

2010 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

The Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) is the professional organization of the approximately 41,000 registered nurses employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). NOVA has identified several areas of concern. Some require legislation, some require funding, and others need to be supported and implemented by the VA.

Budget. The primary goal of VA nurses is to have adequate resources to provide high quality patient care and ensure the VA continues to be a leader in health care. In order to accomplish this goal, NOVA supports the following:

- There needs to be adequate funds to support veterans and staff members returning from the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Adequate discretionary funding for the aging infrastructure of the VA and medical/surgical tertiary care.

Recruitment and Retention. In order for the VA to become the employer of choice for healthcare professionals across the Nation, human resource departments as well as recruitment and retention programs must be modernized. In order to accomplish this, NOVA supports the following:

- *Human Resource Departments Must Receive Adequate Training and Support.* We appreciate VA's efforts to continue to enhance and support labor/employee relations.
- *Hiring Freezes.* Inadequate budgets can result in hiring slow-downs and freezes which has a negative impact on recruitment and retention and quality of care.
- *Programs to Help Decrease Delays in Hiring Licensed Staff.* Continue to support VA's efforts.

Information Technology. NOVA supports the improvement in the support of information technology to the field in order to allow for increased patient safety, software usability and data standardization for integrated patient health care records across the system. NOVA supports the following:

- *Evidence-Based Practice.* This helps ensure patients have the best possible outcomes and that resources are allocated appropriately. A program team developed the VA Nursing Outcomes Database (VANOD) which supports evidence-based practice and should be adequately funded.
- *Computerized Patient Records.* The goal is to have standardized documentations nationwide which are accessible and user friendly.
- *Decentralized System.* The current centralized system has created a lack of responsiveness to critical patient needs. A decentralized system allows for a local rapid response to meet critical patient care needs and supports the work of nurses and other clinicians in providing the best quality care to veterans.