Idaho Nurses Association (INA) Delegates Serving at the ANA House of Delegates

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The 2010 American Nurses Association House of Delegates (HOD) was held in Washington, D.C. June 16 - 19. In reflecting on the most surprising things about the House of Delegates, three first time delegates, Pat Lazare, Robin Pattillo and Renee Watson, expressed thoughts on how organized and efficient the meetings were and on the strict use of parliamentary procedure. As a third time delegate, Val Greenspan, author of this article and fourth delegate, marveled at changes since her previous service as a delegate—hand held electronic “clickers” for voting, short surveys, short demographic surveys and brief nursing trivia quizzes; immediate voting results. Delegates with Blackberry’s viewed instant messaging reactions (e.g., Obama speech) of non-delegates via social media including Twitter and Facebook.

Prior to attending, the delegates’ preparatory work included online reading of bylaws amendments, reference proposals and the delegate handbook, as well as participating in virtual discussion. In early May, the delegates, past president and Executive Director held a teleconference to discuss proposed amendments and references in relation to Idaho. Upon registration, delegates received more reading (e.g., status report of 2008 resolutions; 2009 annual report) and copies of the virtual discussion. The virtual discussion system worked as this
author was pleasantly surprised to see how input on health literacy was slightly modified into a resolve on a resolution proposal approved during final voting.

Prior to the HOD, this author attended a WEX meeting consisting of primarily presidents and executive directors from western constituent member associations (CMAs), June 15, 2010, where issues and accomplishments were shared. Also attended was Lobby Day, June 16, 2010, which began with a breakfast and a briefing on bills and issues. While visiting with Senator Risch and staff member and staff members of Senator Crapo and Representative Minnick, discussion centered on four issues: safe patient handling (give nurses the equipment to do the job safely); safe RN staffing (sufficient RNs help save lives); need for allowing advanced practice nurse to certify home health plans of care (corrects glitch in Medicare law); and the need for safe chemical policies to protect nurses and other health care workers.

An initial business item was HOD approval of a cultural covenant pertaining to conduct and valuing of each other. Introductions of past Presidents of (ANA), organizational affiliates and associated organizations were cut short to provide time for a guest speaker, President Barack Obama. The mutual respect between ANA President Rebecca Patton and President Obama was one obvious factor leading to his presence at the HOD. The delegates greeted President Obama with signs saying “Yes We Did!” President Obama thanked ANA and nurses for their strong commitment to ensuring access to health care and system reform. He noted that ANA was the first health care organization to support the creation of Medicare, so their advocacy for access to health care was not new. He spoke about failures of the current health care system, about changes and various implementation timelines as a result of the historic Patient Protection and Affordable Care act and about work remaining for the future. The video
and transcript of his speech may be accessed at
http://www.nursingworld.org/HomepageCategory/ANAWorkingforYou.aspx

Another “first” highlight of the HOD was a panel of living ANA past presidents reflecting on ANA’s Impact on Health Care; listed from the earliest to most recent are Jo Eleanor Elliott, Barbara Nichols, Eunice Cole, Lucille Joel, Virginia Trotter Betts, Mary Foley and Barbara Blakeny. In the same order, their stories reflected involvement in the beginning of Medicare; differentiating expanded vs. extended roles of nurses; working on federation issues, deciding to endorse presidential candidates and impacting diagnostic related groups (DRGs); defeating a proposal by the AMA for registered care technologists (RCT), designating nursing board specialties and a greater extent of speaking externally; working on the nation’s health agenda in 1993 and tying policy with political action; dealing with the effect of 9/11 and nursing shortages, helping pass a safe needle act; and, defining the economic value of nurses, developing coalitions to counter attempts to infringe on the scope of nursing practice and upholding the rights of nurses in the workplace within the practice discipline. The HOD was informed about a history project designed to capture this rich tapestry and wealth of information from the past presidents.

In her ANA presidential address, Rebecca Patton related the visible role of ANA including being present at the signing of the health care reform bill, a bill reflecting the nation’s major investment in health care reform and a shifting from disease care to prevention. She discussed the successful outcomes of several legal cases involving nurses—two nurses accused of harassing a physician after they had reported concern about the physician’s standard of care; and a Board of Education attempting to redefine nurses’ scope of practice to allow unlicensed
persons to administer insulin in a school setting. She proudly announced the new director-at-large seat for a recent graduate on the ANA Board of Directors. She used her collection of hourglasses as an analogy to inspire nurses to reset and create their desired direction, keep going, keep actively engaged, keep looking for opportunities on the horizon and to make the most of it each day. Since new delegates often experience a considerable learning curve, President Patton proudly announced another “first,” the delegate-in-training program that allows seating with a non-voting status at the HOD. A new delegate orientation was attended by one of the Idaho new delegates whose arrival schedule accommodated this session.

The dynamic Executive Director, Marla Weston, highlighted the work of the ANA including pay for quality initiatives that make a difference in outcomes, the use of National Database of Nursing Quality Indicators (NDNQI) in 1606 hospitals (1 of 4), the recent involvement of 25 fellows in advocacy workshop, a grant to bring immunizations to every community, the development of a Career Center, an ANA link to a Mosby website for evidence-based information and a new strategic plan. She proudly indicated the willingness of Constituent Member Associations (CMAs) to share what works and helpful strategies.

Twenty honorary awards were distributed throughout the agenda. The awardees’ extensive accomplishments to nursing and health care were heartwarming and motivating. On a personal note, this author was pleased to briefly reconnect during the HOD experience with nurses with whom she previously served professionally in North Dakota. One of these was Dr. Mary Wakefield, now administrator of Health Resources and Services Administrations (HRSA), whom President Obama said is the highest ranking nurse in his administration. The other was
Approved bylaws amendments were as follows: 1) stagger terms of membership in the Congress on Nursing Practice and Economics; 2) language change indicating ANA supports the CMAs’ right to engage in collective bargaining and workplace advocacy for nurses; and 3) provision for pilot programs (via grant type application and written agreement of involved CMAs) over the next two years to establish membership categories, dues rates and payment options that may differ from current HOD policies and bylaws. The HOD declined by a 76.1% vote to extend the terms of ANA officers.

Approved ANA HOD reference proposals corresponded to the following Idaho Nurses Association (INA) goals:

INA Goal 2 – The Idaho State Nurses Association will promote the professional development of all nurses and foster high standards of nursing practice.

Reference Report #10 – Social Networking and the Nurse (Note: Originally this was an informational report that was changed to an action proposal based upon HOD concerns.)

Reference Report #11 – Mentoring Programs for Novice Nurses

INA Goal 3 – The Idaho State Nurses Association will lead the nursing professional wherever decisions are made affecting nursing and health care.

Reference Report #5 – Advanced Practice Registered Nurses Signing and Certifying for Home Care
INA Goal 4 – The Idaho State Nurses Association will promote the safety and well-being of nurses in the workplace.

Reference Report #1 – Hostility, Abuse and Bullying in the Workplace

INA Goal 5 – The Idaho State Nurses Association will strengthen the nursing role in client advocacy for consumer safety and quality health care.

Reference Report #3 – Addressing Health Literacy through Patient Literacy

Reference Report #4 – Safety and Effectiveness of Reprocessed Single Use Devices

Reference Report #9 – Healthcare for Undocumented Immigrants

Other approved proposals relating less directly to INA goals were reference report #2 on removal of outdated language; reference report #6 on representation of CMAs in the ANA House of Delegates and reference report #7 clarifying dues paid for members without governance rights, both of which addressed gaps in current policy; and reference report #8 Continuation of the Automatic Dues Escalator. The latter involved removal of a 2010 sunset for the dues escalator, which received an affirmative majority vote after testimony about the importance of budgetary planning to offset the rising cost of doing business and about how an annual calculation is based on the Consumer Price Index for Urban Consumers (CPI-U), which results in dues changes every 3 years within a 0% to 2% cap.

The Idaho delegates attended two educational forums: 1) *Principles for Pay for Quality* and 2) *Nursing’s Social Policy Statement; Nursing: Scope & Standards of Practice*. The latter reflected 2010 revisions of previous editions. These forums related to INA Goal 1 – Nurses in Idaho will be informed on issues and trends that affect their professional nursing practice.
The Idaho delegation was one of several states recognized for 100% participation in contributing to ANA-PAC with an average $75.00 per delegate. The delegates attended a finance forum and a candidate’s forum. In the latter, candidates spoke for one minute; candidates for president spoke for five minutes followed by extemporaneous answers to two questions not known to the candidates in advance. Idaho nurses were recognized during a memoriam service.

The HOD ended with a teller’s report of the election. Karen Daley, Massachusetts, was elected President. She is a former President of the Massachusetts Association of Registered Nurses and is, perhaps, best known for her active advocacy that resulted in a federal act for use of safer needle devices. Western CMAs were represented in the elected positions of 2nd vice president, secretary, one director-at-large and several positions on the Congress on Nursing Practice and Economics (CNPE). Idaho gained a link to representation when Elizabeth Dietz, CA was appointed to fill Karen Daley’s vacated position on the Board of Directors. Elizabeth indicated to the Idaho delegation that she has a home in American Falls and plans to become more active in Idaho as she spends more time in the state.

While serving on the HOD involved a packed agenda, it was not all work and no play. The delegates enjoyed a Moroccan dinner one evening and several delegates joined the early morning walking tour.

We thank INA for the wonderful opportunity to serve at this 2010 collegial ANA HOD and over the next two years until new delegates are selected. The experience reaffirmed that ANA has positioned itself well to represent the interests of all registered nurses and to effect health care issues.