring healthcare employers to develop and implement workplace violence prevention plans while providing anti-retaliation protections for nurses and healthcare workers who report incidents of violence.

One of the highlights of the day was meeting with Congressman Joe Wilson, who confirmed his support for all four legislative priorities presented by ANA. His willingness to stand with nurses and co-sponsor legislation important to our profession was deeply appreciated by our delegation.

We also had productive conversations with legislative staff representing Senator Lindsey Graham, Senator Tim Scott, and Representative Nancy Mace. Their willingness to listen and engage in meaningful dialogue reinforced the importance of maintaining open communication between nurses and policymakers.

However, the meeting that left the greatest impression on our group took place in Congressman Jim Clyburn's office with Legislative Assistant Acacia Bamberg Salatti.

From the moment we entered, she created an atmosphere that was warm, welcoming, and conversational. As our group settled on sofas and chairs around the office, she sat cross-legged on the floor beside the coffee table and gave us her full attention.

What immediately stood out was her preparation.

She understood the legislation we had come to discuss, offered thoughtful insight regarding the policy implications of several bills, and demonstrated a gen-

uine understanding of nursing concerns. It quickly became apparent that she had done her homework.

As nurses, we often recognize when someone truly understands our profession and our challenges.

She got us.

By the time we left Congressman Clyburn's office, our delegation was energized and optimistic, wondering how the day could possibly get any better.

Then it did.

As we approached the elevators, we unexpectedly encountered Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Gracious and approachable, she kindly agreed to take a photo with our group. Given her national visibility and influence, it was a memorable and exciting moment for many of us who admittedly found ourselves a bit starstruck.

Throughout the day, another message from Representative Underwood remained in my thoughts: elected officials who do not support nursing initiatives should not expect photo opportunities with nurses simply for appearances' sake. Nurses must recognize the value of our endorsement and our visibility. Advocacy requires more than attendance; it requires accountability.

By the end of the day, I had walked what felt like at least a 5K across Capitol Hill, but every step was worthwhile.

Our final stop was the United States Botanical Garden, where the peaceful surroundings provided the perfect opportunity to reflect on the significance of the day and the work still ahead.

The excitement of Hill Day continued through the conclusion of the ANA Membership Assembly, where members voted to welcome Licensed Practical Nurses and Licensed Vocational Nurses as members of the American Nurses Association. The decision represented a historic and meaningful step toward greater unity within the nursing profession.

As I reflect on my experience at ANA Hill Day 2026, I can confidently say that I accomplished exactly what I came to Washington to do:

Advocate for nurses. Elevate the profession. Engage our members.

For me, ANA Hill Day was not simply a visit to Capitol Hill. It was a reminder that every nurse has both the opportunity and the responsibility to influence healthcare policy.

The future of nursing will not be decided for us.

It will be shaped by us.

And I look forward to returning for many more Hill Days to come. ■

Implementing INACSL-Based Simulation to Strengthen Competency in Medical-Surgical Nursing Students

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Clinical sites are highly coveted and chosen carefully for their ability to meet course objectives and student learning needs[1]. Until recently, program historical site preferences have routinely been upheld, however the clinical placement process is becoming increasingly complex[2] due to an influx of nursing programs, increasing demand for nurses due to workforce shortages[3], and the need for practice readiness upon graduation[4]. Moving away from historical site preferences is necessary for equity among programs yet managing the uncertainty of securing placements rest heavily on faculty and clinical coordinators[2].

The South Carolina Board of Nursing allows for up to 50% of course clinical hours to be simulation-based[5]. Balancing clinical experiences with simulation is a strategy to mitigate strain created when clinical site placements are challenging[6]. Ensuring that clinical replacement simulations maintain rigor, foster critical-thinking development, include client communication, and develop technical skills is paramount to practice readiness[7].

This article reports how a medical-surgical course created a clinical replacement