

A Report from NIWI 2019

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The Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI) program increased my knowledge of the advocacy process, increased my confidence in my ability to be an effective advocate for neuroscience patients, and provided me with a set of tools to be a better advocate. Additionally, the program provided excellent networking opportunities and enabled me to network with a fellow AANN member and NIWI attendee.

The seminar met over three days in March. The stated goals were:

- Describe how nurses can be involved and influence policy at the local and national level.
- Discuss how to work effectively with legislative staff to advance policy agendas.
- Describe key steps to effect change in the legislative process.
- Identify techniques to advance legislative issues at the grassroots level.
- Identify legislative, political, and economic forces driving health care policy and delivery changes today.
- Learn to schedule Capitol Hill meetings

It was my assessment that these goals were met. I received high quality training on the legislative process. I was also educated on how to best present my issue of concern to a legislator or their aid. As a part of the education, I was provided with the opportunity to role play discussing my concern. The most effective and useful part of the program was the opportunity to meet with Rep French Hill, Sen. John Boozman and legislative aids from the office of Sen Tom Cotton.

During these meetings I advocated for full funding of Title VII and increased funding for the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR). I was pleased to find out that although the President's budget sternly censored funding for the NIH, the budget prepared by the House of Representatives increased funding for the NIH, including NINR. While I certainly would not attribute the House budget to my embryonic advocacy efforts, I was nonetheless very satisfied to see that the House has an interest in nursing research.

Through these meetings I initiated a relationship with people who have a direct influence on policy. Even though it has only been a few months since the program, I have reached out to my newly formed contacts in Washington to advocate for APRNs ability to prescribe durable medical equipment (DME) for patients that they care for and follow without the directive of a physician. I plan to use my new skills to schedule meeting with my representatives and advocate for patients and nurses, when they are back in my home state of Arkansas at Town Hall Meetings. To be blunt, I was flabbergasted how readily one can set up a brief meeting with one's representative or their aid and to find them keenly interested in nursing. Although, neither of my

Congressmen, were members of the Congressional Nursing Caucus that all agreed to join, as it is a great bipartisan caucus.

It is also important to note skills I learned to apply at a national level are readily transferable to advocacy at a state and local level - and I certainly plan to use them.

In summary, the knowledge and skills I gained through this internship has enabled me to be to be a more confident and effective advocate. And I think these skills will serve me well as I move into a leadership role on the AANN Advocacy Committee. I would encourage the Membership and Board to continue their support of this program.

Consider volunteering for the AANN advocacy committee and see what NIWI is all about. If you are interested in serving on the advocacy committee, email Anne Gramiak at agramiak@aann.org.