



## **NOVA's Mission:**

***Shaping and  
Influencing Health  
Care in the  
Department of  
Veterans Affairs***

## **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:**

During the fall of 1980, the nationwide shortage of registered nurses reached crisis proportions. Nurses were leaving the profession in droves, enrollment in nursing schools was decreasing, and discontent was widespread. Discontent ranged from disillusionment with nursing as a profession to adversarial relationships with physicians and resulted in pronounced staffing shortages. ***(Does this sound familiar?)***

This unfortunate situation was exemplified in the VA as Congress passed PL 96-330. This law, which directly affected NA nurse pay, was developed and passed with no direct input from VA nurses. A small group of dedicated nurses at the Hines VA Hospital in Illinois decided it was time for action. This decision marked the birth of the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs.

Earlier, in the spring of 1980, a proposal was drafted encompassing the concept of a nationwide professional nursing organization with an educational and legislative emphasis. Since this beginning, NOVA has grown to reflect VA nurses from all over the United States. These nurses have pursued their goals resolutely and have been able to significantly influence our nation's legislators on issues of veterans' health care.

## What Does NOVA Do For VA Nurses?

NOVA provides the following professional services:

- **A strong lobbying power on Capitol Hill**
- **A quarterly newsletter featuring national and local activities of the organization related to nursing practice within the DVA, including a current perspective by the Secretary of DVA**
- **Timely legislative updates on our web page and in a quarterly newsletter**
- **Links (personal, electronic and telephonic) to other nursing/legislative organizations**
- **National, regional and local educational programs**
- **Scholarship and research opportunities through the NOVA Foundation**
- **A voice in policy making through our contacts on Capitol Hill, the DVA, the Veterans Service Organizations and Nursing Headquarters**

NOVA is a recognized force in Washington, deeply involved in the legislative process. Through NOVA, VA registered nurses can directly impact health care policy in the Department of Veterans Affairs and in the health care industry.

There is national concern about staffing levels, patient safety, the effects of the nursing shortage, recruitment and retention of a qualified nursing workforce, the impact of the current budget, and the quality of care we are able to give our veteran patients. NOVA is at the forefront, tackling these issues and impelling Congress to act.

NOVA provides VA nurses with a strong, educated and informed voice which speaks for our profession, its rightful place in health care, and its impact on advocacy and optimal care for our patients.

Florence Nightingale said: *“There are two classes of people in the world. Those who take the best and enjoy it and those who wish for something better and try to create it. The world needs the appreciation of the first and the discontent of the second.”*

Senator Frank Murkowski once said: “VA nurses are the matrix upon which our health care system is built. For too long, registered nurses have been taken for granted. The quality of the health care delivered to our nation’s veterans relies upon the quality of the professional nursing care delivered. We can appropriate all of the dollars we wish to expand our VA Health Care System, but in the final analysis, without professional nurses, we would have no alternative but to close the doors of VA hospital wards, clinics, and nursing homes.”



## **The Vision of NOVA:**

**VA patients will receive high quality nursing care at all times and in all settings.**

**VA nurses will have an optimal work environment to care for patients.**

**VA nurses will be well informed on relevant issues that impact their nursing practice.**

**VA nurses will have a strong voice in the legislative arena.**

**VA nurses will have a strong presence at VHA corporate leadership level.**

**VA nurses will seek membership in NOVA.**

