

2017 Legislative Priority Goals

The Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) is the professional organization for all nurses employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Our members are the frontline faces who provide the best care for veterans. The following legislative priority goals identify several areas of concern. Some items require legislation, some require funding, and others need to be supported and implemented by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

Federal Hiring Freeze: *Effective January 2017 – If modifications are not made:*

- VA must have the ability to make decisions that directly impact public safety, and how care is provided to the veterans they serve.
- The hiring freeze directly affects timely access for inpatient and outpatient care as critical clinical staff will not be hired.

VA Transformation:

- Continue to support VA's Organizational Transformation Plan which must include appropriate use of funding, and inclusion of nursing in strategic decision making, access, operational efficiency, research, and academic efforts.

CHOICE/Community Integrated Healthcare:

- Deliver a program that is easy to understand, simple to administer, and meets the needs of our veterans, community providers, and VHA staff.
- Ensure that VA continues to be the first point of access and the coordinator of all healthcare for enrolled veterans.

Information Technology:

- VA must continue to improve information technology support provided to the field to improve patient safety, software usability and data standardization for strong integrated patient healthcare records across the system.

Retention/Recruitment/Staffing:

- Ensure competitive salaries for nursing personnel so that VA may be an employer of choice.
- Simplify the hiring process to include increasing the number of Human Resources staff to strengthen all areas of the hiring process within the VHA employment system.
- Provide adequate training and support for all Human Resources staff and Nurse Recruiters, to include ensuring each VA facility has a full-time nurse recruiter.
- Undertake a thorough review of downgrades and reclassification of critical positions across VA.
- Increase training and utilization of Locality Pay laws.
- Study and revise the cap on Nurse Pay structures and RN pay schedules and reclassification of critical positions.
- Provide swift implementation of Full Practice Authority regulations so as to allow APRNs employed by VA to function in partnership with their healthcare colleagues. We also ask that a review of CRNAs for inclusion in the regulation be taken.
- Ensure sufficient budget for staffing levels to enable proper access to care and services while maintaining a well monitored and safe environment for veterans.