

## Nursing Facts

- Nursing is the nation's largest health care profession with an estimated 2.9 million licensed registered nurses.
- Most health care is delivered by nurses.
- Federal investment in nursing education is less than six hundred-thousandths of one percent of the total federal budget.
- Title VIII Nurse Workforce Development Programs – funded at \$149.7 million in FY 2006 – are the primary source of federal funding for nursing education.
- In 1974, during the last serious nursing shortage, Congress appropriated \$153 million for nurse education programs. In today's dollars that would be worth \$592 million, approximately four times what the federal government is spending now.
- In 1980, 40.5 percent of RNs were under the age of 35 compared to 16.6 percent in 2004.
- The average age of nurse educators with doctorates is 55.7.
- Nearly 1,800 full-time faculty members leave their positions each year.
- Only 350 to 400 nursing students receive doctoral degrees each year.
- The number of full-time faculty needed to “fill the nursing gap” may be as high as 40,000. Currently, fewer than 20,000 full-time faculty are in the system.
- 147,000 qualified applications were turned away from nursing programs for the academic year 2004-2005 in large part because of the severe faculty shortage.

NLN

**National League  
for Nursing**

**For additional information contact:**  
**National League for Nursing**  
6534 Marlo Drive  
Falls Church, VA 22042  
Phone: 703-241-3947  
Fax: 703-534-9036  
Email: nlingov@aol.com

**National Headquarters:**  
**National League for Nursing**  
61 Broadway, 33rd Floor  
New York, New York 10006  
Phone: 212-363-5555  
Fax: 212-812-0393  
**www.nln.org**



## PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA 2006

NLN

**National League  
for Nursing**

***Shaping the Future  
of Nursing Education***

The **National League for Nursing** is the professional association of nurse faculty and leaders in nursing education *in all types of nursing programs* – doctorate, master’s, baccalaureate, associate degree, diploma, and practical/vocational. Representing more than 1,100 nursing schools and 17,000 individual members, it is a powerful voice for a public policy that ensures that the United States will have the nurses it needs for quality health care.

***The NLN advances excellence in nursing education that prepares the nursing workforce to meet the needs of diverse populations in an ever-changing health care environment.***

## **The 2006 Public Policy Focus**

**S**ecure federal assistance for nursing education initiatives that help build and maintain an excellent nursing workforce. Support from members of Congress and administration officials is vital to bolster existing programs and create new ones that will:

- Recruit students into the nursing profession
- Produce a diverse nursing workforce
- Provide faculty members to educate nursing students
- Create educational opportunities to keep nurses in the profession

Even as the United States grapples with a shortage of nurses, nursing programs are turning away qualified candidates because they do not have sufficient faculty. The NLN supports legislation that will provide America’s nursing schools with the faculty needed to educate the next generation of nurses. Incentives to attract students into nursing are not enough. They must be supplemented with expanded faculty scholarship and loan programs for graduate students who will enter the classroom as nurse faculty.

Because 30 percent of the current nurse faculty are more than 55 years of age, the impending retirement of experienced educators will further impact the ability of our schools of nursing to meet the educational health care needs of the nation.

## **Strengthen, Stabilize, and Secure the Nursing Workforce Through Education**

### **The National League for Nursing**

- Advocates the appropriation of a substantial increase in Title VIII funding to expand the Fast-Track Nursing Faculty Loan and Scholarship Program which provides support to students working toward a master’s or doctoral degree: one year of financial assistance is received in exchange for each year of teaching at a school of nursing. The program allows students to rapidly complete their studies and enter the teaching role at a younger age, thus increasing the number of productive teaching years.
- Urges Congress to strengthen existing Title VIII nurse education programs by funding them at a minimum level of \$175 million for FY 2007. These programs support individual nursing students through scholarships and loans and provide schools of nursing with grants to strengthen the programs that educate the students who will meet the health care needs of the nation.
- Calls on Congress to increase funding targeted at bringing minority and disadvantaged students into nursing and to enhance the retention of these nurses once they are in the profession. Besides representing an untapped resource to address the nationwide nursing shortage (only 11.6 percent of RNs are from racial or ethnic minority backgrounds; only 5.7 percent are men), minorities are essential to developing a health care system that understands and addresses the needs of our rapidly diversifying population.
- Encourages Congress to provide support to increase career opportunities for practicing nurses and other individuals interested in attaining a nursing degree. Scholarships and stipends for continuing education are needed to help nurses meet the demands of a constantly evolving health care environment, increase job satisfaction through new knowledge and career advancement, and enable individuals working in health care to move up the career ladder to achieve nursing status.

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***An investment in nursing education is not sound without support for the development of nurse faculty to teach.***