Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA)

History
1980 – 2014
Nurses Organization of the Veterans Administration  
P. O. Box 88  
Hines, Illinois 60141  

Dear Nursing Colleague.  

About six months ago a group of professional nurses at Hines VAH began discussing the need for input into the legislative process at the national level. It was decided that a nation-wide V.A. professional nurses organization would serve as an excellent vehicle to facilitate this goal. The Hines VAH RN group formed the Nurses Organization of the Veterans Administration (NOVA).  

An interim Board of Directors, composed of professional nurses at all levels from Hines VAH, has been selected. An election will be held within the next six to twelve months, so that all registered nurses from the 174 V.A. facilities will have the opportunity to participate.  

As you will see from our Constitution, it is our intent to influence legislation collectively and to be a political action body. We wish to avoid any movement toward becoming a bargaining agent—therefore the Constitution does by exclusion eliminate this possibility.  

Prior to contacting you we have informed the Administrator and the Director, Nursing Service in Central Office of our intention. This letter is being sent to the Chief, Nursing Service at each V.A. facility as well as to at least one other professional nurse at each facility. We are asking those of you who receive this letter to either distribute the membership applications and disseminate the information regarding NOVA yourself or give this entire packet to a colleague who would be able to widely share this information with other V.A. professional nurses at your facility.  

We are now prepared to solicit dues-paying membership from 30,000 V.A. nurses. At this time we think it is appropriate to ask you to talk to your colleagues, ask for their support, and form a chapter of NOVA. The dues are $12.00 for this first year.  

Enclosed are copies of the draft of the Constitution and Bylaws, membership application, and 'News from NOVA.' Please contact any of the following people if you need more information or have any questions.  

Barbara Chambers 312-325-4320  
Jan Norton 312-848-7535  
Joey John 312-629-0509  
Judy Paice 312-366-7102  
Tom Fiala 312-437-4725  

Sincerely.  

Barbara Chambers Interim President

Introduction

During the fall of 1980, a nationwide shortage of registered nurses had reached crisis proportions. Nurses were leaving the profession, enrollment in schools of nursing had decreased, and the rumblings of discontent were widespread. This discontent ranged from disillusionment with nursing as a profession to adversary relationships with physicians, and pronounced staffing shortages. Nowhere was this unfortunate situation more pronounced than in the VA nursing system. When Public Law 96-330 was passed by Congress without the benefit of direct input from VA nurses, it precipitated a call for action. VA nurses from American Lake, Tacoma, Washington; Long Beach, California; Palo Alto, California; and Hines, Illinois had been meeting to share concerns about the plight of nursing. Registered nurses at Hines VA Hospital spearheaded the action for VA nurses nationwide to start their own professional organization. They decided that never again would such a significant bill be presented and debated in Congress without the voices of VA Nurses being heard.

1980

In the spring of 1980 a group of Hines RNs were enrolled in a management course taught by Chief Nurse Jennie Umbel McKoy. She challenged them to be change agents in every sense of the word. Barbara Chambers, Chuck Naparalla, and Tom Fiala picked up that gauntlet and ran. They wrote a proposal encompassing the concept of a nationwide professional nursing organization with an educational and legislative thrust. Jennie Umbel McKoy endorsed and supported that proposal. Those RNs canvassed the nursing staff at Hines seeking others who would give generously of their time and talent.

April – August

It was established that the name of the organization would be the Nurses Organization of the Veterans Administration or NOVA. NOVA was chosen as an abbreviated title because of its definition as a new brightly shining star. It also lent possibilities for an attractive star logo. Drafting the constitution and bylaws commenced. Other topics requiring immediate attention included membership dues, officers, committees, and hopefully a non-profit status.
September - December

The administrative staff at Hines VA Hospital were kept apprised of the intent and course of action of the organization. President Barbara Chambers appointed an interim Board of Directors. They included:

President:             Barbara Chambers
Vice President:       Thomas Fiala
Corresponding Secretary:   Vivian John
Membership Secretary:   Nancy Schliefer
Treasurer:              Janet Norton
Board Members:         Janet Paice
                         Cathy Gawron
                         Isaac Wilson

At last a final version of the constitution and bylaws was adopted. Annual dues were set at $12.00 per annum. The hardworking NOVA core group put together an impressive packet that included welcoming letters, membership applications, and the first issue of News From NOVA. These packets were mailed to the Chief Nurse and one other RN at every VA healthcare facility in the country. Press releases were sent to twenty major nursing healthcare publications.

December

Response to the packet mailings was overwhelming! Encouraging letters and phone calls came in from all over the nation. Over 600 registered nurses representing ninety VA facilities joined NOVA. This represented 52% of the 172 VA facilities, an impressive beginning. There was not only great enthusiasm for national membership, but also a real impetus for chapter formation. The December issue of American Nursing Midwest published NOVA’s press release. American Lake VA RNs called to say although they had initiated action for a similar professional organization starting with California, they would lend their strength and commitment to the overall project started by the group from Hines.

The basic workings of the organization were under way. The treasurer and secretary were bonded for monies received and disbursed by NOVA. Clerical support in the processing of applications was retained and procedures were refined. Pat Sibley was appointed as an additional board member. Catherine Gawron was appointed to replace Nancy Schliefer as Membership Secretary and Barbara Scherer was appointed to replace Janet Paice as a board member. The founding board was comprised of all full time employees who worked an incredible number of volunteer off duty hours under the energetic direction of the president. NOVA was indeed fortunate to obtain the gratuitous services of a fine legislative attorney who offered invaluable advice and information about establishing political contacts and guiding the growth of NOVA. Fundraising became another important focus for NOVA.

1981

It immediately became evident that NOVA members out in the field would welcome a guide for starting their own chapters. Another mailing was needed to maintain the momentum gained. The core group decided upon the concentrated effort of a two day retreat at a scenic lodge in Palos Hills, Illinois. The fruits of that retreat included an interim constitution and
bylaws, letter of inquiry, the newsletter, and a chapter starting kit, all of which were included in
the next mass mailing to all VA Medical Centers. Excitement escalated with the arrival of
chapter constitutions and bylaws from Phoenix, Arizona, and Albany, New York.

The culmination of several months’ planning was a highly successful reception held at
the Rayburn Building in Washington, D.C., for Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committee
members and their staffs. NOVA members from Hines, Illinois; St. Louis, Missouri; Des
Moines, Iowa; Manhattan, New York; Albany, New York; Richmond, Virginia; and Washington,
D.C. attended to discuss their nursing and veteran patient care concerns with the legislators.

The interim NOVA Board spent three days in Washington consulting with the Senate and
Congressional staffs; VA Central Office staff including Dr. Donald Custis, Chief Medical
Director and Vernice Ferguson, Deputy Assistant Chief Medical Director for Nursing Programs;
Veterans Service Organizations including the Paralyzed Veterans of America, the American
Legion, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars; and Dr. Paul Schaefer, President of the National
Association of VA Physicians. Highlights of this first legislative effort hosted by NOVA were
featured in the NEWS FROM NOVA of May-June, 1981. Again, every VA facility was targeted
with the mailing of newsletters and applications. Major projects of ongoing concern included
the first annual meeting planned for September 21, 22, 1981 at the Bismarck Hotel in Chicago, a
proposed budget for 1981-1982, preparation of the ballot for the first national election, and
publicity efforts.

The interim Board had the unique privilege of working under the unfaltering direction of
a most determined president. Hardly a day went by that the core group did not receive endless
communications from all over the nation cheering the efforts already expended and fostering
support for the future. It was in this heady climate that the Board planned what was to be the
historic first annual meeting of the Nurses Organization of the Veterans Administration.

On the morning of September 21, 1981, NOVA President Barbara Chambers walked to
the podium at the Bismarck Hotel in Chicago, Illinois to welcome a heartwarming cross-section
of VA RNs. There were staff nurses and chief nurses, nurse educators and clinical specialists,
newly registered nurses and career nurses, together for the first time to work for a common
cause. They shared a concern for the viability of nursing as a profession, the survival of the VA
healthcare delivery system, the quality of care for the veteran patient, and the enhancement of the
VA nursing service.

The president’s opening address, “Public Law 96-330 One Year Later” was a fitting
beginning for a highly charged and responsive audience. It offered a challenge for the work
ahead. The president’s address was followed with “The History of the Birth of NOVA”
presented by Secretary Vivian John. A most rewarding tribute for Barbara Chambers and her
interim Board took place in the form of a standing ovation from the entire constituency. Keynote
speaker Dr. Gloria Hope, Deputy Director, Nursing Service, VACO, lent perspective to the focus
of NOVA by addressing “The VA Nursing Service: Past, Present, and Future.” Bill Brew, the
Minority Counsel of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs asked the constituency, “What
took you so long?” (to become a voice and an influence in the VA healthcare system) in his
address titled “The Nitty-Gritty Issues.” Nancy Cahill, Legislative Attorney for the American
Medical Association gave direction to the fledgling NOVA constituency when she addressed
“Unlimited Needs with Limited Resources.” Roger Marquardt, a political activist related what
can be accomplished at the grass roots level when he spoke on “Political Action Means Action.”
Judy Marquardt, a VA RN from the political arena instructed the group on the practical approach
for communicating with legislators in her topic titled “Sincerely Yours.” Michael Howlett,
former Secretary of State of Illinois, commented on the important impact that nurses can have on the legislative aspects of health care issues. A most enlightening and informative session was moderated by Ed Angrist of Graff, Ballauer, and Company in laying the groundwork for the “Financial Aspects of the Organization.”

It was with great joy and tremendous satisfaction that the President announced the National election results. NOVA had gone from a key group at Hines to a Board representing a diversified geographical cross section. The results of the election were as follows:

President: Barbara Chambers (Philadelphia, PA)
Vice President: Thomas Fiala (Hines, IL)
Treasurer: Tom Adamski (Manhattan, NY)
Corresponding Secretary: Vivian John (Hines, IL)
Membership Secretary: Catherine Gawron (Hines, IL)
Board of Directors: Marilyn Abraham (Tucson, AZ)
Betty Beardmore (Miami, FL)
Verdelle Bellamy (Atlanta, GA)
Jerry Freeman (Manhattan, NY)
Elaine Lloyd (Palo Alto, CA)
Alice Tulanowski (Lyons, NJ)

The newly elected Board met in a planning session September 22nd, following the close of a most exciting first annual meeting. NOVA was on its way.

1982

The Board of Directors expended great effort in defining NOVA’s legislative goals for 1981-1982. Key Central Office, government and legislative persons were informed of these goals. The basic structure of the organization was strengthened by the appointment of Committee Chairpersons including Bylaws Committee, Verdelle Bellamy; Program Committee, Jerry Freeman; Nominations Committee, Elaine Lloyd; and Chapters Committee, Ronnie Leibowitz. The President also appointed Vivian John PL 97-72 Task Force Chairperson. It became increasingly evident that the volume of communication and clerical work generated by this ever expanding professional organization required the services of a management firm. Several firms were considered and interviewed. A decision was made to enter into a contract with Stygar-Willis Associates as of March 1, 1982.

Certainly a hi-light of this year was the inclusion of NOVA at the Oversight Hearings conducted by Senator DeConcini (D, AZ) in Arizona during January. NOVA colleagues from Phoenix, Prescott, and Tucson testified by outlining the major nursing problems at their hospitals while including NOVA’s national scope and goals. It was the first time an RN who sees and cares for patients daily had the opportunity to give testimony to a member of the United States Senate and NOVA’s President Barbara Chambers was there! That was just the beginning. On Wednesday, April 21, 1982, NOVA’s president testified before the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs at the Russell Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C. It was NOVA’s turn to let the committee know about the VA nursing and the recruitment/retention issues. In her opening statement, Barbara Chambers said, “Our major objective is to ensure quality nursing care of the Veteran patient in any facility of the VA through nursing input into legislation and politics affecting the veteran.” She emphasized that NOVA is not only concerned about nursing problems but also is concerned about programs and healthcare aspects related to the veteran.
encouraged the Senators to use VA nursing service as a resource of healthcare knowledge when legislative decisions are being made.

April 22, 1982, NOVA sent the word out to NOVA contact people, Chief Nurses and Board members, to support Senator Cranston’s Bill S2389, by letter, mailgram, telegram, or phone call. This Legislative ALERT effort was the first step in what ultimately became the successful passage of Public Law 97-251 “The Veterans Administration Healthcare Programs Improvement and Extension Act of 1982.” The passage of this Bill was to provide a dramatic climax for what would prove to be a highly visible and productive year for NOVA.

It was an exhilarated now seasoned group that laid plans for the Second Annual Meeting September 30-October 3, 1982 in the nation’s Capital. The theme was “Personal, Professional and Political Growth.” NOVA went on record with the statement: *NOVA recognizes the impact of the legislative process on the health care of the nation’s Veterans. The politically aware nurse can influence legislation that affects professional practice while continuing to serve as an advocate for the Veteran patient.*

Jerome Freeman, Program Committee Chairperson, put together an excellent program, and the Washington Hilton provided an elegant setting. A reception at the Rayburn Building for members of Congress and their legislative staffs was hosted by NOVA.

Vernice Ferguson, M.A., R.N., F.A.A.N., Deputy Assistant Chief Medical Director for Nursing Programs, Veterans Administration, gave a rousing keynote address asking each participant to take back the message that all VA nurses must be part of the decision making process in the VA nursing service at each station. Senator Randolph Jennings of West Virginia, member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, reinforced the fact that if nurses ever needed to have a say about VA health care delivery, the time was now. A legislative panel comprised of Julie Sussman, Majority Legislative Director, Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, and William Brew, Minority Counsel of Health, Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, generated the active participation of the attendees.

Informative Workshops included “Nurses and Political Action” by Ms. Diana Mason, R.N., M.S.N., Chairman District 13, New York State Nurses Assoc., Legislative Committee; “Effective Lobbying,” Ms. Beverly Bailey, Legislative Assistant to the American Dental Association, and “Starting a Chapter – at the Local Level,” Ms. Ronnie Leibowitz, M.A., R.N., Chairperson, Chapter Committee Chairperson, NOVA. A long year of diligent effort on the part of the Bylaws Committee under the direction of the Chairperson Verdelle Bellamy, climaxed with the unanimous adoption of the NOVA Constitution and Bylaws at the Second Annual Business Meeting of October 2, 1982.

Another segment of the country entered the NOVA leadership with the election of board member Charles Oesterling from Butler, Pennsylvania. The election results included:

- **Vice President:** Tom Fiala (Hines, IL)
- **Secretary:** Vivian John (Hines, IL)
- **Board of Directors:** Elizabeth Beardmore (Miami, FL)
- Verdelle Bellamy (Atlanta, GA)
- Charles Oesterling (Butler, PA)

In the midst of hard work, exchanging ideas, and camaraderie, NOVA members took time to sing at a poolside party featuring a strolling banjo player.

Chapter Growth

As of November, 1982, NOVA boasted thirty (30) chapters, including:
The total paid membership to date was 2315 members, quite a record for an organization that had gone national officially approximately one year earlier in September of 1981.

1983

When the NOVA Officers and Board of Directors met January 7th and 8th in Washington, D.C., they looked forward to NOVA’s traditional annual visits with the eminent national legislative leaders of the Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, and the Paralyzed Veterans of America. How satisfying it was to have progressed from introducing the concept of a new organization back in the Spring of 1981 to now meeting with tried and true allies who shared the common concerns for the health care of the Veteran patient.

The Legislative Committee, Chaired by Elaine Lloyd, began exploring concerns about social security legislative proposals that would impact on the Federal Retirement Program. The work of putting policy and committee function into writing was initiated with the appointment of Alice Tulanowski as Chair of the Operational Policy Committee. NOVA again continued networking with other national organizations by sending representatives to the January meeting of the National Federation for Specialty Nursing Organizations held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Plans for a dynamic and exciting 3rd annual meeting were shaping up beautifully under the direction of Program Chairperson Betty Beardmore. She presented a fine overview of the proposed program at the June 10-11 Board Meeting held at the Bismarck Hotel in Chicago.

It was fitting that the Board reviewed the organization’s “growing pains” at the Bismarck, site of the first annual meeting. The vital issue of strategies for stabilizing NOVA’s financial structure came under discussion. The Board was faced with the reality that the mainstay of the organization would be expanded membership and increased dues. $12.00 per annum had been too modest a beginning. The Board reviewed the legislative report on the VA Study of the Feasibility and Desirability of Converting Selected Healthcare Occupations to Title 38. It was decided that the NOVA President would be in communication with the National LPN group regarding their stance on this issue.

NOVA now was ready to acknowledge RNs who had made an outstanding contribution to the nursing profession, VA nursing, and NOVA, in the form of Recognition Awards. Jenny Umbel McKoy, Chief Nurse, Hines VA Hospital, was selected as the first recipient of the NOVA
Recognition Award in acknowledgement of her role during the formative stage of NOVA. The Public Recognition Award was earmarked for Loretta Swit of the M.A.S.H. TV Series, for her portrayal of nursing’s contributions during time of war.

Founder and outgoing President of NOVA Barbara Chambers, presided over her last Board Meetings September 21 and 22 prior to the 3rd annual meeting. She acknowledged the fine contributions made during the previous two years by outgoing board members Alice Tulanowski, Jerry Freeman, and Marilyn Abraham. Ms. Chamber’s opening address to the NOVA constituency at the September 22-25, 1983 3rd Annual Meeting at the Grand Hotel in Anaheim, California, conveyed the attitude of the day. “We were the sleeping giant. Our eyes are opened. We’ve taken the first yawn, we’ve stretched, we’ve walked, and we’ve talked. We are the giant who is recognized, and we can become the firm giant to be dealt with.”

The program titled “Veteran Healthcare – The Mandate to VA Nursing” focused on timely issues related to healthcare for the veteran patient. NOVA’s goals maintained that the primary function of VA nursing is quality health care for the Veteran. Therefore the focus of this program was imparting care through nursing and nursing’s potential political activity. We were honored to have Harry N. Walters, Administrator, Veterans Administration, Washington, D.C., as the keynote speaker. He exchanged grass root information with the NOVA Executive Committee at an informal breakfast prior to his address on “Challenges of the VA in the next 5 years.” The legislative tone was set by Yvonne Moody, M.S.N., R.N., Chief Nursing Program, Region 6, VACO, in her message “Veterans Care: The Mandate to VA Nurses.” United States Senator Dennis DeConcini of Arizona spoke on “Current Political Issues of Concern in Veteran Healthcare.” Cheryl Beversdorf, B.S.N., M.N.S.C., R.N., American Health Association, gave her firsthand account of “Nursing Involvement in the Political System.” Patricia Hunter, R.N., California Board of Registered Nursing told us about her road to a political appointment. A variety of other topics included “Political Action in the Nursing Curriculum” by Donna Ver Steeg., Ph.D.; “Power Skills” by Veneer Farley, Ph.D., Long Beach, California; “How An Idea Becomes a Law,” Tom Adamski, M.S., R.N., Manhattan VAMC; “Nursing and the Aged Veteran,” Elizabeth Lattell-Beardmore, Ed.D., R.N., Miami VAMC; “The Image Nurses Want to Project,” Alice Tulanowski, M.S.N., R.N., Lyons VAMC; and “The Joint Appointment,” Mary Ann Mikulic, M.N., R.N., Seattle VAMC. These varied and high powered presentations gave participants a crash course in becoming viable change gents for NOVA. Arthur Rodriguez, Dept. Service Officer in Charge of the San Diego area, and F. Joseph Dwyer, Senior Field Service Officer, San Diego, gave participants “The Veteran’s View.” This outstandingly inclusive program was highlighted by the presentation of the first NOVA Achievement Award to Chief Nurse Jennie Umbel McCoy. Ms. McCoy responded to the president’s accolades with “Reflections and Predictions.”

Election results demonstrated the strength of NOVA nationwide, with:

President: Elaine Lloyd (Palo Alto, CA)
Treasurer: Marilyn Abraham (Tucson, AZ)
Membership Secretary: Catherine Gawron (Hines, IL)
Board of Directors: Kenneth Hall (Syracuse, NY)
Lenore Manak (Loma Linda, CA)
Lynna Smith (American Lake, WA)

National membership climbed to 2661 paid members representing 1022 new members, and 1639 renewed members. Catherine Gawron took on the responsibility as editor of the
NOVA Newsletter NEWS FROM NOVA. NOVA members donned straw hats with NOVA headbands for an all out “Old Tyme Political Rally” celebration. Representatives for Loretta Swit accepted the NOVA Public Recognition Award with style and grace. A “roast” of outgoing officers proved VA nurses can give their best to play as well as work.

1984

Newly elected President Elaine Lloyd set the pace for 1984 taking under advisement input from the NOVA constituency at the third annual meeting. The Board explored moving in the direction of a Long Range Planning Committee. It was evident that the organization had attracted considerable talent and expertise from the field and was ready to utilize those resources by planning for the future of NOVA. Marilyn Abraham of Tucson, Arizona, was appointed Chairperson, and her committee was vested with the responsibility to bring their recommendations to the Board.

It was exciting to observe that the Legislative Committee under the direction of Noreen Sommer, Palo Alto, California, was evolving as an informed and effective entity. Ms. Sommer conferred with legislative staff in Washington, D.C. Topics included the detrimental effect of the Grace Commission’s recommendations, the OPM proposal, and grade roll backs, the nursing staff-patient ratios, and the results of the Recruitment and Retention Survey. She also met with VACO’s Yvonne Moody, and accompanied NOVA’s President on a visit to the ANA Washington, D.C. office. Local implementation of the Baylor Plan was under discussion at VA Medical Centers nationwide. The consensus of opinion by the Board and the Legislative Committee was that the current diminished need for emphasis on recruitment in selected areas of the country would change in keeping with the economic recovery. A letter pertaining to the Baylor Plan and surrounding issues was sent by President Elaine Lloyd to each NOVA chapter. NOVA worked for the passage of the Women Veterans Recognition Week legislation which became a noteworthy reality.

As a broad spectrum of issues were dealt with during 1984, the emphasis fell on budget planning in relationship to the legislative and membership programs. A new membership brochure and pro-ration of dues was provided for. The Chapter Update publication was well received as a mechanism to keep Chapters informed of NOVA’s activities on a bi-monthly basis. In an effort to provide NOVA members with a service not available to VA employees, the Board did a search for disability insurance coverage. A San Francisco based marketing firm was selected as the provider. Every visit to Washington, D.C. was grasped as an opportunity to reaffirm NOVA’s visibility and credibility. President Elaine Lloyd met with Dr. Custis, the Chief Medical Director VACO. NOVA Officers exchanged ideas and concerns with Ms. Vernice Ferguson at a dinner meeting. Once again Board members met with the National leaders of the Veteran Organization Service Groups.

The Fourth Annual Meeting of NOVA, November 8-11, 1984, at the Washington Hilton in Washington, D.C. was the culmination of efforts by Program Chairperson Tom Adamski of Manhattan, New York, and input from Betty Beardmore, Miami, Florida, and the Board. This fine program titled “Politics, Economics, and Nursing Care” addressed the most current clinical and management issues affecting the overall health care of the Veteran patient, and presented topics that were impacting nursing care in the Veterans Administration Medical Centers nationwide. Old friends who had attended every NOVA annual meeting met with newcomers to the Washington scene, and shared a mutual awe for the experience of meeting legislative staff at the traditional NOVA Reception held in the Rayburn Building. NOVA’s President Elaine Lloyd
addressed a constituency of experienced NOVA Advocates November 8th at the Washington Hilton.

The essence of her message was contained in the following excerpt from her opening comments: “Each year that NOVA exists we become a stronger voice for ourselves, for VA nursing and in the broader nursing community. We are gradually taking our equal place among the various nursing groups who exist for a variety of reasons such as specialty practice, education or administrative interests, and in our case, Nurses employed by the largest nursing service in the Western World, the Veterans Administration. In the United States when the opinion of the nursing community is solicited the American Nurses Association is often asked because the ANA represents over 600,000 nurses. Today when the opinion of the VA Nurse is desired there is another avenue for that voice to be heard and that is through NOVA. We have the potential to speak for 30,000 Registered Nurses. We must create the climate so that we can be heard. Later this month I will represent you at the Nursing Organization Liaison Forum which is a forum of Nurses representing 40 to 50 Nursing Organizations who will have input about broad Nursing Issues to the ANA House of Delegates. As we strengthen as an organization we have many challenges ahead of us. The challenge to increase our membership, for we must, if we are to survive as an organization, the challenge to attract more staff nurses, the challenge to maintain our fiscally sound base, and the challenge to venture into new territory. I trust you will continue with your vigilance of our organization; to question the Board, to understand its decisions, and to push for clarification when you do not understand. Many NOVA members write to the National Office about their concerns. Some are issues that NOVA cannot address, others we can. Please continue to be responsive, for it is only when we hear from you that we know we are serving you well.”

It was with profound admiration that the participants received the moving address of the “Experiences of a Nurse POW” by Col. (Ret.) Ruby Bradley. NOVA gave Col. Bradley the Public Service Award on behalf of the World War II Nurse Prisoners of War, and Col. Bradley gave NOVA a renewed pride in the profession of nursing. Nothing could have been more timely than Nora S. Kinzer, Ph.D.’s topic, “The Women Veteran and the VA Healthcare System.” Ms. Kinzer serves as Special Assistant to the Administrator of the VA, Washington, D.C.

On the legislative side of the program, Anthony Principi, Chief Counsel and Staff Director, Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, and Rufus Wilson, Staff Director and Counsel, House Veterans Affairs Committee spoke to “Legislative Plans for the Veterans Administration,” while Diana Mason, M.S.N., R.N., Herbert H. Lehman College, City University of New York addressed “Politics and the Bedside.” Economic concerns including “DRGs and the VA Resource Allocation Methodology” were discussed by the expert Marie L. Ashcraft, Ph.D., Director, Health Services Research and Development, VA Great Lakes Region, Ann Arbor, Michigan. State of the Art regarding “Computers in Nursing Service” was offered by Nancy O’Donohue, M.B.A., R.N., Associate Director of Nursing, Projects and Research, Kings County Hospital Center, Brooklyn, NY. A clinical issue of significance to all nurses, “Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome” was updated by Tom Adamski, M.S.N., C.R.N.A., R.N., Manhattan VA Medical Center, New York, New York; John Azzopardi, R.N., New York, New York; and Ronnie Leibowitz, M.A., R.N., Manhattan VA Medical Center, New York, New York.

Angela Beth Bohannon, RNC of the Topeka VAMC, chaired a special meeting focusing on issues surrounding U.S. Cadet Nurse credit towards retirement. Cadet Nurses were seeking to have legislation introduced granting them creditable time towards retirement in the VA system.

National election results were announced:
It was gratifying to note that 1456 NOVA members had renewed their membership, and NOVA had attracted 1072 new members, bringing the membership to a total of 2528 members. No finer tribute could have been paid to the founder of an organization than to name an award after that person, and that is exactly what was done to honor Barbara Chambers, the founder and first president of NOVA. Barbara was presented with the first “Barbara Chambers Award” in acknowledgement of her role in the birth of NOVA. The highly successful Fourth Annual Meeting drew to a close with a trip to Arlington National Cemetery for the National Veterans Day Ceremony. NOVA participated with the laying of a wreath inscribed “NOVA Honors Women Veterans” at the military nurse statue.

1985

NOVA entered 1985 with a call for action. During 1984 there had been a great deal of discussion in the media concerning various methods of trimming the federal budget. Many of the recommendations promised to jeopardize the status and security of federal employees. The legislative committee Chair, Noreen Sommer, was besieged with inquiries from across the nation asking, “What can we do to help?” NOVA members were advised to keep in close communication with their legislators at the local level by apprising them of their concerns of how the current recommendations for budget cuts would directly or indirectly affect health care delivery to the Veteran patient.

The March Board meeting in Washington, D.C. was a well-timed opportunity for the Legislative Chair and Board members to meet with key legislative persons. While in Washington NOVA expressed opposition to the reduction of FTE’s and 5% pay reduction. NOVA questioned whether increased productivity, good employee morale and retention of qualified RNs can take place when salaries are frozen and cut and other benefits are threatened each year. The Board pointed out that VA nurses are well aware that staff-patient ratios are lower in the VA than in the private sector. NOVA viewed many of the budget proposals as detrimental to the existence and the mission of the VA. The National Service Organizations and various legislative contacts were most supportive of NOVA’s views.

On April 24, 1985, NOVA was represented by Annemarie Leyden, Co-Chairperson of the Legislative Committee at hearings before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Committee on Veterans Affairs, House of Representatives, held on Capitol Hill. The purpose of these hearings was to discuss the impact on the VA of the President’s Private Sector Survey on Cost Control (Grace Commission) recommendation to reduce the number of Grade 11-15 positions in government. In Fiscal Year 1985 VA Professional Nurses were included in an exemption from reduction in numbers. Throughout these hearings, Ms. Leyden spoke with various Veterans Organization Representatives, VAMC Directors, and professional groups in order to express NOVA’s concerns about maintaining the quality of care delivered to Veteran patients if the VA is unable to recruit and retain qualified persons to give that care.

A NOVA Alert was sent to each Chapter President in June asking that they notify their members about concerns for the VA portion of the Federal Budget. Members were asked to
write legislators on the Budget Conference Committee who would be hammering out the final budget and deciding whether or not the VA budget would be reduced, causing a reduction in staffing for patient care. Also in June, NOVA responded to proposed drastic cuts in the separate VA Central Office budget with nursing personnel affected by a reduction of 50%. Letters were sent from NOVA’s President to legislators, to the Chief Medical Director in VACO as well as others about our opposition to any pay reduction or freeze, any increase in retirement contributions, and any reduction in VA Central Office Nursing Service Staff. VA nursing and patient care would be weakened with such cuts, so NOVA’s voice was heard on these issues.

HR 2663: Angela Beth Bohannon and the Topeka, Kansas Chapter succeeded in having Congressman Slattery of Kansas introduce legislation for the Cadet Nurses to get creditable time towards retirement. Committee hearings on the legislation were scheduled for the fall of 1985, with NOVA represented.

The membership recruitment project consisted of an extensive mailing to 6000 VA employed Registered Nurses was completed; the Board analyzed the results at the June Board meeting. Membership increased by 18% in the last three months with the Membership Recruitment project credited with many new members. The Board learned more about the membership in their efforts to keep numbers growing. The Long Range Planning Committee completed a Postcard Survey of members who had not renewed to gain information on why they hadn’t. An important finding was that 27% of those surveyed had left VA employment. The growth rate will be calculated taking that yearly loss into consideration. One of the 1985 projects of the Long Range Planning Committee was the development of an “Issues and Needs” Questionnaire. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the current status of NOVA and factors that might influence the future of NOVA. The results of this analysis will assist with planning long-range goals and objectives which will insure that NOVA’s actions can meet the needs of its members.

As the first session of the 99th Congress progresses, NOVA has been busy. The big item of business for the Congress is the federal budget. How the final budget will impact on the viability of the VA health care system can be influenced by NOVA. The VA nurses and their veteran patients have a great deal at stake. If we ever needed NOVA, the time is now. Not only have we entered the legislative arena to speak for 30,000 VA RNs, but we have also addressed ourselves to the broad educational needs of our constituency. The content of our chapter programs and national meetings validate that assertion. The opportunity for professional RNs with diversified academic credentials and clinical expertise to share that knowledge and work together for common causes is indeed a rare privilege. NOVA during the past five years has offered that privilege to each and every professional nurse in the largest nursing service in the Western hemisphere.

Summary—The First Five Years

Since its inception in 1980, the Nurses Organization of the Veterans Administration has grown from a small, dedicated group of nurses at the Hines VA Hospital in Illinois to over 2,500 members from all over the United States. A majority of these members belong to more than sixty chapters that have originated at VA Medical Centers. NOVA is governed by elected officers and a Board of Directors. The Board meets at intervals during the year to conduct the business of the organization. The day-to-day operations of NOVA are handled through the Executive Director and staff who are hired by and report to the Board. The Nurses Organization of the Veterans Administration holds an annual educational program and business meeting. The
The organization also publishes *News From NOVA* on a quarterly basis. This newsletter provides the membership with current legislative information, activities of standing committees, and Board of Directors, notice of annual meeting programs, and also serves as a forum for the membership to exchange ideas and concerns.

The legislative chairperson meets periodically with members of Congress and their staffs in Washington, D.C. The legislative ALERT system notifies the membership of legislative issues warranting action by the members. On January 26, 1982, NOVA President Barbara Chambers, along with nursing representatives from the Phoenix and Tucson VA Hospitals attended Oversight Hearings conducted by Senator DeConcini of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. These hearings were held in Arizona. On April 21, 1982, NOVA President Barbara Chambers testified before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee in Washington, D.C. Her testimony was in support of Senator Cranston’s Bill S-2389. It was the first time that a VA nurse from the rank and file had testified.

National Officers and the Board of Directors meet annually with National Veterans Service Organizations, to share concerns regarding Veteran healthcare issues. Liaisons have also been established with numerous other national nursing and health care organizations. NOVA, with a potential membership of 30,000 Registered Nurses, is recognized as a voice for nurses employed by the Veterans Administration, the largest single employer of registered nurses in the nation.

A History of NOVA: The First Five Years. Author: Vivian John; Historical Committee Chairperson: Vivian John; Members: Tom Fiala, Catherine Gawron, Constance LaPorte, Barbara Scherer, and Pat Sibley.

The author acknowledges Elaine Lloyd and Noreen Sommer for their advice and encouragement during the writing of NOVA’s five year history.


Forward

The members of the Disabled American Veterans are honored to join in recognizing the contributions of those nurses who staff the nation’s veterans’ medical facilities.

We know that nursing, in the best of situations, is a demanding and difficult job. Many of you have faced the challenge of doing that job – and doing it well – during a time of budget cutbacks, staff reductions and equipment shortages.

Many forces have fought long and hard to cut both the quality of VA health care and the quantity that is provided to veterans. In the end, it has been the nurses of NOVA who have formed the last, best barrier against substandard care for veterans.

More than any other category of health care professionals we know, VA nurses have continuously had to do the best possible job with the least possible resources. The fact that quality healthy care continues to be provided to veterans today is the most enduring testament to your legacy of professionalism, commitment, and care.
The First Five Years: A Summary

In the spring of 1980, as part of a nursing administration assignment, Barbara Chambers, Thomas Fiala and Chuck Napparalla proposed a nursing organization for the Veterans Administration with an educational and legislative thrust. After its inception, a core group of registered nurses at Hines VA Hospital in Illinois spearheaded the development of NOVA – The Nurses Organization of the Veterans Administration – “the bright, shining star.” The organization’s introduction was well timed. Nationally, there was a shortage of nurses. Public Law 96-330, which included salary increases for physicians but not nurses, was passed without any direct input from VA Nurses working in the medical centers. These events spurred the core group into drafting a constitution and bylaws for NOVA. Annual dues were established at $12.00. By the fall of 1980, information packets had been sent to chief nurses at every VA facility. The first Board of Directors, all from Hines VA, was designated: Barbara Chambers, President; Thomas Fiala, Vice President; Janet Norton, Treasurer; Vivian John, Corresponding Secretary; Nancy Schliefer, Membership Secretary; and Judith Paice, Catherine Gawron, and Isaac Wilson, Board of Directors.

By December 1980, 90 VAs, 52%, had responded to the mailings sent to each Medical Center. The Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer were bonded. A Legislative Attorney was consulted about organizational structure and bylaws. Fund raising projects began. As 1981 rolled around, an interim constitution and bylaws were developed. A newsletter was instituted and chapter starter kits were compiled. The first VAs to show an interest in chapter formation were Hines, Phoenix, and Albany. A wine and cheese reception, the first of many, was held at the Rayburn Building in Washington, D.C. for Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees. The NOVA Board of Directors met with Donald Custis, M.D., Chief Medical Director, Veterans Administration; Vernice Ferguson, R.N., M.A., F.A.A.N., F.R.C.N., Deputy Assistant Chief Medical Director for Nursing Programs, Veterans Administration; Paul Schaefer, M.D., President, National Association of VA Physicians; members of the Paralyzed Veterans of America, American Legion, and Veterans of Foreign Wars; Senate and Congressional staff.

The first annual meeting was held on September 21-22, 1981, at the Bismarck Hotel in Chicago. The meeting focused on budget, publicity, and the first election ballot. Also discussed were the survival of the VA health care delivery system, quality of care for the veteran patient, and enhancement of the nursing service. The keynote address was given by Gloria Hope, R.N., Ph.D., Deputy Director, Nursing Service, Veterans Administration. Other speakers included bill Brew, Minority Counsel, Senate Veterans Affairs Committee; Michael Howlett, Former Secretary of State of Illinois; and Edward Angrist, C.P.A., Groff Ballauer and Company. The first national election resulted in a representative cross-section of the VA: Barbara Chambers, President (Hines); Thomas Fiala, Vice President (Hines); Tom Adamski, Treasurer (Manhattan); Vivian John, Corresponding Secretary (Hines); Catherine Gawron, Membership Secretary (Hines); and Board of Directors Marilyn Abraham (Tucson), Elizabeth Lattell-Beardmore (Miami), Verdelle Bellamy (Atlanta), Jerome Freeman (Manhattan), E. Elaine Lloyd (Palo Alto), and Alice Tulanowski (Lyons).

Nineteen eighty-two was a year for organization. The Board of Directors defined legislative goals for the organization. Committees were organized and chairpersons elected: Elizabeth Lattell-Beardmore, Bylaws; Jerome Freeman, Program; E. Elaine Lloyd, Nominating; and Ronnie Leibowitz, Chapters. The Board of Directors reviewed several proposals from
executive management firms and selected Stygar-Willis Associates in March. Nineteen eighty-two was also a year of firsts. NOVA members were invited to speak at the Oversight Hearings conducted by Senator DeConcini (D-AZ) in January 1982. This was the first time a registered nurse, from the rank and file, gave testimony to Congress. In April, the President of NOVA testified before the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs. A legislative alert was issued to VA Nurses to support Senator Cranston’s Bill S.2389, which led to the eventual passage of Public Law 97-251, “The Veterans Administration Healthcare Programs Improvement and Extension Act of 1982.”

The second annual meeting, chaired by Jerome Freeman, took place September 30 – October 2, 1982, in Washington, D.C. with the theme: “Personal, Professional, and Political Growth.” Miss Vernice Ferguson was the keynote speaker. The NOVA constitution and bylaws were adopted. Another congressional reception was held at the Rayburn Building. By November, 30 chapters had been formed and membership was 2,315. NOVA had “gone national” only one year earlier.

NOVA’s board met in January with Veteran Service Organizations, including: Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, and Paralyzed Veterans of America, to share goals and concerns. NOVA also networked with other national nursing organizations at the National Federation for Specialty Nursing Organizations (NFNSO). By June, NOVA was suffering growing pains and developed strategies to stabilize the financial structure of the organization. Dues were raised to $25.00.

Barbara Chambers presided over her last Board meeting in September, 1983, just prior to the third annual meeting. The Program Chairperson was Elizabeth Lattell-Beardmore. Harry N. Walters, Administrator, Veterans Administration, was the keynote speaker at the annual meeting. Other speakers included Yvonne Moody, R.N., M.N., Chief Nursing Programs and Legislative Affairs, Veterans Administration, and Arizona Senator DeConcini. The first NOVA awards were presented at the meeting. The NOVA Recognition Award went to Jennie Umbell McKoy, Chief Nurse at Hines, for her early support of the organization. Loretta Swit received the Public Recognition Award for her positive portrayal of the military nurse in the television program “M*A*S*H.” E. Elaine Lloyd was introduced as the incoming President. NOVA had expanded to 2,661 members.

With its feet firmly planted on the ground, NOVA, in 1984, formed a Long Range Planning Committee, chaired by Linda McDonald of Seattle. Noreen Sommer chaired the Legislative Committee and made it a force to be seen and heard. NOVA worked for the passage of Women Veterans Recognition Week and investigated the possibility of disability insurance for members. The president, E. Elaine Lloyd, met and spoke with the Chief Medical Director, Dr. Donald Custis. The Board of Directors met with Miss Vernice Ferguson to share goals and strategies.

The fourth annual meeting was held in Washington, D.C. in November, 1984. Chaired by Tom Adamski, its theme was: “Politics, Economics, and Nursing Care.” A reception for NOVA members and legislative staff was held at the Rayburn Building in Washington, D.C. Colonel (Ret.) Ruby Bradley, World War II Prisoner of War, received the Public Service Award from NOVA. Nora S. Kinzer, Ph.D., Special Assistant to the Administrator, Veterans Administration, was the keynote speaker on: “The Woman Veteran and the VA Healthcare System.” Anthony Principi, Chief Counsel and Staff Director, Senate Veterans Affairs Committee; and Rufus Wilson, Staff Director and Counsel, House Veterans Affairs Committee, were members of a panel discussing “Legislative Plans for the VA.” A. Beth Bohannon chaired
a special meeting to focus on U.S. Cadet Nurse service credit towards retirement, an issue which eventually became law. Membership had peaked at 2,528. Barbara Chambers received NOVA’s first Barbara Chambers Award (named in her honor) for her leadership in starting and nurturing the organization during its first few years. An inspiring service at Arlington National Cemetery was attended by NOVA members who laid a wreath at the military nurse statue.

Nineteen eighty-five began with NOVA voicing its opposition to a proposed decrease in FTEs and a five per cent pay reduction. Nursing staff to patient ratios were already less than those in the private sector. The Board met in April to discuss the impact of the Grace Commission Report and to oppose the reduction of VACO nursing staff by 50%. A membership recruitment project sent 6,000 letters to potential members resulting in an 18% increase in membership. The Long Range Planning Committee sent a post card survey to nurses who had not renewed their NOVA membership and found that 27% of these nurses no longer worked for the VA. An issues and needs questionnaire was also developed by the committee.

In these past five years, NOVA had been busy. The legislative realm had been entered, and the voice of VA nursing had been heard. The educational needs of the NOVA constituents had been addressed. Constituents now had an arena to share clinical knowledge and work toward common goals. The same initial concerns of NOVA, including staffing shortages, nursing satisfaction, and budget cuts impacting on health care for veterans, would remain vital concerns for the next five years.

1985

The second five years of NOVA history began with a clear shift towards an emphasis on legislative affairs. Following the 1985 meeting in Crystal City, VA, near Washington, D.C., Dorothy Kade, President of the Hines Chapter, wrote: “It is interesting to realize how closely we share the same concerns and the same frustrations from New York to California and all points in between.” The membership came to see itself more and more as a national group with a real power base to speak out and be heard on issues relating to needs of the VA nurse and the veteran patients. Along with concerns and frustrations were many good ideas and goals for political action.

At the Chapter President’s gathering prior to the 1985 annual meeting, Noreen Sommer, Legislative Chair, prepared those in attendance for their visits to Congress. She knew that Capitol Hill, with its endless miles of halls, corridors and rooms, could be an intimidating place. Since the first NOVA meeting in Chicago, there had been annual educational programs on legislative activities. This year, what had been learned about legislative activities met an immediate need and was put into practice. Such educational programs continue to the present as a part of each annual meeting, for there are new members every year who need to feel comfortable and knowledgeable visiting “the Hill.”

The officers for 1985-1986 were:

President: E. Elaine Lloyd (Palo Alto VAMC)
Vice President: Elizabeth Lattell-Beardmore (Miami VAMC)
Secretary: Verdelle B. Bellamy (Atlanta VAMC)
Membership Secretary: Lenore Manak (Loma Linda VAMC)
Treasurer: Lynna Smith (American Lake VAMC)
Directors: Kenneth Hall (Syracuse VAMC)
Vivian John (Hines, VAMC)
The Fifth Annual Meeting of NOVA, “VA Nursing: What Does the Future Hold?” took place November 7 – 10, 1985, at the Crystal City Marriott Hotel in Virginia. The program, chaired by Lenore Manak, focused on current clinical, managerial, ethical and political issues affecting the VA nurse and health care for the Veteran. Hazel W. Johnson-Brown, Ph.D., R.N., F.A.A.N., Director, Division of Governmental Affairs of the American Nurses Association, set the stage with her keynote address, “The Future is Now – Not When You Reach It!” A memorable highlight of the meeting was the presentation of the Barbara Chambers Award for outstanding contributions of time and talent to the organization. President E. Elaine Lloyd expressed the appreciation of the NOVA constituency to the Hines, Illinois nurses who founded NOVA in 1980 as the first national professional organization exclusively for VA Registered Nurses. Recipients of the award were Thomas Fiala, Catherine Gawron, Vivian John, Constance LaPorte, Barbara Scherer, and Pat Sibley. During the meeting, Senator Alan Cranston (D-CA) was presented with NOVA’s Public Recognition Award in acknowledgment of his intense support of the Veteran and his great desire to maintain and improve the VA Health Care System. In his acceptance speech, Senator Cranston said: “The [budget] situation is in the process of changing very dramatically and the problems created by the deficit make the situation all the more ominous.” His statement remains true today. NOVA hosted a Congressional reception for key legislators and their staff, as well as nurses from other organizations and VA Central Office Staff, on the opening evening of the convention. The meeting concluded with a trip to Arlington National Cemetery and participation in the impressive National Veteran’s Day ceremonies.

1986

Nineteen eighty-six was the year that a NOVA nurse successfully found a way through the legislative process. H.R. 2663, affectionately called “The Cadet Nurse Bill,” was introduced by the Hon. Jim Slattery (D-KS). The Bill amends Title 5 U.S. Code to credit time spent in the Cadet Nurse Corps during World War II as creditable for civil service retirement. The Bill was introduced in early 1986 and was signed into law by President Reagan on November 10, 1986. Angela Beth Bohannon, R.N., of the Topeka VAMC, struggled long and hard to see this legislation come to fruition. This stands as an example of what an individual nurse can do with “a little help from her NOVA friends.”

As the 1987 Budget Bill was being considered in Congress, NOVA and others successfully opposed a $507 million cut, preventing the loss of nearly 9,000 VA employees. Senate Bill 2197, providing for “early outs,” was unable to get out of Committee. NOVA also opposed this Bill, as those who retired early could not be replaced before 1991 and nurses could not support this concept. NOVA constantly remains alert to any similar proposals in Congress, with opposition to those that are not supportive of VA health care or VA Nursing. It was also in 1986 that a resolution, submitted by Jean A. Wilkinson of the New Orleans Chapter, suggesting overtime pay at the RN’s salary rate was passed. It would be 1989 before NOVA would succeed in having this provision appear in a bill before the 101st Congress. NOVA members are learning patience and power; legislation takes time.
NOVA’s Sixth Annual Meeting was held at the Fairmont Hotel in New Orleans on October 2 – 4, 1986. One hundred eighteen nurses participated in the annual program: “The Power of Nursing—Reality or Myth?” Claudette Morrissey chaired the Program Committee. One of the outstanding speakers was Tom Sherwood, R.N., M.A., M.Ph., M.Ed., Legislative Intern, U.S. Congress, House Budget Committee and Former Chief, Nursing Service Coatesville VAMC, who addressed the issues surrounding the achievement of power and complexities of power. The “Mardi Gras in October” party on the last night of the meeting was a perfect ending for the New Orleans setting.

The officers for 1986-1987 were:

President: E. Elaine Lloyd (Palo Alto VAMC)
President-Elect: Claudette Morrissey (Brooklyn VAMC)
Vice President: Verdelle B. Bellamy (Atlanta VAMC)
Secretary: Patricia A. Krull (Atlanta VAMC)
Membership Secretary: Lenore Manak (Loma Linda VAMC)
Treasurer: Lynna Smith (American Lake VAMC)
Directors:
- Kenneth Hall (Syracuse VAMC)
- Linda McDonald (Seattle VAMC)
- Carolyn S. Rose (Coatesville VAMC)
- Noreen Sommer (Palo Alto VAMC)
- Mae Williams (New Orleans VAMC)

1987

“We must expect that Congress will listen when we, as VA nurses, see that the delivery of health care to our nation’s Veterans is at risk.” This was the message of our President, E. Elaine Lloyd, at the end of 1986. Congress did begin serious listening in February of 1987, and continued to listen as testimony was presented in February, April and May. NOVA was invited by the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Veterans Affairs to present testimony on the VA Medical Fiscal Year 1988 Budget. The testimony, prepared by President E. Elaine Lloyd and Legislative Chair Noreen Sommer, was entered into the hearing record of February 4, 1987. An all out effort to voice concerns regarding the shortage of nurses, the growing problems of recruitment and retention of nurses, and the increased workload for nurses was made by the various Board members while they were in Washington in March. President E. Elaine Lloyd and President-Elect Claudette Morrissey met with Chief Medical Director John Gronvall, M.D., and Legislative Chair Noreen Sommer met with staff of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees to apprise them of the issues important to NOVA.

On March 11, 1987, several members of NOVA were in the Senate Gallery as Senator Frank Murkowski (R-AK) introduced legislation authorizing bonus pay for nurses. Although NOVA felt provisions of this bill might adversely affect the retention of skilled nurses, it was exciting to hear Senator Murkowski recognize the contributions of nurses. He called registered nurses “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.” He further acknowledged that: “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.”
History was in the making over the next few months. NOVA’s view on the major issues confronting VA nurses were presented by President Lloyd as she testified April 22, 1987, before the U.S. Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Hospitals and Health Care on the Status of Recruitment and Retention of VA Health Care Personnel. She again testified on May 21, 1987, before the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs. Themes throughout the testimony were the need for competitive salaries, tuition reimbursement, and realistic workloads. Did these themes sound familiar? Yes, our NOVA president kept reminding Congress of the 15 recommendations from the study mandated Congressionally by Public Law 96-330, “Recruitment and Retention of Nurses in the Veterans Administration.”

We had come this far on our own, presenting our concerns and issues before congressional committees. Image what we could do with a registered lobbyist! In July, 1987, we strengthened our Washington presence by relocating our National Headquarters to the Washington, D.C. area, and realized our dream of having a lobbyist in the person of our new Executive Director, George Degnon. Could we meet the challenges by Mr. Degnon and the Board immediately set out for us: to have NOVA double its membership in the coming year and represent more than half of our VA nurses by 1990? As he said: “This is a tremendous challenge, but in order to be credible, we must represent a majority of VA nurses – ideally all VA nurses – for in numbers, there is strength, from strength there can be change, and through change there will be meaningful progress.”

Since 1987, NOVA has been represented at the Nurses Coalition for Legislative Action (NCLA) by Bette Davis of the Washington, DC, VAMC. This group, comprised of over 50 nursing organizations, exchanges legislative information and endorses legislation which has an impact on greater nursing goals. History also had its price tag. NOVA dues increased by $1 per month to help defray the costs of moving to Washington, hiring a lobbyist, and preparing and presenting testimony. However, membership remained a bargain at $60.00 per year for all the professional representation members received.

In September, the last of our fall annual meetings was held. Beginning in 1988, the annual meeting would be held in the spring while Congress was in session. At the Seventh Annual Meeting in the Washington, DC Hilton Hotel September 10-11, 1987, our second President, E. Elaine Lloyd, concluded her pace-setting, four-year term. She was succeeded by Claudette Morrissey from the Brooklyn-St. Albans Chapter.

The officers for 1987-1988 were:

President: Claudette Morrissey (Brooklyn VAMC)
Vice President: Verdelle B. Bellamy (Atlanta VAMC)
Secretary: Patricia A. Krull (Atlanta VAMC)
Membership Secretary: Lenore Manak (Loma Linda VAMC)
Treasurer: Lynna Smith (American Lake VAMC)
Directors: Bette Davis (Washington VAMC)
            Linda McDonald (Seattle VAMC)
            Carolyn S. Rose (Coatesville VAMC)
            Sheila Savala (Cheyenne VAMC)
            Noreen Sommer (Palo Alto VAMC)
            Mae Williams (New Orleans VAMC)
Although the meeting was short – two days, because of the early 1988 meeting – it lived up to its theme: “Revolution in Health Care: Time for Action,” chaired by Verdelle Bellamy. Members from 21 states across the country were challenged by the speakers to keep abreast of the many changes in health care and to become actively involved in activities to publicize nursing’s agenda for our veterans. A panel of experts from service organizations related how they support nursing issues as they work toward maintaining and improving health care for veterans: Dr. John Gronvall, Chief Medical Director, speaking on “The Impact of Administrative Policy;” Nancy Sharp, Director of Practice and Legislation, The Organization for Obstetric, Gynecologic, and Neonatal Nurses, speaking on the imperative for legislative involvement; a panel of legislative staff from the House and Senate updating us on activity on “the Hill” related to veterans health care and VA nursing; and other speakers with hints to improve our recruitment and retention strategies. Miss Vernice Ferguson, Deputy Assistant Chief Medical Director for Nursing Programs, enthusiastically offered suggestions for balancing the issues of the day and presenting information factually to others. She summed up the then-current climate by saying “Nobody will live successfully in tomorrow’s world unless they are happy and comfortable with temporary systems.”

Noreen Sommer, Legislative Chair, presented a briefing to prepare NOVA members for their Congressional visits. Two important bills at this time were: 1) S. 9 before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, involving issues such as Saturday premium pay, tuition reimbursement, bonuses for hard-to-recruit areas, Chief Nurse representation on key committees, and salary restructuring; and 2) H.R. 2618 with similar provisions. A highlight of the 1987 meeting was the presentation of NOVA’s Distinguished Service Award to the Hon. Jim Slattery (D-KS), who sponsored the Cadet Nurse Bill. We were also fortunate to have the opportunity to view the replica statue for the Women’s Vietnam Memorial. We were able to forward a generous donation from NOVA to the project. Many “distinguished Americans,” such as the Statue of Liberty and Abe Lincoln attended our fun night, the Great American Party, coordinated by the Washington, DC chapter. As always, our serious, hard-working members – those flexible nurses – knew how to enjoy a party!

As 1987 was drawing to a close, it was clear that NOVA had the attention of Congress. NOVA had been identified as the source of expertise and guidance regarding the VA nurse by both House and Senate. We had been the single most visible organization pressing for reforms affecting recruitment and retention of VA nurses. Our new Executive Director challenged every member to take personal responsibility for getting involved in writing, calling, or visiting Congressmen. As he so aptly put it: “Participatory democracy takes time and effort. The decisions of government impact upon each of us every day. Isn’t it time that each NOVA member begins to impact upon the process of government?”

Thanks to NOVA input and action, as 1987 drew to a close, the House and Senate had passed legislation providing for Saturday premium pay; tuition reimbursement; recruitment and retention bonuses; Chief Nurse representation on policymaking and fiscal committees; and VA study of recruitment and retention issues such as pay comparability, pay differentials for evenings and nights, and flexible benefits. It was again time for the waiting game to see how the House and Senate Conference Committees would resolve their differences and agree upon a compromise bill.

1988
A January snowstorm closed many government offices, but the majority of the NOVA Board made it to their meeting in DC, where they challenged chapters to increase membership and win two free annual meeting registrations. President Morrissey also regretfully accepted the resignation of Linda McDonald from the Board of Directors and appointed, upon approval of the Board, Marcia Kiernan to fill the vacancy.

The nursing shortage crisis of 1980 that was an impetus for the birth of NOVA was again making headlines. In March 1988, at the request of the president and on behalf of NOVA, Noreen Sommer, testified before the Department of Health and Human Services Commission on Nursing where she addressed the issue and gave specific recommendations for retention of nurses. “A cadre of satisfied, enthusiastic, competent, and caring nurses will be our best recruiters for the future.” The first of five position papers supported the elevation for the Veterans Administration to an Executive Department at the cabinet level. The Chapters Committee was very active during 1988. Houston and Fresno applied for Chapter Charters, and other VAMCs requested information on chapter formation. We anticipated the April annual meeting with the knowledge that the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 2616 (later to be passed as P.L. 100-322, 5/20/88) which provided Saturday premium pay, nurse recruitment and retention bonuses, tuition reimbursement, and for the Chief Nurse to be a member of medical center policy making committees.

One hundred and one NOVA members from 21 states represented 33,000 VA nurses at the Eighth Annual Meeting April 14-17, 1988 in Seattle, WA, at the Seattle Sheraton Hotel. The program, “Nursing Today: The Future is Now,” was coordinated by Lynna Smith. Carol Lindemann, R.N., Ph.D., F.A.A.N., Dean, School of Nursing, Oregon Health Sciences University, Portland, OR, challenged NOVA members to prepare for nursing in the year 2000, asking “Will we be technology or knowledge workers, doers or thinkers?” She suggested that nursing is presently a stool with one leg, clinical practice. We must add other legs: ethical issues and cost containment. Valerie Robinson, R.N., M.S.N., C.N.A., Coordinator, Utilization Review and DRG, Salt Lake City VAMC, gave order to the complex Resource Allocation Model. We then got a glimpse of coming technology such as robots and sophisticated computers. Anne Lousteau, R.N., Ph.D., Assistant Dean of Academic Programs, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, presented trends in nursing school enrollments.

Carol Vipperman, Marketing Consultant, Carol Vipperman, Inc., Seattle, WA, addressed marketing strategies and challenged us to be achievers, not just sustainers. Robert Lindsey, Jr., VA Regional Director, Western Region, expressed his support for nurses and the importance of their participation in key management decisions. Miss Vernice Ferguson, Deputy Assistant Director for Nursing Programs, VA Central Office, gave a thought-provoking concluding presentation on the need for VA nurses to have a voice in planning our future: 1) what future we prefer, 2) what issues we are willing to work for, posture for, fight for and 3) what actions we must take to be responsible and responsive.

The Seattle and American Lake Chapters presented an award to Senator Warren G. Magnuson (D-WA) for his tireless efforts for 36 years on behalf of health care. He believed that as national health care in some form emerges, nurses must determine how and what kind of care they will give. NOVA lost a friend when Senator Magnuson died less than a year later. Due to the change in the annual meeting date from Fall to Spring, the Board decided that for Board members whose terms would have expired in 1988, terms of office would be extended for an additional six months. Throughout 1988, the NOVA Board was diligently working on many vital issues: the 1989 VA budget, bylaws, chapter starter kit, testimony, policy statements,
Chapter Charters, and the date and location for the 1989 annual meeting. Several policy and position statements were issued by the Board:

- The policy statement, *Drug Testing*, opposed random and pre-employment drug screening of health care workers and supported development of specific objective guidelines for establishing a reasonable cause of drug impaired job performance as well as a program of assistance for the impaired nurse.
- The policy statement, *Salaries and Cost of Living Adjustment*, recommended: 1) an increase in the Title 38 basic salary schedule for all grade levels of nurses within the VA and 2) nurse who are on special salary rates be given the annual Federal Employee Cost of Living Adjustment.
- A position statement, *Registered Care Technicians (RCTs)*, strongly opposed the proposal of the American Medical Association for high school graduates to receive three, nine, or eighteen months of training to execute physicians’ orders at the bedside. NOVA joined 46 other major nursing organizations to support a proposal that would 1) increase the time that registered nurses and licensed practical nurses spend with patients by reallocating resources and designing new staffing systems and 2) expand the overall pool of nurses who work in hospitals and long-term care facilities.

President Morrissey regretfully accepted the resignation of Sheila Savala, Member, Board of Directors, and the Board approved publishing the NOVA history every five years; Patricia A. Krull was designated Chairperson to compile NOVA’s second five-year history from 1985 to 1990.

In June, NOVA President Claudette Morrissey testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs. She addressed the issues of the nursing shortage as well as the recruitment and retention of VA nurses. Throughout the summer, NOVA activities continued with enthusiasm. The Membership Committee provided incentives to recruit new members, noting that “NOVA has become the Lion with a Roar, a voice in Congress which we all worked so hard to achieve.” In September, with input from NOVA chapters, testimony was presented to the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs. We were reminded once again that each VA nurse does have a voice in Congress. This hearing addressed the adequacy of resources to provide for quality patient care on a timely basis: recruitment, retention, supplies, medications, equipment and support staff. Also in September, NOVA submitted a letter concerning bonuses which was included in H.R. 5114 and a companion bill S. 2011. Throughout the fall session of Congress, the membership was informed of the progress of these significant bills through Legislative Alerts.

The Office of Personnel Management allowed payment of COLAs for nurses on special salary rates, an issue supported and promoted by NOVA. In October, Public Law 100-527 established the VA as the Department of Veterans Affairs. A productive, challenging year closed as NOVA set its legislative priorities in December. Reflection on the year raised the unanswered question of what will it take for all VA nurses to join the few who are willing to shape our destiny? As 1988 ended, the federal budget deficit took its toll on legislative issues of concern to NOVA. The Department of Medicine and Surgery was already almost $1 billion short of its need to meet existing responsibilities. The 100th Congress failed to come to agreement on the pay issues of H.R. 5114 and S.2011 that were crucial to recruitment and retention of nurses.
The stage was set for 1989. The Senate promised to place salary and pay issues of VA nurses high on its agenda for 1989. Since the whole process was to begin from scratch, NOVA’s highest legislative priority for the 101st Congress was Competitive Salary Rates for VA Nurses, beginning with revision of base pay rates for Title 38 registered nurses. Other issues of concern were to be: 1) nurses on special pay rates receiving the cost of living adjustment, 2) recruitment and retention bonuses, 3) removal of the pay cap on overtime pay for registered nurses, and 4) removal of restrictions on VA nurses seeking second jobs. In the vanguard of support for the creation of a Cabinet-level position for the Veterans Administration, NOVA was pleased to congratulate Edward J. Derwinsky as he became the first Secretary of Veterans Affairs on March 15, 1989.

Before the annual meeting in April, 1989, NOVA’s President Claudette Morrissey had testified on February 9 before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs regarding the budget. On April 6, testimony was submitted to the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs concerning recruitment and retention. In addition, two bills had already been introduced by the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Hospitals and Health Care: H.R. 1199 introduced by Representative Joseph Kennedy II (D-MA), and H.R. 901 introduced by Chairman George “Sonny” Montgomery (D-MS). On April 12, 1989, the Board of Directors and 25 NOVA members gathered in the gallery to hear President Morrissey’s expert testimony on H.R. 1199. President Morrissey reported to the Committee that in the midst of a national nursing shortage: “The VA is not competitive in salaries, benefits and working conditions to compete in the free market for this scarce human resource.” NOVA praised H.R. 1199 because it expanded upon current VA nurse salary schedule which rewards experience, education, and performance, and was consistent with the recommendations of the Secretary of Health and Human Services Commission on Nursing which included recommendations to “expand nurse pay ranges.”

Attending the hearing and observing President Morrissey present NOVA’s testimony was an exciting way to prepare for our annual meeting, starting the next day. One hundred and eighty three participants registered for NOVA’s Ninth Annual Meeting April 13-15, 1989, at the Quality Hotel Capitol Hill, Washington, DC. This was the largest attendance ever! The title of the program, chaired by Bette Davis, was “VA Nursing: The Challenge in a Changing Environment.”

The busy first day prepared participants for visits to “the Hill,” and ended with the members meeting legislators and staff from Veterans Service Organizations at the NOVA sponsored Congressional reception in the Rayburn Building. Part of the preparation for the legislative aspects of the program was a reference, “A Guide for Legislative Action,” written by Patricia McCorkle, Legislative Committee Member from the Wilmington VAMC, and Noreen Sommer, Legislative Chairperson. Among the legislators meeting and talking with NOVA members and VACO staff were Chairman George V. “Sonny” Montgomery (D-MS), Jim Jontz (D-IN), and Bruce Morrison (D-CT). The keynote speaker on the second day was Miss Vernice Ferguson, Deputy Assistant Chief Medical Director for Nursing Programs, Department of Veterans Affairs, who gave an inspiring address: “VA Nursing Service: Priorities and Programs in a Changing Environment.” She challenged NOVA to develop strategies and to act on issues of legislative importance.

The second day continued with speakers addressing the multitude of issues and challenges requiring action by VA nurses. Amidst all this serious talk, NOVA members and
guests enjoyed their “fifties” fun night organized by the Coatesville, PA, chapter. As cited in News From NOVA, it was “truly a ‘Blast from the Past!’” NOVA appreciated the opportunity to share the joy of this get-together with the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), who sponsored the social activity for the evening. Prior to the Ninth Annual Business Meeting, Angela Barron McBride, R.N., Ph.D., F.A.A.N., Professor and Associate Dean for Research, Development and Resources, Indiana University School of Nursing, Indianapolis, IN, and President, Sigma Theta Tau International, presented a thought-provoking address: “Orchestrating a Career in Nursing,” Rhetaugh Dumas, R.N., Ph.D., F.A.A.N., Dean, School of Nursing, The University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, MI, and President, The American Academy of Nursing, elegantly addressed: “Strategies for Nursing in Influencing Health Policy.” John J. Lee, regional Director, Mid-Atlantic Region, gave his perspective on how VA nurses should respond to the challenge of their changing environment. The luncheon speaker was Dr. John Gronvall, VA Chief Medical Director, who spoke about the need to make the VA visible and known as an active, viable participant in the world of health care.

Included in the business conducted was the awarding of Chapter Charters, adoption of revised bylaws and the announcement that we had 1,669 members as of April 1, 1989. The Houston VAMC Chapter had registered 71 new members. Increasing membership remained a high priority goal.

The officers for 1989-1990 were:

President: Claudette Morrissey (Brooklyn VAMC)
President-Elect: Noreen Sommer (Palo Alto VAMC)
Vice President: Verdelle B. Bellamy (Atlanta VAMC)
Secretary: Patricia A. Krull (Atlanta VAMC)
Membership Secretary: Lenore Manak (Loma Linda VAMC)
Treasurer: Lynna Smith (American Lake VAMC)
Directors:
  - Bette Davis (Washington VAMC)
  - Simone Guenette (Providence VAMC)
  - Marcia Kiernan (New Orleans VAMC)
  - G. Sue Kinnick (Topeka VAMC)
  - Carolyn S. Rose (Coatesville VAMC)

We concluded our ninth annual meeting in what had been, as President Morrissey said, “truly our most active legislative year to date.” Bette Davis of the Washington, DC Chapter assumed the Legislative Chair position. Former Chair and President-Elect Noreen Sommer was commended for six years of outstanding service to NOVA as Legislative Chair. As we neared the halfway mark in 1989, H.R. 1199 had been passed by the House and S. 947 had been introduced to the Senate by Senator Alan Cranston (D-CA). A long struggle was ahead as compromises would be needed to reach consensus on a final bill regarding issues of vital concern to VA nurses.

In April 1990, we will gather for the 10th Annual Meeting in Atlanta, GA. It will be another milestone for NOVA as we celebrate, acknowledge, and reflect on the past 10 years. Certainly during the second five years of NOVA, we honed our legislative skills. We moved from the thrill of being asked to present testimony to the expectation that no VA legislation would pass without the testimony of NOVA.
Five years ago, it was stated in NOVA’s history: “If we ever needed NOVA, the time is now.” This sentiment continues to be timely. However, we must remember that NOVA can best impact future legislative issues only with the support of each and every VA professional nurse.


(End of published NOVA histories)

1990

NOVA began the year by presenting written testimony for the record on the President’s FY 1991 VA Budget Recommendations to the House and Senate VA Committees’ Hearings held February 8 and 23, 1990. NOVA member Mary Ann Mackin’s Congressman, The Honorable Doug Walgren of Pennsylvania, introduced a bill in the House of Representatives on February 7, 1990 to place part-time Title 38 employees of the DVA on an equal footing with all other part-time federal employees. NOVA member Dorothy Lawson continued to work with Congressman Jim Slattery on H.R. 3280 to provide benefits for Cadet Nurses who retired before 1986.

Noreen Sommer became NOVA’s fourth president at the Tenth Annual Meeting and Anniversary Gala at the Buckhead Holiday Inn in Atlanta, Georgia April 19 – 21, 1990. The agenda focused on strategies for influencing decision making and strengthening the environment for veteran healthcare in the next decade. A record number of over 200 participants heard Lucille Joel challenge NOVA to develop an agenda for action in setting priorities for nursing in the 21st century. Gloria Donnelly, R.N., Ph.D., F.A.A.N., Chair and Associate Professor, Department of Nursing, LaSalle University, Philadelphia, provided participants with an opportunity to determine their preferred style of functioning and an appreciation of how to use different styles to their benefit. The first annual poster exhibition was held, with fourteen poster exhibits at a wine and cheese reception.

Informative presentations were also given by Mary Long, R.N., Vice President of Government Affairs, Arthritis Foundation National Office and Second National Vice President, American Nurses Association; Donald B. Thompson, Southeast Regional Director for the DVA; and the Honorable J. Roy Rowland, M.D., Member, Committee on Veterans Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives. Positioning nursing for the 90’s was highlighted by discussion panel. Bobbie Vance, R.N., C.N.A.A., M.S.N., Chief Nursing Service, Atlanta, moderated the panel which included Clair Martin, R.N., Ph.D., Dean and Professor, Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing, Emory University; Mary Woody, R.N., M.A., F.A.A.N., Associate Hospital Director and Director of Nursing, Emory University University Hospital; Jamesetta A. Halley-Boyce, R.N., M.A., Chief, Nursing Service, VAMC Brooklyn; and Jane O’Donnell, R.N., C.N.A.A., M.S.N., Chief, Nursing Service, VAMC Gainesville.

Vernice Ferguson, R.N., M.A., F.A.A.N., F.R.N.C., Deputy Assistant Chief Medical Director for Nursing Programs, DVA, joined President Morrissey and Atlanta Chapter President Sarah Myers in cutting a birthday cake commemorating NOVA’s 10th birthday. The annual luncheon provided a fitting close to two and a half days of stimulating, challenging programming. NOVA was fortunate and honored to have the Honorable Edward J. Derwinski,
Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs, as the annual luncheon speaker. Secretary Derwinski’s forecast for VA was one of change as the department realigns resources. His support for VA nurses was evident as he commented on how much he learns from listening to nurses. Following the luncheon, Awards Chair Verdelle B. Bellamy presented the Paralyzed Veterans Association of Florida with its Annual Distinguished Service Award.

NOVA presented testimony at the first public hearing of the VA Commission on the Future Structure of the Veterans Health Care on June 20, 1990, in Washington, DC. On July 11, 1990, Legislative Chair Bette Davis presented oral testimony for President Sommer at the hearing before the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations on “The Status of the Child Care Centers.” On August 28, President Noreen Sommer testified on “Issues Relating to Delivery of Health Care by the Dallas, Texas, VAMC” also for the House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. NOVA participated in the ANA Convention where Vice President Verdelle Bellamy represented the NOVA President in the opening ceremonies procession of nursing organization presidents.

The NOVA Board of Directors selected The Jefferson Group, a Washington, D.C.-based Government and Public Affairs company to provide association management and related services beginning July 1, 1990. NOVA headquarters moved to Washington, D.C., with a new Executive Director, Julie Susman. NOVA had 90 chapters, 8 new, and 23 pending. NOVA annual dues were $60.00.

The excitement of a great accomplishment was realized during the first week of August 1990, with the passage of the Department of Veterans Affairs Nurse Pay Act of 1990, rewarding NOVA’s persistence and patience. President Bush signed the bill into law on August 15, 1990. The VA Nurse Pay Bill of 1990 (PL 101-366) established a system of competitive pay for VA nurses to improve the VA’s ability to recruit and retain RNs and certain other categories of health care personnel. It allowed local VA medical centers to offer salaries competitive with those offered by other health care facilities in the same local market, taking into account other employee benefits, including non-monetary benefits. This approach offered a consistent annual system that can respond quickly, and more frequently if a need is indicated by changing local conditions. PL 101-366 provided for nurse pay grades to be based upon local labor market area survey data of the Bureau of Labor Statistics if available; otherwise, the facility director would collect data of local facilities using the BLS methods. It prohibited the VA from making changes in pay rates that would result in the VA being the remuneration leader in local areas. It provided that the maximum rate of pay in each grade is not more than 133% of the minimum rate paid in that grade. When the maximum is non-competitive for recruitment and retention purposes, however, the Secretary may increase the minimum up to 175% of the minimum rate of basic pay in that grade. It required the VA facility director to consider survey results when federal employees are scheduled to receive a cost of living adjustment, when BLS releases a new industry wage survey or the relevant labor market, and at any other time the director deems it necessary.

It provided that a nurse transferring to another VA would remain in the same grade and step, but be paid at the salary rate applicable to that grade and step at the new facility. It provided that all head nurses receive additional pay equivalent to a two-step increase while serving in that position. It also required the Secretary to submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs (for the next three years) a report on whether and to what extent local directors granted COLAs, coincident with COLAs for other federal civil service employees, or the basis for not providing an answer. It also provided cash bonuses (up to $2000) for RNs upon certification in a
recognized nursing specialty in which the nurse is assigned, and for exemplary job performance or job related achievement. It eliminated the cap on overtime pay by providing that any nurse’s overtime rate would be 1.5 times his/her hourly rate of basic pay. It revised VA’s authority to enter into agreements for sharing scarce medical resources, authorized extending the temporary full time appointments of students pursing academic degrees in certain health care fields, and established a new program to provide educational assistance to students in health professions who were eligible reservists under the Montgomery GI Bill, in return for subsequent service with the VA.

In October 1990, NOVA wrote a letter to Secretary Edward J. Derwinski supporting his actions to investigate the allegations raised regarding the Cleveland VAMC on the ABC-TV Show “Prime Time” which aired September 27, 1990. Congress included $10.6 million for VA’s Health Professional Scholarship Program for FY91, $1 million more than appropriated for FY90, and placed it in a separate account. NOVA’s testimony on child care in VA facilities may have provided an additional boost for a comprehensive child care bill included in the FY 1990 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act that addresses the critical need for child care in the U.S.

Legislative priorities continuing at the end of 1990 included:
   extending Saturday and Sunday premium pay to all licensed practical or vocational nurses and nursing assistants,
   allowing re-employment of retired VA nurses without reductions in pay, allowing outside employment, exploring the options and support for cadet nurses retired before 1986, and part-time VA employees’ retirement equity.

NOVA endorsed “The Price of Peace,” the FY 1991 Independent Budget for Veterans Affairs, a budget formulated and presented to Congress by a coalition of Veterans Service Organizations. NOVA also endorsed an educational brochure developed by the Nurses Coalition for Legislative Action for lobbying Congress to appropriate money for nursing education and research.

NOVA closed 1990, celebrating a decade of excellence and commitment to caring. NOVA’s successful and intensive lobbying represented a significant victory for NOVA and for all who supported this legislation.

The officers for 1990-1991 were:
President: Noreen Sommer (Palo Alto V AMC)
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Secretary: Patricia A. Krull (Atlanta VAMC)
Membership Secretary: Sadie Thomas (Allen Park VAMC)
Treasurer: Carolyn S. Rose (Coatesville VAMC)
Directors: Bette Davis (Washington VAMC)
           Simone Guenette (Providence VAMC)
           Barbara Hamilton (Little Rock VAMC)
           Marcia Kiernan (New Orleans VAMC)
           G. Sue Kinnick (Topeka VAMC)
           Maura Farrell Miller (Miami VAMC)

1991

Noreen Sommer was the first NOVA President to meet in the offices of the first Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Secretary Edward J. Derwinski. She expressed the
dedication of NOVA and VA nurses to the quality care of veteran patients. Another historic moment occurred when NOVA was honored by Chairman G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. Chairman Montgomery presented NOVA with a Red Line copy of the Nurse Pay Act of 1990. This red lined copy is a framed ceremonial, limited edition of the first and last page of the bill as signed by House Speaker Thomas Foley, President Pro Tempore of the Senate Robert Byrd, and President George Bush. President Noreen Sommer submitted NOVA’s testimony on the Fiscal Year 1992 Budget to the House and Senate Committees on Veterans Affairs in February, 1991. President Sommer’s testimony emphasized the importance of VA health care as a most basic need for our nation’s veterans and that inadequate VA appropriations have jeopardized the quality and quantity of VA health care.

NOVA’s Eleventh Annual Meeting convened at the Crystal City Marriott Hotel April 18 – 20, 1991. Dr. James Holsinger, CMD, VHA, opened Legislative Day with a brief outline of VA goals and priorities: 1) health care for veterans, 2) education, 3) research, and 4) back up for the Department of Defense. Dr. Holsinger viewed the VA as exchanging some acute care beds for more long term care beds in the future, and stated that the VA has the opportunity to “blaze the trail of care for the elderly.” Yvonne Moody, M.S.N., R.N., Deputy Director, VA Nursing Service, highlighted the pilot project being conducted at 21 VA facilities aimed at eliminating shift rotation, and discussed multiple and continuing efforts of implementing the VA Nurse Pay Act and of enhancing the leadership role of VA nurses. Over 80 members, representing 18 states, visited their Congressional representatives, including members of the VA and Appropriations Committees. Rhetaugh Dumas, Ph.D., R.N., F.A.A.N., planted seeds for NOVA’s strategic planning when she gave the keynote address. Dr. Dumas is currently a member of the VA Commission on the Future Structure of Veterans Health Care.

The recipient of NOVA’s Barbara Chambers Award was Verdelle B. Bellamy, Associate Chief, Nursing Home Care Unit, Atlanta VAMC, for her long and distinguished service to NOVA, who completed service to NOVA as the last remaining member of NOVA’s first elected board. The recipient of the Professional Nurse Award was Margaret Kruckemeyer, Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist, Dayton VAMC, for her sustained professional excellence.

President-Elect Bette Davis and Lee Ann Mayo, NOVA’s Associate Director, attended the House VA Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations hearing on April 26, 1991 to review the delivery of veterans’ benefits and services in Washington, D.C. by the DVA. NOVA President Noreen Sommer prepared a statement for the Commission on the Future Structure of Veterans Health Care dated 5/22/91 addressing the administrative placement of nurse executives. It was NOVA’s recommendation that the Chief Nurse executive of the entire VA be elevated to the position of Associate Director of Nursing for Patient Services. NOVA further recommended that at the local level, the Chief Nurse position be realigned to a position parallel to the Chief of Staff, as an Associate Director of Nursing. President Sommer’s testimony highlighted the success of the Columbia, Missouri VAMC pilot project, implemented in August of 1988, which demonstrated the direct correlation between the realignment of the Chief Nurse and the effectiveness of the enhanced communication level between the new management structure in the decision making process.

In response to preliminary data regarding follow up of implementation of the Nurse Pay Act of 1990, Associate Director Lee Ann Mayo initiated a coalition with the American Nurses’ Association and the Paralyzed Veterans of America. A joint memo dated 5/24/91 was issued to DVA nurses. This coalition met with staff from VACO and the House and Senate VA Committees. Based on these meetings, Congressman G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery, Bob Stump,
and John Paul Hammerschmidt sent a letter on 7/30/91 to Dr. Holsinger urging the establishment of an advisory group or working group of nursing personnel from VA to “grapple with such issues as pay compression in the Intermediate and Senior grades and career mobility under the new pay system.” NOVA supported this concept.

On July 31, 1991, Secretary Derwinski announce the elevation of the position of Vernice Ferguson to Assistant Chief Medical Director for Nursing Programs. NOVA had been extremely active advocating the elevation of the Chief Nurse position at Central Office and in the field. On August 21, 1991, President Noreen Sommer presented testimony to the House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, presided by Subcommittee Chair Lane Evans (D-IL), on the delivery of benefits and services to women veterans. In her testimony, President Sommer stated NOVA’s commitment to providing quality care to all veteran patients. She also highlighted NOVA’s history of support for Women Veterans. The Cadet Nurse Bill was reintroduced as HR1752/S827. This bill would allow time spent in the Cadet Nurse Corps during WWII as credible for federal civil service retirement purposes. Similar legislation was passed in the 99th Congress (PL 99-638). However, there was no provision to make this law retroactive. The current bill is to seek equitable compensation.

NOVA completed a member survey in 1991, identifying adequate nursing staff and support services as top concerns of members. On December 5, 1991, NOVA President Noreen Sommer and President Elect Bette Davis received a warm reception meeting with Congressional Committees and Central Office staff in December, pressing NOVA’s message of quality care for the veterans and a quality environment in which nurses provide care. NOVA made every effort to lead and respond rapidly to issues affecting VA nursing and health care. Throughout the day, similar themes and topics recurred with the various groups, including budget, appropriations, Commission Report, locality pay system, cost of living allowance, cash awards, transfers, Nurse Pay Task Force Recommendations, grades/steps, pay retention, surveys, shift rotation, FTEE, quality care, Weiss Report, computerization, access/eligibility, Hospice care, and overall health care reform.

Meeting with Dr. James Holsinger, Chief Medical Director and Vernice Ferguson, ACMD for Nursing Programs, NOVA discussed VHA’s overall health care agenda as well as a need for follow up on the Nurse Pay Task Force Recommendations just received by Dr. Holsinger from the VA Personnel Office and the upcoming 1993 budget. The discussions expanded when the entire NOVA Board had the pleasure of meeting with Ms. Yvonne Moody, Deputy Director for Nursing Service. Implementation of the Nurse Pay Act was high on the agenda. Also reviewed was the pilot project increasing the number of nurses which would reduce the amount of shift rotation. NOVA also met with Veterans Service Organizations to discuss legislative priorities, including Paralyzed Veterans of America, The American Legion, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The officers for 1991-1992 were:
President: Noreen Sommer (Palo Alto VAMC)
President-Elect: Bette Davis (Washington DC VAMC)
Vice President: Lynna Smith (American Lake VAMC)
Secretary: Sally E. Nutter (American Lake VAMC)
Membership Secretary: Sadie Thomas (Allen Park VAMC)
Treasurer: Carolyn S. Rose (Coatesville VAMC)
Directors: Louise Bristol (Coatesville VAMC)
1992

Based on a request by Democratic Senator Alan Cranston, Chairman, and Senator Arlen Specter, Ranking Republican Member of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, the General Accounting Office began studying the effect of the implementation of the Nurse Pay Act of 1990. This action was taken in response to the concerns expressed by NOVA and other nurses. NOVA shared information with GAO and the Congress regarding this issue.

In President Noreen Sommer’s testimony to the House Veterans Affairs Committee on February 19, 1992, and to the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committees on February 27, 1992, she firmly stated that NOVA’s objective for quality care for the veteran patient would require proper funding or care would be restricted. NOVA was extremely dismayed to realize that funding had not been included in the FY 1993 proposal to continue the very successful pilot project to eliminate shift rotation. Pilot 798, originally funded for 1991 and to be continued in phases over five years, would reduce the need for the day time RN staff to rotate to off tour evenings, nights, and weekends. Funding was absent in 1992, therefore, in the budget testimony, President Sommer stated “NOVA strongly recommends funding for 1,100 RN FTE for FY 1993 to improve the nurse-patient ratios and to ensure shift stability for all VA RNs.” In addition, the testimony reflected the serious shortage of funding for nurse pay. On other issues, NOVA urged the Congress to adequately fund computerization at the point of care to provide the highest level of care quickly and efficiently and supported the continued expansion of the automated unit dose dispensing system.

Maura Farrell Miller was the program chair for the Twelfth Annual Meeting April 9 – 11, 1992 at the Sheraton Gunter Hotel in San Antonio, Texas. Mr. Jose Coronado, Director of the Audie L. Murphy Memorial VA Hospital greeted the program attendees, showing support for NOVA and setting the tone for an enjoyable and positive meeting. Patty L. Hawken, Ph.D., R.N., F.A.A.N., Dean and Professor for the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, gave the keynote address, “VA Linkages with Schools of Nursing.” Her model of shared resources between the VA and the University was innovative and provided information to develop similar programs at VAMCs across the United States. Constance Captain, R.N., Ph.D., Associate Chief Nurse for Research at the Audie L. Murphy Memorial VA, also addressed the group with a thought-provoking insight into the research process. Terri Gaffney, R.N., M.S.N., Field Representative for Practice, of the American Nurses’ Association, presented “Nursing’s Agenda for Health Care Reform.” Ms. Beverly Freeman, R.N., M.S.N., Chief, Nursing Service, led the group on a guided tour of the Audie L. Murphy Memorial VA Hospital.

Judy L. DeMers R.N., M.Ed., a member of the Commission on the Future Structure of Veterans Health Care, gave a report on the Mission Commission. The commission’s recommendations included elevating the position of Chief Nurse in line with the hospital Chief of Staff and Assistant Director positions. This recommendation was in support of NOVA’s legislative goals for elevation of the Chief Nurse position. Other recommendations included improved access to care, simplifying eligibility, providing stable funding levels, and implementing a blueprint for quality in the development of a total quality management system. Kathryn Daane R.N., M.S.N., Chief Nurse, Hines VAMC, inspired participants with “Elevating
the Position of Chief Nurse: Report of the Columbia, MO Pilot Study.” In her presentation, “Meeting the Challenge of VA Eldercare,” Marsha Goodwin, R.N., M.S.N., Director of Extended Care and Grants Management Services in VACO, presented an uplifting view of the programs and services coordinated by the Department of Extended Care. Joan A. Furey, M.A., R.N., in “Care of Veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder” outlined the definition and differentiation including symptoms and diagnostic criteria. Susan Mather, M.D. presented a look at “National Female Veterans Programs,” beginning with the history of women in the military from Pre-WWII to the Persian Gulf.

At the NOVA meeting, Bette Davis became NOVA’s fifth president, recognizing outgoing President Noreen Sommer for her outstanding service to NOVA. The St. Louis Chapter received the Most New Members Award, and the Palo Alto Chapter received the Most Renewed Members Award. Second and third place for most new members were (tie) Topeka and Washington DC, and (tie) San Francisco and Dayton. For the first time, NOVA provided a special area for Chapter goods to be sold at the annual meeting. NOVA officially changed its name from Nurses Organization of the Veterans Administration to Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs. NOVA accepted resolutions covering overtime compensation for RNs, on call pay, cigarette smoking, and pay for supervisors.

The NOVA Distinguished Service Award was presented to Joseph L. Kurzejeski, the director of the Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans Hospital, Columbia, MO. His progressive management style has been particularly demonstrated in relation to the profession of nursing in the VA Health Care System. He supported the elevation of the Chief Nurse to an Associate Director Level, conducting a successful pilot program. Vernice Ferguson, R.N., M.S.N., F.A.A.N., F.R.C.P., ACMD for Nursing Programs presented “Being Heard.” Ms. Ferguson had announced that she would be leaving her post at the end of 1992 after serving as the leader of the nation’s largest nursing service since 1980. During her tenure, she has publicly stated numerous times the necessity for nurses to join and to actively participate in the professional nursing organizations such as NOVA. She has also always been available to NOVA and VA nurses to discuss the importance of a variety of issues which affect the VA nursing environment. Her ability to rally the troops has taken the VA nursing profession to new heights. NOVA publicly proclaimed that Vernice Ferguson has been a very strong leader and a very special friend, and honored her with a special award for her distinguished service and leadership as she completed her appointment in Central Office.

NOVA continued to be a driving force to keep nurse pay issues alive, pushing for needed changes in the locality pay system. President Bette Davis testified before the Hospitals and Health Care Subcommittee of the House Veterans Affairs Committee on April 29, 1992, on amendments to the Nurse Pay Act of 1990. At the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee hearing on S.2575, “Department of Veterans Affairs Nurse Pay Amendments of 1992” on June 3, 1992, President Davis emphasized NOVA’s concern over the pay compression and implementation problems that have continued and NOVA’s recommendations to enhance the locality pay system. President Davis stated that beginning salaries for entry grade nurses became competitive for recruitment purposes, while problems of non-competitive pay and pay compression remained or worsened for many career VA nurses in the upper grades. NOVA strongly encouraged its members to voice their concerns regarding nurse pay to members of Congress, emphasizing the message that NOVA has a voice and NOVA’s voice matters.

In a letter dated May 28, 1992, Dr. Robert H. Roswell, Associate Deputy Chief Medical Director for Clinical Programs notified NOVA that VACO would establish an executive search
committee “to assist us in identifying the best available candidates both within and outside the Department for our Assistant Chief Medical Director Position.” President Davis attended the Building Dedication Ceremony and Reception of the American Nurses’ Association new National Headquarters in Washington, DC, during National Nurses’ Week.

President Davis and Margaret Kruckemeyer presented testimony before the Senate VA Committee on July 2, 1992, regarding women veterans’ health care. Although there has been some improvement, NOVA shared the committee’s concerns and agreed with the GAO report. H.R. 5885, the “Women Veterans Health Programs Act of 1992” was introduced on August 12, 1992. On September 17, 1992, President Davis and Margaret Kruckemeyer also testified before the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the House Veterans Affairs Committee on the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace and VA health care for women veterans. In September, 1992, NOVA wrote a letter thanking Chairman G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery of the House Veterans Affairs Committee for his continuing interest and support for VA nurse pay issues, recommending an amendment to require extension of steps in each pay grade from 133 to 157 percent, and expressing concern regarding resumption of smoking in VA medical centers. NOVA also said farewell to Senator Alan Cranston, former Chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee.

The NOVA Board of Directors established a priority of creating and maintaining a strong fiscal foundation with a balanced budget and sufficient reserves to enable NOVA to continue and expand operations. NOVA signed an agreement with MBNA/INFS for a NOVA member Affinity Credit Card Program, and accepted advertisements to cover newsletter publication expenses. A Chapters Honor roll was initiated to encourage chapters to participate in a voluntary contribution effort to assist NOVA, and NOVA began exploration of an Educational Foundation. Dues were increased to $70.00 beginning October 1, 1992. In addition, NOVA was an active participant in the Executive Search Committee for the ACMD for Nursing Programs. President Davis wrote a letter to Gary Logan, Editor of DAV magazine, congratulating him for featuring a positive article on VA Nursing that depicted the need to engage in political work to be heard in Washington, in their November issue.

At its December 1992 board meeting, members participated in a panel discussion with Yvonne Moody, Deputy Director Nursing Programs, DVA; Bill Brew, General Counsel, Veterans Affairs Committee, U.S. Senate; Greg Matton, Professional Staff, and Tina Alvarado, Minority Director, Veterans Affairs Committee, U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Hospitals & Health Care; Philip Riggin, The American Legion; Frank Buxton and Dave Gorman, Disabled American Veterans; Susan Edgerton and Dennis Cullinan, PVA. This meeting became NOVA’s first legislative roundtable.

In the final days of the 102nd Congress, the Senate passed H.R. 5193, which became Public Law 102-585. This bill revised the nurse pay grade schedule, provided authority to carry out surveys of labor markets in determining rates of compensation for health care professionals, including nurses; and revised the basis for calculating the compensation of the corresponding health care positions. President Davis reminded NOVA members that the evolution of the nurse pay act and resolution of problems relating to its implementation proceed slowly, and stated that NOVA must keep repeating its message, effectively.

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President: Bette Davis (Washington DC VAMC)
Vice President: Lynna Smith (American Lake VAMC)
As of January 1, 1993, NOVA extended a farewell to The Jefferson Group and thanked them for their contributions during the two-and-a-half year stay, and began a new commitment with Washington’s oldest association management firm, William S. Bergman Associates. The firm has broad experience in building organizations like NOVA. This change positioned NOVA more positively for clearer opportunities for growth and recognition. NOVA’s new Executive Director is Sheridan Brinley, who has an extensive record in managing associations and legislative and communications programs over more than twenty years in Washington. NOVA’s exciting and productive program of legislative activities during the past eight months was instrumental in obtaining a fifth nurse pay grade, establishing a search committee for the next ACMD for Nursing Programs, developing new dimension in VA health care and research for women veterans, and addressing sexual harassment in the workplace. Overall, the passage of P.L. 102-585 demonstrates a positive response to the efforts of the NOVA members, as well as many others.

NOVA’s legislative priorities for 1993 include

- supporting appropriations that will fund quality Veteran health care;
- supporting restructuring VA health care programs to be an integral component of National Health Care Reform,
- promoting clarification of eligibility to improve access of veterans to health care, supporting quality health care programs for women veterans, wellness, and disease prevention,
- ensuring accurate implementation of nurse pay amendments in PL 102-585, providing nursing FTEE to eliminate pay compression problems,
- elevating the VAMC Chief Nurse position to the leadership triad,
- providing modern technological support for nursing care practice,
- employing sufficient numbers of ancillary personnel for clinical and non-clinical tasks to support patient care,
- supporting outside remuneration for professional activities by full time RNs,
- and ensuring financial support for education scholarships, tuition assistance, and career development.

Jesse Brown, former Executive Director of the Disabled American Veterans, is named the new Secretary of Veterans Affairs. He has been a friend to NOVA for many years and shares NOVA’s concerns about the direction of veterans policies and resources devoted to caring for those who have served our country in the military.
NOVA’s Thirteenth Annual Meeting was held at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C. from April 15 – 17, 1993, with 184 registered attendees. Speaker Mary Wakefield, Ph.D., R.N., Chief of Staff for Senator Kent Conrad (D-ND), provided an overview of the importance of nurses influencing health care policy, and offered guidance and information that assisted attendees to be more comfortable talking with legislators and staff. A panel, moderated by Legislative Chair Simone Guenette, provided more legislative information. Janet Coffman, Legislative Aid from the Senate VA Committee, presented some of Senator Rockefeller’s concerns and issues for DVA. Other panel members included Frank Buxton, Deputy Director VA and Rehab, The American Legion; Susan Edgerton, Health Policy Analyst, Paralyzed Veterans of America; and Dave Gorman, Assistant National Legislative Director for Medical Affairs, Disabled American Veterans.

Tina Alvarado, Minority Staff Director from the House VA Committee continued to build on the issues and encouraged nurses to become involved in the process. VA attendees visited members and staff on “the Hill” and shared with them what it is like to work as a nurse in the VA. The day ended with a Congressional Reception held in the House VA Committee Hearing Room, with Representative Sonny Montgomery and other legislators present. Hillary Clinton was holding task force meetings with Congressional staff during this time. Keynote speaker Donna Diers, M.S.N., R.N., F.A.A.N., The Annie W. Goodrich Professor and Chair, Adult Health Division at Yale University School of Nursing, gave the keynote address, “Influencing Health Care Policy.” She stated that the DVA is positioned to be a part of the solution to universal health care, and described the DVA nursing system as a recognizable political force as the country shifts more into long term and ambulatory care. Donald L. Custis, Associate Executive Director, Health, Policy Department, PVA, and Victor P. Raymond, Ph.D., Acting Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning, Department of Veterans Affairs, presented “The Future Structure of the VA Health Care System.”

Estelle Davison-Crews, M.A., M.S., Davison-Crews Seminars, presented “Women Working with Women & What Men Need to Know, Too,” a humorous discussion of the unique problems involved with a group of women working together. Sister Carol Taylor, C.S.F.N., R.N., M.S.N, Ph.D-C, Assistant Professor of Nursing, Research Scholar for the Center for Clinical Bioethics, Senior Research Associate, Center for the Advance Study of Ethics, Georgetown University, presented “Ethical Decision Making for the Elderly and Chronically Ill.” Donna Richardson, J.D., R.N., Director of Government Relations, ANA, presented “The Changing Role of Nursing with Health Care Reform,” stating that ANA needs NOVA to advise them of how to put the veteran into the nursing agenda for health care. Herschel Gober, Deputy Secretary for DVA, was the annual luncheon speaker, discussing changes in the DVA leadership, policies, and directions. Program participants also met Nancy Valentine, Ph.D., R.N., C.N.A.A., F.A.A.N, the new ACM for Nursing Programs.

The NOVA Veterans Award was given to David W. Gorman, Assistant National Legislative Director for Medical Affairs, DAV. The NOVA Distinguished Service Award was given to Yvonne K. Moody, R.N., Deputy Director for Nursing Programs, DVA, currently acting ACM for Nursing Programs. Most new member awards were given to Topeka VAMC (first place), Boston VAMC (second place), and Tucson (third place).

The NOVA Board approved conversion from a cash-based to an accrual-based accounting system beginning July 1, 1993, approved a new financial guidelines procedure, and reviewed the results of the On Call Resolution Survey. The data returned was so widely diverse at each facility that no patterns could be determined nationally. The board began strategic
planning for development of NOVA’s primary objectives to expand membership base, continue legislative focus, and provide financial stability to the organization. Deborah Beck became NOVA’s Executive Director.

On April 27, 1993, NOVA presented Congressional testimony for the sixth time within one year. This time, Senator Rockefeller, Chairman of the U.S. Senate VA Committee, invited NOVA to address the role of VA health care in national health care reform. NOVA was pleased to join with ANA to present joint testimony, as this was an opportunity for NOVA to support the concept of Nursing’s Agenda for Health Care Reform and to affirm the DVA as an integral component of national health care reform. Also contributing to the testimony were many VA chief nurses whose input was timely and valuable, and another indication that NOVA continues to strengthen its coalitions and partnerships. NOVA member Louise Stephens, M.S.N., R.N., Community Health Care CNS from the Dayton VAMC presented testimony on behalf of NOVA and ANA, an historical first.

On May 4, 1993, H.R. 1968, the Cadet Nurse bill, was reintroduced as “World War II Cadet Nurse Civil Service Fairness Act” by Kansas Congressman Jim Slattery. This bill would provide that periods of training in the Cadet Nurse Corps during World War II be made creditable for the federal retirement purposes with respect to annuitants and certain other individuals not included under PL 99-638. Senator Shelby from Alabama introduced a similar Senate bill, S.1120. NOVA President Bette Davis, Washington DC Chief Nurse Sue Hudek, and DC Chapter Board Member Nancy Lydon were among the more than 150 nurses attending a briefing on the President’s Task Force on National Health Care Reform, conducted by White House Senior Advisor Ira Magaziner at the Old Executive Office Building on May 5, 1993. The briefing featured President Clinton, HHS Secretary Donna Shalala, and ANA President Virginia Trotter Betts.

On May 14, 1993, NOVA submitted responses to the questions submitted by Senator Rockefeller to Louise Stephens, M.S., R.N., C.S., in follow up to the April 27 hearing. On June 23, 1993, President Davis testified before the House VA Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation on VA Provisions of Health Care to Women Veterans and Related Issues. The areas addressed were: training of health care professionals in the treatment of women veterans who have experienced sexual traumas, eligibility for care, the Women Veterans Coordinators Program, medical facility accommodations and availability of personal articles, and VA research relating to women veteran health. She also provided written testimony to the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs on the following Senate bills:

1. S. 1030 DVA Sexual Trauma Services: discussed the elimination of the time limits in sexual trauma reporting, eligibility priority for care, supporting the 800 number telephone service program to have a designated full time trained staff in providing initial crisis intervention, and referring to appropriate resources for veterans needing sexual counseling, and Women Veterans Coordinators Program.


3. S.1122 VA Health Professionals Education Debt Reduction Act: discussed the need for advanced practice nurses and incentives for education to attract staff to the VA. NOVA requested this legislation be expanded to include master degree-prepared nurses.

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4. S.454 Rural Health Care Clinic Program: discussed NOVA’s support for the rural health care clinic initiative, particularly the mobile health care services to eligible veterans living in rural and remote areas. NOVA recommended that VA expand this program to include veterans currently eligible for inpatient care as well as for outpatient care.

5. S.583 Adult Day Health Care in State Homes: discussed NOVA’s support for the adult day health care program which would extend VA’s authority to provide per diem payment to States for eligible veterans who receive services in State Veterans’ Homes.

6. S.1094 Veterans’ Hospice Service Act of 1993: discussed extending the aspects of the VA Hospice Program already operational and assisting the implementation of plans for improving services.

NOVA was one of seven national nursing organizations to co-host a reception held for Dr. Nancy Valentine, the new ACMD for Nursing Programs held on September 9, 1993 at the ANA Headquarters. Other organizations included the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, American Association of Critical Care Nurses, American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, National League for Nursing, and Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists.

Lynna Smith, NOVA’s President Elect and Margaret Kruckemeyer, NOVA’s Legislative Chair attended the National Federation for Specialty Nursing Organizations Legislative Training Internship Program September 26-29, 1993 in Washington, DC, and met with Tina Alvarado, House VA Subcommittee Minority Director. On September 30, 1993, President Davis, Lynna Smith, and Margaret Kruckemeyer met with DVA Secretary Jesse Brown and DVA Deputy Director for Nursing Programs Yvonne Moody to discuss the role of VA in National Health Care Reform.

Immediate Past President Noreen Sommer and President Bette Davis co-authored an article on the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs, which was published in the second edition of Policy and Politics for Nurses: Action and Change in the Workplace, Government, Organization, and Community by Diana J. Mason, Susan W. Talbott, and Judith K. Leavitt.

The officers for 1993-1994 were:

President: Bette Davis (Washington DC VAMC)
President-Elect: Lynna Smith (American Lake VAMC)
Vice President: Maura Farrell Miller (Miami VAMC)
Secretary: Carol Watt (Topeka VAMC)
Membership Secretary: Sadie Thomas (Allen Park VAMC)
Treasurer: Marcia Kiernan (New Orleans VAMC)
Directors: Laverne Aldrich (San Antonio VAMC), Louise Bristol (Coatesville VAMC), Vincent Elliott (Palo Alto VAMC), Barbara Hamilton (Little Rock VAMC), Louise L. Knight (Augusta VAMC), Margaret I. Kruckemeyer (VAMC Dayton)

1994

NOVA President Davis presented oral and written testimony on H.R. 4013 (formerly H.R. 3808), Legislation to Preserve VA’s Flexibility in Meeting its Medical Workforce Needs.
and draft legislation to authorize a pilot program for VA participation in state health reform plans before the VA’s House Subcommittee on Hospitals and Health Care Hearing on March 8, 1994, strongly endorsing the need for House passage. The passage of H.R. 4013 by the House on 4/28/94 in a 282 to 118 vote that cut across party lines if approved by the Senate would exempt VHA from personnel reductions for five years beginning 10/1/94. The bill represents a serious setback to the Clinton administration’s plan to downsize government.

The threat to the DVA’s viable existence was also being waged in the FY 1995 budget battle. The Senate’s recently passed budget included two amendments. One called for a $26.1 billion budget reduction in discretionary spending and the other placed a cap on Medicare and Medicaid entitlement programs, presenting a threat of a health care staff reduction of 5,000 and budget reductions. NOVA alerted the members to act on this issue and write their Congressional representatives.

- President Davis and NOVA member Barbara Zicafoose, Nurse Practitioner and Women Veterans Coordinator at the Salem VAMC each gave oral and written testimonies on Recent VA Actions to Improve the Provision of Health Care to Women Veterans and Related Issues before the House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Veterans Affairs Hearing March 9, 1994. NOVA presented recommendations for:
  - Development of guidelines for interaction of regional comprehensive health care centers with other VAMCs within the region;
  - Provision of clerical help and MAS support for new programs, clinics, centers, and registries;
  - Finer tuning of record keeping and monitoring of work;
  - Establishment of a clearinghouse for identifying female discharges from military services and processing service-connected rating; and
  - More national dissemination of women’s information to VAMCs, relying less on individual facilities to assume this work.

Prior to the annual meeting, a pre-program networking party was hosted by Vince Elliott. Thirty-five NOVA members rode on a motorized open air cable car on a three-hour tour of San Francisco. NOVA’s Fourteenth Annual Meeting convened April 14 – 16, 1994 at the Holiday Inn Financial District Hotel in San Francisco, California. Dr. Marlene Kramer opened the first day of our educational program, with her keynote address, “The Magnet Hospital.” Dr. Kramer captivated the attendees with her predictions for change nurses must face as health care delivery systems are restructured in health care reform. Dr. Kramer discussed the Clinton Health Care Reform Plan, quoting projections from the Congressional Record and HCFA. She predicted that reforms take a long time, and shared the following, “if you want to slow down the aging process, send it through Congress.” In her second presentation, “Case Management,” Dr. Kramer validated the need for advance practice nurses as providers of cost effective, quality care. Kathleen Bartlett, B.S.N., R.N., Lynn O’Brien, M.S., R.N.C., F.N.P, and Cheryl Tuckerman, B.S.N., R.N., presented “AIDS Case Management.” NOVA’s special interest groups met to discuss issues of common interest.

Richard Benner, Ph.D., described his “Clinical Excellence Model,” stating that most organizations train for and reward a minimal standard level of performance. He described stages of skill acquisition, from advanced beginner to expert and disengaged, incompetent performance. In his second presentation, “Implications for Organizational Development,” he shared leadership strategies for developing and rewarding expert practice. Maude Rittman, Ph.D., R.N., Associate
Chief, Nursing Service for Research, Gainesville VAMC, presented her adaptation of Benner’s model, suggesting the use of an interpretive approach as an alternative for preceptor education through the use of storytelling. The Post Traumatic Stress Disorder clinical team, composed of Rose Sandecki, M.S., R.N., Nurse Clinician for the Evaluation Brief Treatment Unit; Lily Adams, M.S., R.N., Nurse Coordinator at San Francisco Vet Center; and Joan Furey, M.A., R.N., former Associate Director for Education, National Center for PTSD, Menlo Park Division Palo Alto VAMC, provided an overview of PTSD and current treatment services. In addition, each of the Vietnam veteran nurses spoke of her Vietnam service, PTSD experience, and adjustment to civilian life. Joan Furey was recently appointed Director of the new Women Veterans Program Office, DVA. The Vietnam Veterans Association honored her with a reception on March 9, 1994 that was attended by NOVA President Bette Davis.

Chapter presidents met with President Davis to discuss the new plan for payroll deduction and union/NOVA interaction at stations. Ron Norby, M.S.N., R.N., Director Field Support and Clinical Integration Nursing Programs, DVA Central Office, Washington, D.C., presented “Restructuring: Adapting to the Changing Workplace.” He encouraged VA nurses to help restructure and create a system that focuses on illness prevention and health maintenance. Nancy Valentine, Ph.D., R.N., C.N.A.A., F.A.A.N, ACMD for Nursing Programs, described a vision for the VA as “a successful participant in the health care delivery system offering a full range of services enhanced by education and research benefiting veterans and the nation as a whole.”

The recipient of NOVA’s Professional Nurse Award was Donna S. Humes, Regional Chief Nurse, Southern Region. Throughout her twenty-seven year VA nursing career, she has made outstanding contributions to veterans’ health care and VA nursing by effectively assessing and making known nursing needs as well as enhancing the facilitation for resolution of those needs. Awards for service to NOVA were given to outgoing President Bette Davis, Awards Chairperson Patricia Krull, Board Members Barbara Hamilton and Sadie Thomas. By unanimous vote, Vernice Ferguson, R.N., M.S.N., F.A.A.N., F.R.C.P., was honored as NOVA’s First Honorary Member.

NOVA’s annual meeting provided a forum for NOVA members to discuss the implementation of the Nurse Locality Pay Act at their facilities. While many NOVA nurses reported to be satisfied with their salaries, numerous NOVA nurses stated that the implementation of nurse locality pay remains problematic. The Membership Retention Award was given to Topeka. The Most new member awards were given to Little Rock and Baltimore (tie, first place), Topeka and Salem (tie, second place), and American Lake and Boston (tie, third place). New chapters were chartered for Marion, Illinois; Indianapolis, Indiana; Bonham, Texas; and Newington, Connecticut. The board adopted a resolution on the Scope of Advanced Nursing Practice.

Lynna C. Smith became NOVA’s sixth President following the annual meeting. The board initiated strategic planning the areas of finance, communication, and membership, established a task force to continue monitoring locality pay issues, established a task force to review the draft of changes in the qualifications standards, and established a task force of Advanced Practice Nurses to offer assistance to VACO staff in the development of guidelines addressing the role, function, and privileging of Advanced Practice Nurses within the VA. This task force, Chaired by Janice Therien, M.H.S.A., R.N., Salem VAMC, worked to prepare guidelines for NOVA’s position on the scope of practice, practice agreements, prescriptive authority, salary differential, and qualification standards for APNs within the DVA. The agenda
for the board this year includes: the legislative priorities for 1994; strategic plans for membership development, communication, and fiscal management; development of special interest groups as councils, establishment of the NOVA Foundation for the purpose of education, scholarship, and research.

On April 24, 1994, TWX No. 94-04763-21 was sent to all VAMC Finance/Fiscal Officers concerning NOVA for authorization of membership dues payment via payroll allotment. Upon receipt of a properly completed NOVA withholding authorization form, the DVA Payroll Office will input code 4999. NOVA also established a NOVA mail group on FORUM. On May 10, 1994, NOVA member Janice Therien, M.H.S.A., R.N., represented NOVA at a breakfast reception sponsored by ANA and AONE in honor of the 16 nurses who serve in Congress and the Executive Branch of the U.S. Government.

Bette Davis represented NOVA at a luncheon following the third VA National Nursing Research Conference on June 3, 1994. NOVA member Margarethe Cammermeyer was presented with a plaque commending her exemplary service, personal courage, and commitment in opposing discrimination based upon sexual orientation by Dr. Nancy Valentine. Bette Davis also represented NOVA at a reception on June 7, 1994, in honor of Dr. Ada Sue Hinshaw by Friends of The National Institute of Nursing Research. On June 22, 1994, Marcia Kiernan, NOVA Treasurer, attended the 50th Anniversary celebration commemorating the GI Bill and the veterans and visionaries who made it possible. VHA ACMD for Nursing Programs, Nancy Valentine, met with a group of nurses representing their national nursing organization in Washington on August 4, 1994. The purpose of the meeting was for VA nursing service to expand or enhance partnerships with various professional nursing organizations. Former President Bette Davis represented NOVA at this meeting.

In August, Allen Curley resigned from the Board of Directors and retired from the VA. President Lynna C. Smith represented NOVA at the ANA convention June 12-15, 1994, and attended a District Hearing for House VA Subcommittee for Housing and Memorial Affairs, Chaired by George E. Sangmeister, held in Tacoma, WA, on July 8, 1994. This hearing was directed to the needs and programs related to homeless veterans. A national NOVA board meeting was hosted by the Topeka NOVA Chapter August 4-7, 1994, providing a mutually beneficial experience for both groups and allowing for networking between the board and chapter members.

The Veteran’s Benefits Improvement Act of 1994, PL 103-446, was signed into law in November 1994. It provided compensation on a presumptive basis to Persian Gulf veterans suffering from undiagnosed illnesses that may have resulted from service in the Persian Gulf, and ordered the VA to conduct and complete a study to evaluate the health status of spouses and children of Persian Gulf veterans by March 1, 1997. It also doubled the number of homeless veterans centers demonstration programs from four to eight and charged the Secretary to take whatever actions are necessary to ensure that federal agencies provide assistance to homeless individuals. It allowed for report of a medical examination by a private physician to be used in support of a claim for benefits and simplified requirements for reporting. Finally, the law reduced DVA’s contribution to the Federal Work Force Restructuring Act from 27,000 to 10,000 job cuts.

In December 1994, the NOVA Board of Directors hosted its second annual roundtable discussion group in Washington, D.C., “Partnerships for Change,” with the participants from all levels of the legislative process, including staff of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees, representatives from Veterans Service Organizations, Nursing Programs, and the
VA Central Office. Consensus focused on the need to establish stronger grass root networks to help educate our elected officials on matters of veterans’ health care needs and eligibility reform.

The officers for 1994-1995 were:

President: Lynna Smith (American Lake VAMC)
Vice President: Maura Farrell Miller (Miami VAMC)
Secretary: Carol Watt (Topeka VAMC)
Membership Secretary: Shaun Kelly (Topeka VAMC)
Treasurer: Marcia Kiernan (New Orleans VAMC)
Directors: Laverne Aldrich (San Antonio VAMC)
           Louise Bristol (Coatesville VAMC)
           Allen Curley (Boston VAMC)
           Vincent Elliott (Palo Alto VAMC)
           Margaret I. Kruckemeyer (VAMC Dayton)
           Sarah V. Myers (Atlanta VAMC)

1995

With the support of NOVA, Secretary Jesse Brown, and Deputy Secretary Hershel Gober, as well as with the collective wisdom of the Task Force on Reorganization of the Chief Nurse, it was announced via VHA Directive 10-94-096 that each medical center is able to realign the Chief Nurse to a position of Associate Director for Nursing Service/Patient Care Services. To date, eight facilities have submitted plans for organizational change.

NOVA’s outstanding report of the Advance Practice Task Force was sent to Central Office. The major issues of concern to the task force, credentialing, privileging, scope of practice, prescriptive authority, and salary, have been reviewed and are being integrated by VACO into national policy formulation. The NOVA Task Force will provide the initial infrastructure for a system wide network of APNs, addressing strategic planning and communication regarding the role and functions of Advanced Practice Nurses in the VA health care system.

NOVA’s legislative priorities for 1995 included

- supporting a combination of appropriations and revenues to fund VA health care to compete in Health Care Reform;
- ensuring access to comprehensive health care for all veterans;
- providing primary/preventive care, wellness programs, and expansion of health services into ambulatory, community, rural, and home settings;
- ensuring women veterans access to comprehensive, quality, and timely health care;
- promoting utilization of advanced practice nurses as cost-effective, qualified health care providers;
- supporting adequate VA educational and research funding to provide quality health care through research and education;
- supporting the concept of veterans and dependents utilizing the VA health plan;
- ensuring accurate implementation of the VA Nurse Locality Pay System as intended by law;
- providing RN FTEE to eliminate mandatory shift rotation and improve the nurse-patient ratio on off-tours;
employing sufficient numbers of ancillary personnel for clinical and non-clinical
tasks to support patient centered care;

• supporting educational preparation and promotion of VA nurses for key
leadership positions;

• ensuring educational funding for nursing scholarships, tuition assistance, career
development, and cross training programs;

• supporting removal of restrictions on outside employment to full time RNs, and
providing modern technological support for patient care.

On April 6, 1995, NOVA President Lynna Smith presented both written and oral
testimony to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Hospitals and Health Care on
Veterans Health Administration’s Reorganization Proposal.

The Fifteenth Annual Meeting was held at the Quality Hotel, Capitol Hill, Washington,
provided methods for turning health care advocacy words into actions. Keynote speaker Sheila
Burke, R.N., Chief of Staff, Office of Robert Dole, Senate Majority Leader, described the
importance of communicating with legislators. Kenneth W. Kizer, M.D., M.P.H.,
Undersecretary for Health, VHA, DVA, spoke on restructuring VA Health Care. A panel of
experts provided experiences and views on current veterans health care issues. Panel participants
included: Tom Harvey, Majority Staff Director, U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs;
JoAnn Webb, Majority Staff Director, Subcommittee on Hospitals and Health Care, U.S. House
of Representatives Committee on Veterans Affairs; Susan Edgerton, Director for Health Policy
Analysis, Paralyzed Veterans of America; and David Gorman, Deputy Legislative Director,
Disabled American Veterans. Topics discussed included eligibility reform for veterans, the 1996
Independent Budget proposed by the Veterans Service Organizations, Veterans Health
Administration’s Reorganization Proposal, H.R. 1384 bill to exempt certain full time health care
professionals of the DVA from restrictions on remunerated outside professional activities.

Terri Gaffney, R.N., Staff Specialist with ANA, shared her knowledge and expertise in
preparing NOVA Nurses in Action volunteers for their afternoon assault onto “the Hill.” NOVA
held an evening reception in the Russell Senate Office Building for legislators and staff which
was well attended. Leah Curtin gave the keynote address, “Nurses in Management of Health
Care,” describing a health care system of the future that would likely be in worse shape than our
current system. Joan Furey spoke on “Women Veterans Health Care Issues: An Agenda for
Change, “ describing eloquently the need to tailor the health care system to many different
populations. Sue Hudek, Chief Nurse of the Washington, D.C. VAMC spoke on “The Changing
Role of Nurse Leadership in the VA.” Suzanne Gordon, author, spoke on “The News Media:
Nurses’ Voice in Health Care.” Her message of being more media savvy and using the media to
present nursing to the public was enthusiastically received.

A panel presentation, “Engagement and Transformation: Bringing the Vision to Life,”
was moderated by Ronald B. Norby, R.N., M.N., Director of Field Support and Clinical
Integration, Nursing Programs, DVA. Other participants included Constance Captain, Ph.D.,
R.N., Chairperson, Research Constituency center, Audie L. Murphy VAMC; Mary M. Martin
D.S.N., R.N., Chairperson, Education Constituency Center, ACNS for Medical/Surgical and
Ambulatory Care, Bay Pines VAMC; and Margo Donaldson Snider, M.S.N., R.N., Chairperson,
Administration Constituency Center, Chief, Nursing Service, Houston, VAMC; Noreen Sommer,
M.S.N., R.N., Chairperson, Clinical Constituency Center, Community Health Nurse Coordinator,
Palo Alto VAMC; and Bobbie D. Vance, Ph.D., R.N., C.N.A.A., Chairperson, Informatics
Constituency Center, Chief, Nursing Service, Atlanta VAMC. Dr. Nancy Valentine, ACMD for Nursing Program, closed the educational portion of the program with a presentation titled “Star Light, Star Bright: The NOVA Star Phenomenon.”

Vernice Ferguson, retired and immediate past ACMD for Nursing Programs, DVA, was presented honorary NOVA membership. Her innovative and visionary leadership were honored, and her dedicated to and years of hard work on behalf of VA nurses and veterans was recognized. The Honorable Jesse A. Brown, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, is the recipient of the 1995 NOVA Distinguished Service Award for innovative and visionary changes within the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system. During his two years in leading the DVA, the VA has made sweeping innovations and decisions in many areas, from the way we treat coworkers to the way we serve veterans and other customers. Secretary Brown opened by paying tribute to the killed and wounded federal employees and their children in Oklahoma City. He then spoke of the VA mission and complimented VA nurses for the high quality care they give those who are killed or wounded while serving their country. Dr. Margarethe Cammermeyer, a decorated Vietnam veteran and VA nurse since 1971 was awarded the 1995 NOVA Veterans Award for personal sacrifice and commendable service. Thanks to her efforts, the issue of the sexual orientation of U.S. military personnel is again being critically examined.

At the annual business meeting, President Smith thanked outgoing board members, Louise Bristol, Coatesville, and LaVerne Aldrich, San Antonio. She also announced that the debt owed to the previous management firm has been paid off, and Robin Carter was convicted and is now in prison for embezzling NOVA funds. Payroll deduction is now available to all NOVA members, and packets were forwarded to all chapter presidents.

President Smith was invited by Congressman Bob Stump (R-AZ), Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee to testify on eligibility reform. On July 19, 1995, she testified in response to H.R. 1385, a bill introduced by Congressmen Chet Edwards (D-TX) and Sonny Montgomery (D-MS), proposing the reform of eligibility and the delivery of health care within the VA. Another bill, H.R. 1384, which contained a revision to eliminate the restriction on full time VA nurses receiving outside income, passed the House of Representatives on October 10, 1995.

On December 2, 1995, NOVA hosted its Third Annual Roundtable Forum, “VA Health Care: The VISN Way,” in Washington, D.C. Participants included NOVA Board of Directors and staff; Thomas Harvey, Chief Counsel/Staff Director, Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs; William Brew, Minority General Counsel, Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs; Ralph Ibsen, Minority Staff Aide, Hospitals and Healthcare, House Committee on Veterans Affairs; Dr. Nancy Valentine, ACMD for Nursing Programs, DVA; Audrey Drake, R.N., M.S.N., Program Director, VHA; Rick Schultz, National Legislative Director, DAV; Andrea Censky, Associate Legislative Director, PVA; Dennis Cullinan, Action Corps Director, VFW; and Frank Buxton, Deputy Director VANR, American Legion. The two-hour forum looked at budget issues, reorganization and practice, education and research activities, sharing concerns about VA’s continued existence and special programs, e.g., spinal cord, blind rehab, PTSD.

The officers for 1995-1996 were:
President: Lynna Smith (American Lake VAMC)
President-Elect: Maura Farrell Miller (West Palm Beach VAMC)
Vice President: Margaret I. Kruckemeyer (VAMC Dayton)
Secretary: Carol Watt (Topeka VAMC)
1996

NOVA President Lynna Smith presented written testimony on “Veterans Health Care Eligibility Priorities” to the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs in March 1996.

NOVA’s sixteenth Annual Meeting was held April 17 – 20, 1996 at the Park Plaza Hotel in Boston, Massachusetts. The theme of the meeting was “VA Nursing: Transforming and Managing Change.” Joyce Clifford, M.S.N., R.N., F.A.A.N., Vice President for Nursing and Nurse-in-Chief, Beth Israel Hospital, Boston, spoke on “Nurses in the Management of Organizational Change.” Ann Hurley, D.N.Sc., R.N., Director, Geriatric, Research, Education and Clinical Center, Bedford, MA, presented “Research Directions for the Future.”

“Transformations in Health Care: The Leadership Challenge” was presented by Maura Mitchell, M.A., R.N., M.Ed., Vice President for Nursing, Boston University Medical Center, Boston. Audrey Drake, M.S.N., R.N., C.N.A.A., Program Director for Nursing Programs, DVA, spoke on “Re-engineering: What Works and What Doesn’t.”

Break-out sessions included: “Long Term Care Innovations” by Diana Cox, M.S.N., R.N.C., H.A., Associate Chief, Nursing Service/Acute and Long Term Care, White River Junction VAMC; “Re-engineering and Computer Applications” by Anne Marie Brogan, M.S.N., R.N., QM/MIS Coordinator, Boston VAMC; “Product Line Innovations” by Linda Stout, M.S.N., R.N., Acting Chief, Nursing Service, Wilkes Barre VAMC; “Patient Centered Care Model: The Salem Experience” by Mary Raymer, M.A., R.N., C.N.A.A, and a panel of nurses from Salem VAMC; “Job Redesign: Women’s Health Clinic” by Susan Frayne, M.D., Director of Women’s Health Programs and staff from Boston VAMC; and “Inpatient Care Models” by Nova Chapuis, B.S.N., R.N., Head Nurse and Maxine Crawley, M.S.N., R.N., F.N.P, Coordinator of Managed Care, New Orleans VAMC.


The Colmery-O’Neil VAMC, Topeka, KS, has been selected to receive the 1996 NOVA Barbara Chambers Award, for outstanding leadership in NOVA. The Topeka Chapter initiated payroll deduction for national membership dues and has been chiefly responsible for the implementation of payroll deduction nationally. National NOVA membership has increased 30% since payroll deduction was made available. Topeka also began the tradition of local hosting of the NOVA National Board Meetings, allowing local chapters and the National Board to interact and jointly work toward developing NOVA at the local level. The Palo Alto and Livermore Chapters officially consolidated to form Palo Alto Health Care System #129 in March
1996. The Las Vegas Chapter of NOVA was formed in April 1996. Dr. Maura Farrell Miller became NOVA’s 7th president.

NOVA’s legislative priorities for 1996 include:
- Supporting a combination of appropriations and revenues to fund VA health care to compete in the health care environment;
- Preserving the specialized health care services that are unique to the needs of veterans; promoting access to comprehensive health care for all veterans;
- Providing primary/preventive care, wellness programs, and expansion of health services into ambulatory, community, rural and home settings;
- Ensuring women veterans access to comprehensive, quality and timely health care; promoting utilization of advanced practice nurses as cost-effective, qualified health care providers;
- Supporting adequate VA educational and research funding to provide quality health care through research and education;
- Supporting the concept of veterans and dependants utilizing the VA health plan;
- Supporting nursing executive leadership within all levels of VHA reorganization;
- Promoting Senate legislation to remove restrictions on outside employment by full time RNs;
- Supporting RN FTEE to eliminate mandatory shift rotation in order to improve patient and staffing outcomes;
- Promoting the appropriation process for educational funding for nursing scholarships, tuition assistance, career development, and cross training programs;
- Providing modern technological support for patient care;
- And ensuring accurate implementation of the VA Nurse Locality Pay System.

NOVA members were urged to write their Congressional representatives expressing strong opposition to H.R. 2814 and S. 1748, which contain a provision that if passed into law, would essentially eliminate nursing from leadership positions in DVA National Headquarters. Specifically, this provision would prohibit nurses from holding six of the current eight Under Secretary for Health positions in the DVA. NOVA members were urged to write in support of S. 1752. NOVA members were reminded that this is an exciting time to be a VA nurse, with opportunities to shape the future. NOVA’s voice is being heard.

On May 23, 1996, NOVA was invited to Capitol Hill. NOVA President Dr. Maura Farrell Miller presented oral and written testimony to outgoing Chairman, Senator Alan K. Simpson (R-WY) in support of S. 1752, “Removal of Restrictions on Outside Employment for Full Time Title 38 Professionals.” This legislation proposes to eliminate the ban on remuneration for outside professional activities for full time VA registered nurses. President Miller also presented written testimony opposing S. 1748, which virtually eliminates a centralized DVA Nursing Service, which is now mandated by Title 38 law. In her written testimony, she noted, “It is contradictory for DVA to promote a multidisciplinary team focus while essentially restricting top DVA leadership to only physicians and dentists.”

The National NOVA Board meeting was hosted by the Memphis VAMC Chapter in Memphis, Tennessee, August 2 – 4, 1996. Anne Zipp was appointed to serve as National Secretary through April 1997 to complete the term vacated by Carol Watt Kerr. During the annual strategic planning session, NOVA developed a mission statement: “NOVA: Shaping and influencing professional nursing practice within the Department of Veterans Affairs.” The National Board is also revisiting the infrastructures of NOVA, streamlining processes to make
the organization more user friendly. President Miller and 97 Program Chair Jan Therien attended the ANA Summit Meeting in Washington, D.C., November 9 – 10, 1996, joining representatives of over 60 professional nursing organizations. Themes of the summit consistently spoke to the urgent need for partnerships, coalitions, and collaborations in professional nursing organizations.

After ten years of legislative effort, NOVA accomplished one of its long term legislative priorities. The Veterans’ Health Care Eligibility Reform Act of 1996, PL 104-282, was signed into law by President Clinton. This bill contained the provision overturning the half century old law restricting full time RNs from working in their professional capacity in outside employment. The bill also includes provisions for eligibility reforms, contracting reforms, authorizes construction of facilities, requires DVA to develop a five year plan for VHA, and requires DVA to establish centers for excellence combining education, research, and clinical care of the severely mentally ill.

Two major issues confronting DVA registered nurses prompted a visit to DVA headquarters, the impact of Title 38 staffing adjustments and the role of professional nursing in the restructuring DVA. These issues formed the theme of the December 1996 Legislative Summit. On December 5, 1996, NOVA President Dr. Maura F. Miller, Legislative Committee Chairperson Dr. Sarah V. Myers, and Executive Director Deborah Beck met with Drs. Kenneth Kizer and Nancy Valentine to discuss the VA registered nurse’s leadership role in reinventing the Department of Veterans Affairs. Dr. Miller questioned Dr. Kizer regarding the minimal amount nursing was mentioned in his “Prescription for Change.” Dr. Kizer stated that he was informed that VA professional nurses “were only concerned about keeping their jobs and getting raises.” Dr. Miller informed Dr. Kizer of the roles of proactive change agents taken on by NOVA nurses during the past seventeen years, advancing DVA health care via legislative and regulatory reforms. NOVA requested Dr. Kizer to appoint a NOVA member to the Innovations in Nursing Task Force. As a positive outcome of the meeting, Dr. Kizer invited NOVA to attend the next VISN Directors/Clinical Managers meeting.

NOVA held its fourth annual legislative roundtable forum, “Building Partnerships for Practice: From Vision to Reality,” December 6, 1996, in Washington, D.C. Participants included: NOVA Board of Directors and staff; William Brew, Minority General Counsel, Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs; Ralph Ibsen, Minority Staff Aide, Hospitals and Healthcare, House Committee on Veterans Affairs; Dr. Nancy Valentine, ACMD for Nursing Programs, DVA; Audrey Drake, R.N., M.S.N., Program Director, VHA; Cheryl Peterson, R.N., ANA; Donald Greenfield, R.N., National Association of VA Nurse Recruiters; Peggy Ingraham, Legislative Director, National Association of VA Physicians and Dentists; Dr. Thomas Garthwaite, M.D., Deputy Under Secretary for Health, DVA; Edward Scott, Legislative Director for Congressional Affairs, DVA; Jacqueline Garrick, Deputy Director for Health Care Issues, American Legion; David Gorman, Executive Director, Disabled American Veterans; and Dat Tran, Professional Staff Member, Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs. The forum focused on building partnerships and looked at budget issues, VHA reorganization, and a proposed model of reimbursement within VHA.

The officers for 1996-1997 were:
President: Maura Farrell Miller (West Palm Beach VAMC)
Vice President: Margaret I. Kruckemeyer (VAMC Dayton)
Secretary: Anne Zipp (Erie VAMC)
January 23, 1997 marked the date of the VISN Directors and Clinical Managers meeting in Portland, Oregon. Dr. Kenneth Kizer, USH, DVA, invited NOVA to this meeting to assist DVA healthcare reorganization by enhancing field communications. President Miller introduced NOVA as a professional nursing organization of VA registered nurses who are advocates of veteran patients and the DVA health care system, clarified NOVA’s mission, and offered NOVA’s assistance to the VISN Directors by enhancing communication between and within VISNs using existing networks of NOVA nurses. President Miller also shared a brief synopsis of NOVA’s legislative and regulatory reforms that have improved VA healthcare, including lifting the ban on remuneration for outside professional activities, eligibility reform, rural health care, women’s health care, locality pay, elevation of DVA to cabinet status, and elevation of the Chief Nurse Executive to medical center leadership status. She clarified NOVA’s status as a professional nursing organization whose focus is on improving VA healthcare. As the voice of VA nurses, NOVA makes its issues known to Congress, with legislatively focused efforts. President Miller also invited the VISN Directors and Clinical Managers to attend NOVA’s 17th Annual Meeting.

NOVA has an email address, nova@vanurse.org, and established a home page and chat room on the American Journal of Nursing Network.

NOVA’s legislative priorities for 1997 include:

- supporting a combination of appropriations and revenues to fund VA health care to compete in the health care environment;
- promoting nursing’s role in providing specialized veterans’ health care services;
- enhancing access to coordinated and comprehensive health care for all veterans and their dependants, including primary/preventive care, wellness programs, and expansion of health services into ambulatory, community, rural and home settings;
- promoting optimal utilization of advanced practice nurses as cost-effective providers of quality health care;
- supporting educational and research funding to provide quality VA health care;
- ensuring nursing executive leadership throughout the top decision-making levels at National Headquarters, VISNs, Medical Centers, and affiliated health care centers;
- assuring the presence of organized professional nursing in the overall management of health care programs within the DVA;
- supporting, strengthening, and increasing innovative partnerships and coalitions with VSOs and other professional organizations supportive of NOVA’s mission;
- and supporting educational funding cross training and career development to assist the DVA in meeting its primary health care needs.
Dr. Kenneth Kizer appointed NOVA Board Member Cecelia McVey to the Innovations in Nursing Task Force. The Task Force convened for the first time in Washington D.C., in March 1997 and met twice a month for the remainder of that year. This group reviewed current examples of innovations in nursing that could be implemented system-wide in the VA. Another NOVA Board Member, Dr. Sarah V. Myers, was appointed to the Long Term Care Task Force by Dr. Kizer.

NOVA’s Seventeenth Annual Meeting was held April 17 – 19, 1997 at the Washington Court Hotel in Washington, D.C. The theme was “Building Partnerships in Practice: From Vision to Action.” The opening keynote address was delivered by Beverly Malone, Ph.D., R.N., F.A.A.N., ANA President, titled “Shared Visions & Hallucinations.” This was followed by a panel discussion “Issues Forum: Partnerships for Legislative Action.” Panel participants included Rick Schulz, Legislative Director, DAV; John Sommer, Executive Director, American Legion; Doug Vollmer, Associate Executive Director/Government Relations, PVA; Cheryl Peterson, M.S.N., R.N., Associate Director/Government Affairs, ANA; Ralph Ibson, Staff Director, Committee on Veterans Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives. The panel members talked about collaboration and nursing issues.

Nancy Sharp, M.S.N., R.N., President, Sharp Legislative Resources, talked about the political process in a presentation titled “Political Savvy: A Nursing Skill,” hammering home a message for nurses to be actively involved in decision making, every single day. Her presentation was followed by Patti Rager, R.N., President and Publisher of Nursing Spectrum. She talked about “Career Fitness: Exercising Your Nursing Options.” There were breakout sessions for administration, advanced practice, clinical/staff, education/research, and informatics. Brenda Lyons, D.N.S., R.N., F.A.A.N., discussed stress management in her nationally recognized, award winning presentation. Ann Marie Brooks, D.N.Sc., R.N., F.A.A.N., presented “Nursing’s Agenda in the New Millennium: Making Every Moment Count.” Dr. Nancy Valentine closed the program with “Simple Abundance Amidst the Chaos.” The theme of the presentation was for VA nurses to recognize and be thankful for all the abundance in our lives in spite of the massive changes taking place in VA healthcare.

President William Jefferson Clinton was awarded the NOVA Distinguished Service Award. On April 18, 1997, a NOVA delegation consisting of Executive Director Deborah Beck, Secretary Anne Zipp, Awards Chair Jan Therien, President Maura Farrell Miller, Membership Secretary Dollie Lewis Alexander, Treasurer Vince Elliott, and Vice President Margaret Kruckemeyer, went to the White House, to present the award to First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who accepted on behalf of her husband. The award was presented to the President because he has repeatedly affirmed and actualized professional nursing’s role and importance to national health care, and has appointed professional nurses to key policy shaping positions, both nationally and internationally. In her remarks on accepting the award, Mrs. Clinton talked about the caring and compassion of nurses.

Virginia Trotter-Betts, R.N., Ph.D., the immediate Past President of ANA, was awarded the NOVA Professional Nurse Award. Ms. Trotter-Betts supported NOVA and its legislative priorities, including the need for eligibility reform as well as NOVA’s opposition to eliminating nursing leadership representation at DVA. Bette Davis, M.S.N., R.N., was awarded the Barbara Chambers Award. As NOVA President, Ms. Davis authored and gave numerous testimonies for NOVA at Congressional hearings, addressing critical and timely national concerns.

This year, NOVA held an optional pre-conference interactive session titled, “Future Search: Shaping Nursing’s Future in the VHA.” This session was designed to solicit feedback
on issues in the field. The data from the session will be reviewed by the Board of Directors and used to develop NOVA’s legislative/regulatory activities. During the annual meeting, a bylaws change was approved broadening non-discrimination of membership to include sex, race, age, religious beliefs, handicap, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political affiliation/belief, or status as a veteran. Chapters were chartered in Knoxville, TN; West Palm Beach, FL; Las Vegas, NV; Memphis, TN; Richmond, VA; and Charleston, SC. The most new member awards went to Palo Alto (first place), Augusta (second place), and Dayton (third place). The greatest retention of members went to Palo Alto. A Task Force was chartered to look at the 1990 Locality Pay Bill.

On April 17, 1997, President Dr. Maura Farrell Miller testified before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. She addressed the effectiveness of DVA’s sexual harassment awareness programs and enforcement of DVA’s zero tolerance policy. On May 22, 1997, National Board Member and Legislative Co-Chair Barbara Zicafoose presented the first testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Veterans Affairs, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations that was prompted in part by the murder of a VA physician by a patient. The Subcommittee was investigating the feasibility of arming security police at VA hospitals. She expressed NOVA’s concern about arming security guards, and pointed out that many patients have experienced emotional trauma associated with weapons. She outlined security measures that could be implemented which would greatly increase security in the VA without bringing guns into the facilities.

In May 1997, Senator John D. Rockefeller, IV, Ranking Minority member of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs initiated an investigation on health care quality management activities in the VA. Although there had been much media attention on isolated instances of poor quality management, he challenged staff instead to focus on VA systems for quality, not the individual tragedies within the system. The staff found that many of the VA’s quality programs had potential but were terminated rather than modified to overcome any noted deficiencies. They also found that programs had not been adequately monitored, did not gather data systematically, and didn’t effectively track or trend the information.

On June 19, 1997, NOVA Vice President and Legislative Chair Dr. Sarah V. Myers gave NOVA’s second testimony of the summer session. She testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health. Her testimony was “On Care and Treatment of a Persian Gulf War Veterans in the DVA.” Her testimony supported the use of advance practice nurses to care for these veterans, continuing education for these veterans, and implementing an information referral center in each VISN.

It was with regret that NOVA said goodbye to DVA Secretary Jesse Brown on July 1, 1997. He has been Putting Veterans First since his appointment to this position by President Clinton on January 22, 1993. NOVA President Dr. Maura Miller said, “Thank you for making a difference in the lives of our Nation’s veterans and the professional nurses who care for them. NOVA will always remember your dedication to veterans’ health care and your innumerable accomplishments as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.” The National Board of Director’s meeting was hosted by the West Palm Beach Chapter in August 1997. Upon arrival at the WPB VAMC, board members were greeted by Medical Center Director Richard D. Isaac and Associate Director for Nursing, Gregory Skomra, R.N., M.S.N. Thanks to the generosity of Johnson & Johnson Health Care Inc., the NOVA Foundation held its first Board of Directors meeting September 18, 1997 in Washington, D.C. A contract was signed with William S. Bergman Associates to provide management/administrative services to the Foundation.
Ferguson, R.N., M.A., F.A.A.N., F.R.C.N., will serve as the Chairman of the Board. Deborah Beck will serve as the Foundation’s Executive Director.

The American Federation of Government Employees filed an unfair labor practice against the DVA, alleging NOVA is given preferential treatment. NOVA retained a labor lawyer who met with the Federal Labor Relations Authority. Because NOVA is not a labor union, we cannot be the subject of an unfair labor practice. Because of this threat to NOVA’s existence, a legal defense fund was established. In an issue of News from NOVA, President Miller shared Florence Nightingale’s words that Past President Noreen Sommer shared with her when she left office in 1992. “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.” The Women in Military Service for American Memorial was dedicated in the fall, 1997, honoring the 1.8 million women who have served in the country’s military. Bette Davis, Past President of NOVA, attended the dedication ceremony.

NOVA’s fifth Annual Legislative Roundtable, “New Directions, New Opportunities: VA’s Rhythm of Change,” was held December 5, 1997 in Washington, D.C. This forum focused on building alliances with other organizations and individuals who are supportive of NOVA’s mission, and shared ideas on a number of issues, including change in VHA, improvements in patient care, and the budget. Participants included: NOVA Board of Directors and staff; Audrey Drake, R.N., M.S.N., Program Director, VHA; Kenneth Kizer, M.D., M.P.H.; Under Secretary for Health, DVA; William Brew, Director/ Intergovernmental Affairs, Alliance for Aging Research; Cheryl Peterson, R.N., ANA; Pamela Jackson-Malik, R.N., President, National Association of VA Nurse Executives; Michele Heigle Kimball, Legislative Associate/Health Issues Federal Programs, AARP; William Bradahaw, Deputy Director/National Veterans Services, VFW; David Tucker, Senior Associate Legislative Director, PVA; Dick Wannamacher, Associate National Legislative Director, DAV; John Bradley, VA Detail, Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs; Susan Edgerton, Democratic Staff Director, House Committee on Veterans Affairs; and Pat Ryan, Deputy Chief Counsel, House Committee on Veterans Affairs.

NOVA released a press release on the Utilization of Advanced Practice Nurses in a Restructuring Department of Veterans Affairs Health System to respond to the concerns of VA physicians and others as the VA health care system continues to restructure and evolve.

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President: Maura Farrell Miller (West Palm Beach VAMC)
President-Elect: Margaret I. Kruckemeyer (VAMC Dayton)
Vice President: Sarah V. Myers (Atlanta VAMC)
Secretary: Anne Zipp (Erie VAMC)
Membership Secretary: Dianne Nelson (Tucson VAMC)
Treasurer: Vincent Elliott (Palo Alto VAMC)
Directors: Betty Baldwin (Palo Alto VAMC)
Mary Haubold (Topeka VAMC)
Cecelia McVey (Boston VAMC)
Billie Jean Summers (Murfreesboro VAMC)
Jan Therien (Salem VAMC)
Barbara Zicafoose (Salem VAMC)
NOVA’s legislative priorities for 1998 include:

- seeking alternative sources of revenue to fund VA health care research, and education;
- promoting nursing’s role in providing a seamless continuum of health care;
- enhancing access to coordinated and comprehensive health care for all veterans and their dependents;
- promoting optimal utilization of advanced practice nurses as cost-effective providers of quality health care;
- supporting the Consumer Health Care Bill of Rights, and the Patient Safety Act Legislation;
- ensuring professional nurse participation and leadership at all levels of practice, research, administration, and policy;
- supporting allocation of funding for nursing career development;
- strengthening and increasing innovative partnerships and coalitions with VSOs and other professional organizations supportive of NOVA’s mission;
- and ensuring implementation of the recommendations of the Innovations in Nursing Committee by inclusion in the Director’s performance standards.

President Clinton appointed Secretary of the Army, Togo West, Jr. to the position of DVA Secretary. He had served as Army Secretary since 1993.

The final report from the Advisory Committee on Innovations in Nursing of the VHA is out. The Committee felt that the environment and resources for change and support of nursing innovations are not yet in place in the VA. Recommendations include: create and educate interdisciplinary teams to focus on priority goals in the Vision for Change; work toward B.S./M.S. as the entry-level credentials for new hires where the market allows, and facilitate degree attainment for nurses currently practicing in the VHA who do not have those degrees; increase nurse participation and leadership at all levels of practice, research, administration, and policy; increase health services research; develop grassroots process for nursing innovation to surface; and increase competency-based promotions in the VHA so that promising and qualified nurses can advance outside the traditional clinical ladder.

Sarah Myers, NOVA’s representative on the Long Term Care Task Force identified some of the issues facing the committee: the likely long term care needs of veterans through 2010, the portion of those long term care needs that should be met by the VA, and the importance to be given to construction of VA and state nursing homes.

President Maura Farrell Miller testified in mid-March on quality of care within the DVA before the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Veterans Affairs, Subcommittee on Health.

NOVA’s eighteen Annual Meeting, “New Directions, New Opportunities, New Orleans: VA’s Rhythm of Change” was held at the Doubletree Hotel, April 16 – 18, 1998 in New Orleans. Kenneth Kizer, M.D., M.P.H., Undersecretary for Health, delivered the keynote address. Melvin O. Gitlin, M.D., Professor of Clinical Anesthesiology, Tulane University, presented “Case Management for Challenges & Struggles of Pain Control.” Mary Jane Madden, R.N., Ph.D., spoke on “Learning Our Way into the Future.” In her talk, Ms. Madden added a comment made by Cecelia McVey, Nurse Executive at the Boston VAMC and a member of NOVA’s National Board, “I love change; not knowing where I will land is the problem.” Panelists for “DVA
Legislative Issues” were David Gorman, Executive Director, DAV; Gordon Mansfield, Executive Director, PVA; and John Sommer, J., Executive Director, American Legion.

“Writing for Publication” was presented by Patricia A. Beare, Ph.D., M.S.N., Louisiana State University. Martin P. Charns, DBA, Director, Management Decision & Research Center, Health Services Research & Development Service, DVA, presented “Service Line Management in Integrated Delivery Systems.” Other presentations included: “Managing Symptoms Other Than Pain,” by Joni Ingram Berry, R.N., Ph.D., Hospice of Wake County, New York; Successful Grant Writing,” by Patricia Snyder, Ph.D., M.Ed., Louisiana State University; “Wound & Skin Care Update” by Diana Carter, R.N., B.S.N., C.E.T.N.; “Violence in the Workplace” by Nancy Valentine, R.N., Ph.D., C.N.A.A., F.A.A.N; and “The Consumer Bill of Rights: A Veteran Perspective” by Linda Schwartz, R.N., Ph.D. Nancy Valentine closed the meeting with “VA’s Blueprint for Nursing for the 21st Century.”

NOVA awarded the Honorable Jesse Brown with an honorary NOVA membership. Mr. Brown served as DVA Secretary from January 1993, until his resignation in 1997. Honorary membership is given to an individual who has rendered notable and outstanding service to NOVA. In April 1995, he received the NOVA Distinguished Service Award. Secretary Brown had significant impact on VHA during his entire tenure. One of his principal impacts was leading the reorganization of DVA, including VHA, to make it more responsive to our customers, and a more quality driven federal agency. Accepting honorary membership, Jesse Brown said, “I see the face of the possible in you, members of NOVA. You dream of a better day for the American people, veterans and their families. I close by thanking your for your service of yesterday, your work of today, and your dreams for tomorrow.”

NOVA presented Audrey Drake, R.N., M.S.N., with the NOVA Professional Nurse Award. She is the Director of Long Term Care, Acute Care, and Quality Management for VA Nursing Service at DVA Headquarters, and has been a VA nurse for over 30 years. Since 1988, she has worked in Central Office, now Headquarters. She has worked tirelessly to keep nursing a strong presence in DVA. Her outstanding leadership and direction have helped ensure the continuous provision and improvement of quality care to our nation’s veterans.

Dollie Lewis Alexander resigned as Membership Secretary, and Dianne Nelson was appointed to finish her term. Jan Therien was appointed to finish Dianne Nelson’s term. Anne Zipp resigned as Secretary, and Barbara Zicafoose was appointed to finish her term. NOVA was asked to respond to the proposed qualifications standards, and the Board agreed to support the option requiring new hires to the VA to have a B.S.N. Nurses currently employed in the VA would not have to obtain a bachelor’s degree in nursing. The Board approved a $5 dues increase, to $75 beginning July 1, 1998.

The Board made a commitment to promote NOVA membership throughout the year, and the first Member-Get-a-Member campaign was launched. For the first time, a chapter, Palo Alto has exceeded 200 members. Augusta won first place in the membership category; Palo Alto was second, and Boston placed third. Task forces were formed to address violence in the workplace and concerns of staff nurses. The first Membership Committee Award was given to Joycelyn King of Palo Alto. Past President Maura Miller announced the B. Braun/McGaw Legislative Internship for VA nurses, including attendance at the Nurse in Washington Internship and an internship in both the National NOVA and Central DVA offices to develop legislative expertise and contacts in Washington, D.C. Margaret Kruckemeyer became NOVA’s 8th president.

NOVA was able to help the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) with language in a VA manual covering the practice of anesthesia. AANA was unable to get their
recommendations approved, and were advised by a staff member on the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee to enlist NOVA’s help. Literally at the 11th hour, NOVA was able to make a difference, demonstrating the power of NOVA.

Nearly a decade ago, the NOVA Board of Directors began talking about forming the NOVA Foundation. A great deal of work on this project was done by Lynna Smith, NOVA Past President. The NOVA Foundation first silent auction, held at the 18th Annual Meeting, was a great success, raising over $1700.00 for the Foundation. The Foundation announced the first ten scholarship recipients.

AFGE withdrew its charges of unfair labor practices against DVA. On July 6, 1998, the Federal Relations Authority approved the withdrawal of this charge.

Nancy Valentine, R.N., Ph.D., C.N.A.A., F.A.A.N., left her position as Consultant, Nursing Strategic Healthcare Group (NSHG), DVA Headquarters, in the summer of 1998. She advised NOVA members to keep up the good work and devise innovative and creative ways to attract members.

NOVA held its first VA Nurse Summit in early August, 1998, to bring together representatives of all VA nurse organizations: NOVA, the National Association of VA Nurse Executives, The National Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists, and the National Association of VA Nurse Recruiters. Dr. Kenneth Kizer also attended the Summit.

The sixth Annual Legislative Roundtable was held in Washington, DC on December 4, 1998. Key issues addressed at the round table concerned quality of care in VHA, fixing the locality pay system, treating dependents of veterans, and problems with the flat line budget. Attendees included the NOVA Board of Directors and staff; from the Department of Veterans Affairs, Thomas Garthwaite, MD, Deputy Under Secretary for Health; and Kathleen Cole, RN, MS, Associate Chief of Staff for Patient Care, Richmond VAMC. Attendees from VA Nursing Organizations included Karen Israel, RN, CNAA, National Association of VA Nurse Executives; and three representatives from the Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists, Laura Cohen, CRNA Past President; Tom Mines, CRNA, Past President/Executive Director; and Ken Wetjen, CRNA, President-elect. The VA Partnership Council was represented by J. David Cox, First Vice President, American Federation of Government Employees. The American Nurses Association was represented by Cheryl Peterson, RN, MSN, Senior Policy Fellow, Department of Health and Economic Policy; and Pat Rowell, RN, PhD, Senior Policy Fellow, Department of Nursing Practice. The House Committee on Veterans Affairs was represented by John Roerty, Professional Staff Member, Subcommittee on Health; and Susan Edgerton, Democratic Staff Director. Michele Heigle Kimball, Legislative Associate/Health Issues, Federal Affairs attended for the American Association of Retired Persons. Veterans Service Organizations representatives included Jacqueline Garrick, Deputy Director for Health Care Issues, the American Legion; Dick Wannamacher, Disabled American Veterans; Gordon Mansfield, Executive Director, Paralyzed Veterans of America; and Kenneth Steadman, Executive Director, Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The officers for 1998-1999 were:

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**Secretary:** Anne Zipp (Erie VAMC)

**Membership Secretary:** Dianne Nelson (Tucson VAMC)

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Jan Therien (Salem VAMC)
Barbara Zicafoose (Salem VAMC)

1999

New qualifications standards for VA RNs have gone into effect, including significant changes related to educational preparation. Dianne Nelson, NOVA Membership Secretary, serves as a member of the Nurse Qualifications Standards Steering Committee. NOVA, working in partnership with B. Braun McGaw, produced an updated membership video. The script was written by Vince Elliott, and filmed at the Livermore and Menlo Park campuses of the VA Palo Alto Health Care System. NOVA Board Secretary Barbara Zicafoose is a member of the DVA Nurse Locality Pay System Study Implementation Group. The group made several recommendations to be forwarded to Dr. Kenneth Kizer, Undersecretary for Health. The DVA has a February 1, 1999 deadline to submit its recommendations to Congress.

NOVA’s Nineteenth Annual Meeting was held March 10 – 13, 1999, at the Marriott Hotel in Washington, D.C. The opening keynote address was given by DVA Secretary Togo West, Jr. After Secretary West, there were two panel presentations. The first consisted of members of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees; the second was composed of representatives from the national offices of the veterans’ service organizations. All panelists noted how bad the VA’s flat line budget is this year, and all had recommendations to make to solve VA’s financial crisis. In the afternoon, NOVA members visited Senators and Representatives on Capitol Hill.

Marilyn Lanza, D.N.Sc., R.N., C.S., Associate Chief Nursing Service for Research, Bedford VAMC, spoke on “Identification and Prevention of Violence in the Workplace.” Associate Professor Stephanie Ferguson of Howard University challenged participants with her dynamic presentation “Do You Hold the Key? Strategies for Shaping the 21st Century VA and Value Based Leadership.” She stressed that key roles for nurse leaders in the future will include creating and managing integrated service environments, and creating structures that merge all providers around the patient and service pathways. She said that “a positive anything is always better than a negative something.” Audrey Drake, M.S.N., R.N., Acting Consultant, NSHG, gave an outstanding presentation on VA nursing today. She stressed that we have to demonstrate outcomes that are cost effective and must consistently meet customer quality expectations.

Lynna Smith, VA Puget Sound Health Care System, was honored with the Barbara Chambers Award. NOVA members voted unanimously to honor former Mississippi Congressman G.V. “Sonny” Montgomery with an honorary NOVA membership. He served 30 years on Capitol Hill, many of them as Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs. He now lends his valuable support to the NOVA Foundation to increase research and education opportunities for nurses in DVA.

NOVA now has its own site on the Internet and can be reached at http://www.vanurse.org.

The NOVA Board of Directors met with the Board of Directors of NAVANE, National Association of VA Nurse Executives. Both Boards discussed future collaboration, including a common annual meeting. The NOVA Board voted to raise annual dues $5.00 beginning January
1, 2000. The Board attended a reception honoring Vernice Ferguson, R.N., M.A., F.A.A.N., F.R.C.N., former ACMD for Nursing, DVA. The Palo Alto Chapter submitted a resolution and resolved that NOVA establish a Task Force to examine the scope and potential impact on health care for veterans related to FERS retirees electing to spend down their unused sick leave prior to retirement. It was further resolved that NOVA propose to Congress alternatives to spending down accumulated sick leave. A new Member-Get-a-Member Campaign, Blue Stamps, is launched to move membership from its plateau of 2700 members. President-Elect Dr. Sarah Myers was appointed to the committee to search for a Chief Consultant, Nursing Strategic Health Care Group, Headquarters.

The number of individual donors to the NOVA Foundation increased by nearly 50 percent. Chairman Vernice Ferguson held a book signing during the Annual Meeting. She personally signed copies of the book she edited, *Educating the 21st Century Nurse: Challenges and Opportunities*. The Silent Auction, organized by Lynna Smith, raised over $3600 for the Foundation. The NOVA Foundation awarded 15 scholarships to deserving registered nurses, and established a new award, the Vernice Ferguson Award, to be given to individuals or companies that make a contribution to the work of the Foundation.

NOVA presented written testimony twice during the summer of 1999. The first was on Senate Bill 940, buyout legislation proposal submitted by the DVA. NOVA identified that VHA is now “lean and mean,” that VHA has reached a point where staff can no longer be reduced if high quality is to be provided, and the funding approach in VHA of a straight line budget is now becoming a serious problem. The second was on the reconfirmation hearing of Kenneth W. Kizer, M.D., M.P.H., as Undersecretary for Health for the DVA. NOVA provided this testimony just days before Dr. Kizer abruptly withdrew his name from consideration. NOVA supported the reconfirmation of Dr. Kizer with two caveats. NOVA disagrees with Dr. Kizer on the adequacy of funding for VHA. Second, NOVA expressed displeasure at the absence of nursing leadership at all levels of VHA, facility, VISN, and DVA HQ. NOVA testified, “It is NOVA’s perception Dr. Kenneth Kizer has shaped VHA into a physician dominated healthcare system, and NOVA believes this is damaging to the system by not bringing dynamic nurse leaders into the senior planning and operation levels of management.”

The first NOVA Foundation Congressional Breakfast, held on June 14, 1999, in the Rayburn Office Building, was a tremendous success. The program opened with a warm welcome by Vernice Ferguson, Chairman of the NOVA Foundation Board. Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), one of three nurses in Congress, and the only former VA nurse, stressed the importance of never forgetting the price veterans have paid in service to our country. Dr. Kenneth Kizer, former Under Secretary for Health, delivered opening remarks entitled: “The VA On the Cutting Edge.” A panel discussion followed. Over 100 legislative aids responsible for veterans’ issues as well as members of the veterans’ service organizations and corporate communities participated in this event.

Dr. Thomas Garthwaite was appointed Acting Under Secretary for the Department of Veterans Affairs, July 1, 1999.

The NOVA Foundation Second Congressional Breakfast and Briefing Session was a huge success. The Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committee Staff Directors gave a legislative overview. The panel discussion was devoted to Hepatitis C. Participants included legislative aids responsible for veterans’ issues, Veterans Service Organizations, and the corporate community. President Margaret Kruckemeyer, President-Elect Sarah Myers and members of the Richmond and DC chapters represented NOVA.
The VA Directive 5102.1, Registered Nurse Qualification Standard, was officially signed on November 10, 1999. The new standard went into effect for new hires on December 10, 1999. Currently employed RNs will receive their next proficiency under the old standards and will be educated about the new standards during the year. NOVA thanked Senator Michael DeWine and Congressman Steve LaTourette for introducing the VA Nurse Appreciation Act of 1999 into Congress, and encouraged them to pursue legislative as well as regulatory changes to the Locality Pay Statute for registered nurses employed by the DVA.

The seventh annual Legislative Roundtable was held at the DAV Headquarters in early December 1999, in conjunction with the Board of Director’s meeting. The Roundtable is an opportunity for stakeholders in the VHA to talk about veterans’ health care, raise issues, press for changes, acknowledge successes, and strengthen alliances. In a few short years, it has become an important and valuable opportunity for stakeholders to explore VHA. Participants included; the NOVA Board of Directors; Audrey Drake, R.N., M.S.N.; Acting Consultant, NSHG, DVA; Ken Wetjen, CRNA, President; Dave Polner, CRNA, President-Elect; Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists (AVANA); J. David Cox, First Vice President, AFGE; Bill Wetmore, Esq., Board of Veterans Appeals, DVA; Jacqueline Pomfret, Associate Director, Department of Government Affairs, ANA; Bill Cahill, Professional Staff, U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs; Ralph Ibsen, Staff Director, Subcommittee on Health, U.S. House Committee on Veterans Affairs; Stacy Ranstauskas, Legislative Assistant for Veterans Issues, U. S. Representative David Hobson, R-Ohio; Steve Robertson, Legislative Director, The American Legion; Dick Wannemacher, Legislative Director, DAV; and Michele Heigle Kimball, Legislative Associate/Health Issues Federal Affairs, AARP.

The Board of Directors spent a half-day in strategic planning to look critically at DVA and NOVA and consider what needs to be done today and in the future to retain our current ability to shape and influence healthcare in DVA. The Board revised the mission statement: NOVA: Shaping and influencing health care within the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The officers for 1999-2000 were:
President: Margaret I. Kruckemeyer (VAMC Dayton)
President-Elect: Sarah V. Myers (Atlanta VAMC)
Vice President: Vincent Elliott (Palo Alto VAMC)
Secretary: Barbara Zicafoose (Salem VAMC)
Membership Secretary: Dianne Nelson (Tucson VAMC)
Treasurer: Cecelia McVey (Boston VAMC)
Directors: Denise Carey (Charleston VAMC)
Mary-Jo Doolan (Boston VAMC)
Veronica Kirchhofer (North Texas VAMC)
Billie Jean Summers (Murfreesboro VAMC)
Jan Therien (Salem VAMC)

2000

NOVA’s legislative priorities for 2000 include:
- collaborating with Congress and National Headquarters to re-establish scholarships/monies to attract and retain quality VA health care providers;
- promoting nursing’s role in providing a seamless continuum of health care;

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encompassing access to coordinated and comprehensive health care for veterans; promoting optimal utilization of advanced practice nurses as cost-effective providers of quality health care;

- supporting the Consumer Health Care Bill of Rights and Patient Safety Act Legislation; evaluating the impact of the Millennium Health Care Act;
- collaborating with other federal organizations to introduce legislation to revise the current sick leave policy as outlined in FERS;
- ensuring professional nurse participation and leadership at all levels of practice, research, administration, and policy;
- assuring Chief Nurse Executive in senior management quadrad locally and ensuring Nurse Executive leadership and VISN and national levels;
- following up on the Locality Pay Task Force Recommendations and Hay Report;
- monitoring progress of the VA Nurse Appreciation Act of 1999 and gathering testimony from VA nurses;
- strengthening and increasing innovative partnerships and coalitions with VSOs and other organizations supportive of NOVA’s mission.

NOVA President Margaret Kruckemeyer R.N., M.A., M.S.N., C.R.N.H., A.R.N.P. presented testimony before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs on April 12, 2000. This testimony, *Status of Recruitment, Retention, and Compensation of VA Health Care Workforce*, outlined NOVA’s position on the 1999 Nurse Appreciation Act, H.R. 1216. NOVA’s position is that although the Nurse Locality Pay System (NLPS) is functioning properly at some facilities, at many facilities, it has been applied in a discriminatory and inconsistent manner.

NOVA’s Twentieth Annual Meeting was held April 27 – 29 at the Adam’s Mark Hotel in Orlando, Florida. The theme of the meeting was “The New Millennium: Embracing Change Within the Circle of Life.” After a warm welcome to Florida by Sandra Janzen, ACOS/Nursing at the Tampa VAMC, Vernice Ferguson R.N., M.A., F.A.A.N., F.R.C.N. delivered the opening keynote address, stressing the importance of remaining faithful to commitment, caring, constancy, and competence during these monumental chaotic times. Robert Roswell, M.D., Director of the Sunshine HealthCare VISN (8), spoke of his vision of healthcare in the new millennium. Mary Raymer, R.N., M.A., C.N.A.A., chairperson of the VA Nurse Qualification Standard Implementation Committee, shared the history of the development and implementation of the new standard. Participants enjoyed the exhibits and posters session, entering the wonderful world of laughter with Donna Strickland, R.N., M.S., who looked at nursing from a different perspective. Charlotte Beason, R.N., Ed.D., C.N.A.A. spoke about best practice models and introduced the VHA Virtual Learning Center.

Mary Raymer, R.N., M.A., C.N.A.A. received the Distinguished Service Award. This award is given to an individual who has shown evidence of significant impact on the nursing profession or the Veterans Health Care System. Mary Raymer’s most significant contribution to VA nursing is in her status as Chair of the Nurse Qualification Standards Implementation National Task Force. Mary Raymer has demonstrated her passion for seeing the standards implemented and ensuring that every VA nurse has the knowledge necessary to understand the standards and meet performance criteria.

Jeanette Andrews, M.S.N., R.N., C.S., F.N.P., received the NOVA Professional Nurse Award. She is a Family Nurse Practitioner at the Augusta VAMC who epitomizes the professional nurse, making many outstanding contributions to both the nursing profession and
veterans’ health care. She has authored more than ten publications, is recognized nationally as an expert in her field, and was recently awarded one of NOVA’s first Foundation research grants.

Vernice Ferguson, R.N., M.A., F.A.A.N., F.R.C.N., received NOVA’s newest award, the Vernice Ferguson Award. The NOVA Board of Directors created this award to honor an individual or group of persons who have made a significant contribution to the NOVA Foundation. During her three-year term as the first Chairman of the Foundation Board, Ms. Ferguson took the dream of the Foundation and made it an extraordinary reality. She is a tireless fundraiser and a passionate speaker for the Foundation, which raised more than $90,000.00 in 1999. Seven scholarships and two research grants were awarded by NOVA, one research grant was awarded by the DAV Charitable Trust this year. Dr. Sarah V. Myers became NOVA’s 9th president.

Schering Oncology Biotech provided an educational grant for NOVA’s first Regional Seminar held in VISN 1. The morning session focused on Hepatitis C clinical issues. The afternoon session focused on becoming a lobbyist for your profession and veteran patient. The seminar was deemed a success by participants encouraging the Board to look at future offerings. Task Forces on Advanced Practice Nurses, Staff Nurses, and Locality Pay will continue. Work continues on the resolution related to FERS retirement submitted in 1999 by the Palo Alto VA Health Care System. Membership Awards were given to West Haven, Denver, and Dallas for recruiting the most new members. Karin Torson-Thompson recruited over 80 new members for the West Haven VAMC and received the Blue Stamp Winner Award.

NOVA’s voice is strengthened by partnerships. Executive Director Deborah Beck spoke with JoAnn Webb, Program Director of Health Policy of the PVA about the extremely low morale of nurses and her grave concerns. She then wrote an article for a PVA publication, *The True Value of Professional Nurses.* This article was in support of H.R. 1216, the VA Nurse Appreciation Act of 1999.

In early April, NOVA sent a letter to Secretary West expressing concern related to the unfilled position of Chief Consultant, NSHG. This letter was forwarded to veterans’ service organizations, and PVA sent a letter to Secretary West stating PVA’s concern about this vacancy. NOVA President Sarah Myers and Director Mary Raymer met with Secretary Togo West on May 2, 2000. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the continuing vacancy in the position of Chief Consultant, NSHG, a position which had been vacant since July 1, 1998. The NOVA representatives also discussed the low morale of the nursing workforce and suggested staffing levels should be addressed. Secretary West suggested NOVA meet regularly with him at least quarterly. After the meeting, Secretary West named Catherine (Cathy) Rick R.N., M.S.N., C.H.E., C.N.A.A. the new Chief Consultant, NSHG. Ms. Rick came to Washington from the Milwaukee VAMC where she served as the Associate Chief of Staff/Nursing and Primary Care Division Manager since 1997, having joined the VA in 1992.

NOVA Executive Director Deborah Beck and Bill Booher, Executive Director of the National Association of VA Physicians and Dentists, conducted a tremendously successful lobbying effort for H.R. 5109/S.1402, which addressed pay issues. Though the bill had been given up for nearly dead by most Capitol Hill observers, Ms. Beck and Mr. Booher formed an informal coalition, along with the American Dental Association, and used all of the advanced communications tools available, including web sites, email, and phone banks to alert association members to the status of this legislation and the importance of motivating their membership at the grass roots level. It had been nearly ten years since Congress addressed major compensation
policy issues for VA health care professionals. As the decision makers on the Hill began to see that VA nurses, physicians, and dentists were united and willing to work with Congress to explain the rationale for certain elements of the legislation, new life was breathed into the bill.

NOVA and all VA registered nurses scored a tremendous legislative victory in November, 2000, when President Clinton signed S.1402 into law. PL-106-419, “Veterans Benefits and Health Care Improvement Act of 2000” was an omnibus bill that addressed pay issues affecting registered nurses, dentists, physician assistants, social workers, and pharmacists. It also impacts veterans’ benefits and authorization. Section 201 of the bill encompassed reform of the RN locality pay system, as well as mandating increased nursing input in senior management at the VISN level as well as at individual medical centers. The changes to RN locality pay included: a cost of living increase; significant reform of the survey system so the survey data collected is more representative of nearby facilities; oversight of medical center director RN salary decisions by VAHQ, with authority to modify if needed; and required annual reports on nursing staffing. The law also mandates VISN directors to consult with senior nurse executives when making policy about patient care.

NOVA held its eighth Annual Legislative Roundtable December 1, 2000, in conjunction with the Board of Director’s meeting at the DAV Headquarters in Washington, D.C. In its short history, this event has become an important and valuable forum for stakeholders to examine VHA. Participants included: NOVA Board of Directors; Thomas Garthwaite, M.D., Under Secretary for Health; Cathy Rick, R.N., M.S.N., C.H.E., C.N.A.A., Consultant, NSHG; Audrey Drake, R.N., M.S.N., Program Director, NSHG; Bill Wetmore, Esq., National Representative, National VA Council; Jacqueline Garrick, Deputy Director of Healthcare, American Legion; Dick Wannamacher, Legislative Director, DAV; Gordon Mansfield; Executive Director, PVA; Bill Cahill, Professional Staff, Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs; John Bradley, Staff Director, Subcommittee on Health, House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs; Susan Edgerton, Democratic Staff Director, Subcommittee on Health, House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs; J. David Cox, First Vice President, AFGE; Rose Gonzalez, Director, Department of Government Affairs; ANA; Ken Wetjen, CRNA, President, Wilkerson Philips, CRNA, President-Elect, and Tom Mines, CRNA, Past President, Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists; and Bill Booher, Executive Director, National Association of VA Physicians and Dentists.

The National Nursing Education Initiative completed a year of activity, with 1,253 applications processed and 200 additional pending. Nearly 70% of the awards supported baccalaureate education, while approximately 30% supported graduate education.

The officers for 2000-2001 were:
President: Sarah V. Myers (Atlanta VAMC)
Vice President: Vincent Elliott (Palo Alto VAMC)
Secretary: Barbara Zicafoose (Salem VAMC)
Membership Secretary: Dianne Nelson (Tucson VAMC)
Treasurer: Cecelia McVey (Boston VAMC)
Directors:
   Denise Carey (Charleston VAMC)
   Mary-Jo Doolan (Boston VAMC)
   Veronica Kirchhofer (North Texas VAMC)
   William Martin (Northampton VAMC)
   Mary Raymer (Salem VAMC)
   Billie Jean Summers (Murfreesboro VAMC)
2001

NOVA’s legislative priorities include:
- supporting adequate funding for VA healthcare;
- supporting the independent budget;
- developing a formal, collaborative relationship with the VSOs, our union partners, and other stakeholders to implement a public awareness campaign;
- maintaining adequate and competent workforce to provide quality health care to our veterans;
- supporting passage/implementation of legislation S1188;
- monitoring and providing input as indicated, on legislation that impacts health care;
- supporting recommendations of the VHA Nursing Workforce Planning Group;
- actively seeking NOVA membership on national task forces or committees that impact VA health care;
- and providing input to National Office with information on potential local/national task forces that are being initiated.

Anthony J. Principi is the new Secretary for the Department of Veterans Affairs. A graduate of West Point and a combat, Vietnam-era veteran, he has displayed a lifelong commitment to and respect for the nation’s men and women in uniform.

The NOVA Foundation held its third annual Congressional Briefing on March 14, 2001, titled “Innovative Programs in the Department of Veterans Affairs: Agent Orange and Type II Diabetes in the Vietnam Veteran.” Secretary Principi gave the Keynote Address and shared his vision for the DVA. Congressman Lane Evans also addressed the participants. Over 100 participants attended, including legislative aids/veterans issues, registered nurses from around the country; veterans service organization representatives; and members of the corporate community.

The DAV Charitable Trust also provided underwriting for the NOVA Foundation’s first research seminar, Using Research to Improve Practice. Cheryl B. Stetler, Ph.D., R.N., F.A.A.N., an internationally renowned expert on evidence based practice presented the program on April 24, 2001. She also developed an adjunct teaching guide, Evidence-Based Practice and the Use of Research: A Synopsis of Basic Concepts & Strategies to Improve Care, which was distributed to participants and nurse executives at all VA facilities.

The NOVA Foundation’s Gala was held on April 25, 2001, at the Crystal City Hilton in Washington, D.C. Senator and Mrs. Bob Dole were the Honorary Co-Chairs of the event. The program recognized the Honorable Sonny Montgomery as the moving force behind the creation of the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Professional Scholarship Program in the mid-1980’s.

NOVA’s Twenty-first Annual Meeting was held April 26 – 29, 2001, in the Crystal City Hilton in Washington, D.C. The theme, “Coalition Building: Bringing Veterans Issues to the Forefront,” was fun, hard work, filled with networking opportunities and very rewarding for nurses and patient advocates. The keynote address was given by Stephanie Ferguson, Ph.D., R.N., F.A.A.N., Associate Professor at the College of Nursing and Health Science, George Mason University. Her address was “Future Health Trends: Implications and Strategies for VA
Nurses.” Staff members of the Senate and House VA Subcommittees, as well as three veterans service organizations presented their legislative agenda and partnering efforts to better serve veterans for the first session of the 107th Congress. NOVA nurses went to Capitol Hill to act on the mission-shaping and influencing VA health care, raising issues such as the VA budget, the nursing shortage, and quality of care.

Mary Wakefield, Ph.D., R.N., F.A.A.N., Director, Center for Health policy, Research, and Ethics, spoke on “Partnering Politics with Nursing.” Barb Bancroft, R.N., M.S.N., F.N.P. presented a variety of women’s health issues. Ms. Bancroft is an outstanding speaker who is actively sought by NOVA members to present at the annual meeting. Other clinical sessions of the meeting addressed a variety of pertinent topics: medical errors, pain as the fifth vital sign, and depression in the elderly.

NOVA awarded its Distinguished Service Award, given for distinguished service to the veterans’ health care system, to Susan Edgerton, Democratic Staff Director, Subcommittee on Health, Committee on Veterans Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, and Ralph Ibsen, former Staff Director of the Subcommittee on Health, Committee on Veterans Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives. Ms. Edgerton pushed for necessary reforms to the locality pay system, generating support for PL 106-419, when almost everyone said major reform was politically impossible. This law is a testament to her hard work, vision, political skills, and commitment to VA RNs. Mr. Ibsen is receiving his award for over 20 years of work in the area of veterans’ health care. Charlotte Beason, Ed.D., R.N., C.N.A.A., Program Director, NSHG, DVA, received the Professional Nurse Award for her contributions to the profession of nursing in the DVA. The first place Membership Award was given to Birmingham. Dallas was awarded second place, and third place was awarded to Connecticut.

NOVA President Sarah V. Myers responded to the invitation of Senator Jay Rockefeller to present both written and a five-minute oral testimony on “The Nursing Shortage and Its Potential Effect on VA Health Care.” Senator Rockefeller introduced the Nurse Recruitment and Retention Act of 2001 (S.1188) in the Senate on July 18, 2001. Following the introduction, Senator Max Cleland mentioned NOVA when he addressed the Senate. He stated, “Expert witnesses, like the Department of Veterans Affairs President, Sarah Myers, R.N., Ph.D. of Atlanta, Georgia, testified at the June 14, 2001 Senate Veterans Affairs Committee hearing on the nursing shortage. These witnesses identified critical issues ranging from those impacting nurses’ ability to continue to safely care for veterans to nursing burnout.” His passionate address led to the fruition of the Health Care Programs Enhancement Act of 2001.

Two nurses, Mary Ann Mackin and Pat Trapani began working on an inequity in the retirement calculations for part-time VA nurses by convincing Congressman Mike Doyle (D-PA) to introduce a bill in the House to rectify this. The Senate VA Committee included the entire bill language in S.1188. The resolution presented at the 1999 annual meeting from the Palo Alto Chapter was sponsored by Legislative Chair Vince Elliott’s Representative, Tom Lantos (D-CA). Immediate Past President Margaret Kruckemeyer explained this issue to Senator Max Cleland at the NOVA Foundation Congressional Briefing, who requested his Legislative Aid to follow up, resulting in S.1080, introduced by the Senator. Language from this bill was then included in S.1188.

In spite of the tragic events of September 11th and the resultant slow down in Congress, this was a year of legislative victory for NOVA. NOVA influenced the political process through testimony at the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. NOVA was the only representative for professional nursing that was not affiliated with labor or management. NOVA was a major
stakeholder in the passage of the DVA Health Care Programs Enhancement Act of 2001. NOVA identified issues of significance to the professional nurse and directly participated in the development of the bill to assure these issues were included. A key point of this legislation included retention of sick leave benefits for annuity computation, an issue that was first identified by NOVA nurses and now positively benefits thousands of employees and ultimately our patients. Other points included reduction of the employment time for NNEI/EISP eligibility from two years to one year; elevation of the position of the Chief Nurse Consultant to reporting directly to the Under Secretary for Health; and establishing a national commission on VA Nursing to explore and implement innovative strategies for the resolution of workplace and workforce issues. NOVA also intervened with written position papers for critical issues such as Prescriptive Authority for Advanced Practice Nurses and workplace safety.

NOVA maintains a presence on many committees dedicated to professional VA nursing issues. Veronica Kirchhofer was the NOVA Board representative on the VA Future Nursing Workforce Planning Group. Their final report, “A Call to Action—VA’s Response to the National Nursing Shortage,” addresses retention, recruitment, utilization of nursing staff, and outreach. Dianne Nelson is the NOVA Board member on the Nurse Qualification Standard Implementation Steering Committee. The current work of the committee is designing a crosswalk to link the Qualification Standard with the High Performance Development Model. Board Member Mary Raymer is the chair of the group. NOVA continues to work with Partnership Council members to share our strengths and work collaboratively on issues of mutual concern. NOVA Board Members and National Office staff maintain contact with our Veterans Service Organizations to improve healthcare for our veteran patients.

The NOVA Foundation awarded seven scholarships and two research grants, and administered two more research grants funded by the DAV Charitable Trust. The NOVA Foundation raised nearly $100,000 this year. Since beginning in 1997, the Foundation has awarded 37 scholarships to recipients representing 18 states and 27 VA facilities.

NOVA piloted a new service, “Cap Wiz,” where members could send a message directly to their members of Congress. This did not prove popular with members and was discontinued. The web page was completely redesigned with new and exciting information. Some great features include “Hot News,” a subscriber section, connection to over 100 helpful links including congressional representatives, and information on NOVA’s board members. NOVA also completed a membership survey, identifying issues of concern to members.

NOVA held its ninth Annual Legislative Roundtable November 30, 2001, in Washington, D.C. Participants included the NOVA Board of Directors; Fran Murphy, M.D., Deputy Undersecretary for Health; Cathy Rick, R.N., M.S.N., C.N.A.A., C.H.E., Consultant, NSHG, DVA; Carol Craig, CRNA, President, and Ken Wetjen, CRNA, Past President, Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists; Bill Booher, Executive Director, National Association of VA Physicians and Dentists; David Cox, R.N., First Vice President, AFGE; Susan Edgerton, Minority Staff Director, House Committee on Veterans Affairs; James Fischel, Director of Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, The American Legion; Joy Ilem, Assistant National Legislative Director for Medical Affairs, DAV; Richard Fuller, Legislative Director, PVA; and Dennis Cullinan, Legislative Director, VFW.

The officers for 2001-2002 were:
President: Sarah V. Myers (Atlanta VAMC)
President-Elect: Vincent Elliott (Palo Alto VAMC)
2002

President Bush signed the Veterans Affairs Health Care Improvement Act of 2001 (PL 107-135) into law in January, 2002. The act permanently authorizes the Employee Incentive Scholarship Program (EISP) for nurses, reduces the time nurses need to work at VA before they are eligible to receive a scholarship, and removes limits to the amount of money nurses can receive from VA for school, as long as that amount isn’t more than the equivalent of three years of full time study. The act also permanently authorizes VA’s Education Debt Reduction Program, which allows VA to help pay for nurse schooling, up to a total of $44,000.00, with the Secretary able to adjust that amount if needed to coincide with federal pay increases. It also mandates that VA provide Saturday premium pay to Licensed Practical Nurses; gives VA nurses enrolled in the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) the same ability to use unused sick leave as part of their retirement calculations that nurses enrolled in the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) now have, and requires the Secretary and Under Secretary for Health to establish a nationwide policy on nurse staffing standards for VA medical facilities.

The legislation also requires the Secretary to evaluate nurse-managed clinics and determine whether they are feasible in the future, and to submit an annual report on what the DVA is doing to keep our experienced nurses. The top VA nurse in Central Office, currently Cathy Rick, is now required to report directly to the Under Secretary for Health, another recognition of the importance of nurses in our health care system. It exempts RNs, physicians, and some dental technicians from the government wide requirement that part time government service performed before April 7, 1986, be prorated in calculating their retirement. Finally, it establishes a National Commission on VA Nursing.

Also in January, the Nursing Strategic Healthcare Group released *A Call to Action--VA’s Response to the National Nursing Shortage*. The report is the product of VA’s National Nursing Workforce Work Group. Veronica Kirchhofer represented NOVA on this group. The report is a frank discussion of VA’s ability to compete in today’s nursing labor market and the barriers that impede nurse retention, recruitment, and utilization. VA’s retention of nurses is dependent on fostering professional work environments in which nursing is valued and respected. Recommendations are presented under the headings of retention, recruitment, utilization, and outreach, and emphasize areas of change at all levels. Under retention, a number of actions are suggested to create more positive work environments in which nursing judgment is valued and respected. Nurse pay is also addressed.

Recruitment of new nurses into VA is closely associated with retention issues. Among the recruitment proposals, VA is encouraged to seek broader pay and hiring authorities, and to use existing authorities in a flexible and creative manner. It recommends expanding the VALOR program and reactivating the Health Professional Scholarship Program. To support utilization of
staff, it’s recommended that nurses have sufficient support personnel and technology to maximize their patient care activities, and have adequate education/training, and the time to attend classes, on the proper use of technology. VA’s role in outreach is linked to the need to improve the image of nursing as a desirable career.

Secretary Principi announced on April 1, 2002, the membership of a 12-person commission to advise him on issues affecting nurses working in DVA. NOVA Board Member Mary Raymer has been appointed to serve as NOVA’s representative on this commission. The panel can consider legislative and organizational changes to enhance the recruitment and retention of nurses. A report on the commission’s findings is due May, 2004.

NOVA’s Twenty-second Annual Meeting was held May 2-4, 2002, in Reno, Nevada. Dr. Robert Roswell, Under Secretary for Health, delivered the opening keynote address, enthusiastically announcing that Cathy Rick, Chief Consultant, NSHG, DVA, now reports directly to him. He also applauded the NSHG’s “Call for Action.” Kris Davies, M.S.N., R.N., North Texas Health Care System, spoke about the challenges of the job of a nurse recruiter. Deborah Antai-Otong, M.S., P.M.H.N.P., C.S., R.N., North Texas Health Care System, presented tips for creative stress management and techniques for self-renewal. In an encore performance, Barbara Bancroft, M.S.N., P.N.P., R.N., gave a very insightful, humorous session “Shampoos, Tattoos, and Bar-B-Que: Clinical Immunology Simplified.” Libby Lewis, R.N., Johnson & Johnson Healthcare, spoke about J & J’s nursing recruitment campaign. Vincent Elliott became NOVA’s 10th president.


Dr. Robert Roswell, Network Director for VISN 8 when nominated and currently Under Secretary for Health, received the Distinguished Service Award for creating a work environment that is supportive, innovative, and visionary for professional nurses and nursing practice. Richard Wannamacher, Associate Legislative Director for the DAV from 1996 through 1999, received the Veterans Service Award for devoting hours of time to impact the legislative process and improve the quality of care for all veterans. The Palo Alto Chapter received the Barbara Chambers Award for actively supporting the NOVA Foundation with monetary contributions, active involvement in the legislative process locally and nationally, and their resolution to change the FERS retirement structure. Marilyn Lynn, a Nurse Practitioner at the Denver VAMC, received the Professional Nurse Award for her 15 years of dedicated service to DVA, and her significant contributions to the nursing profession and quality veterans health care. Lynna Smith, former NOVA President, received the Vernice Ferguson Award for devoting many hours of time, energy, and significant financial support to the NOVA Foundation, including numerous successful silent auctions.

The second annual NOVA Foundation Gala was held October 24, 2002 in Washington, D.C. prior to the Nurse Leadership Conference. Elizabeth Principi, R.N., J.D., was the Chair of the Gala. President and Mrs. George Bush served as honorary chairs. The G.V. Sonny
Montgomery Award was presented to Faye Abdellah, R.N., Ed.D., Sc.D., F.A.A.N., Dean and Professor, Graduate School of Nursing of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences for her leadership and outstanding support of the VA/DOD Adult Nurse Practitioner Post-Master’s Program. The fourth Nurse Leadership Conference, Coaching & Mentoring: The Leadership Edge for the Future, was held at the Westin Grand Hotel in Washington, D.C. October 25 – 26, 2002.

NOVA’s tenth Annual Legislative Roundtable was held November 22, 2002, in Washington DC, hosted by the DAV. This extremely successful forum generated discussion on a variety of issues, including the mandatory VA budget, HR.5250, and concerns regarding access to care, growth, and workload. NOVA board members attended, along with attendees from the Department of Veterans Affairs Robert Roswell, MD, Under Secretary for Health; Gordon Mansfield, Assistant Secretary for Congressional & Legislative Affairs; Charlotte Beason, EdD, RN, Program Director; and Cathy Rick, RN, CNAA, CHE, Chief Nursing Officer. VA professional organizations were represented by Carol Craig, CRNA, President, Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists (AVANA); Angela Weiss, CRNA, Secretary AVANA; Ken Wetjen, CRNA, Executive Director, AVANA; and Bill Booher, Executive Director, National Association of VA Physicians & Dentists. VA Partnership Council representatives included J. David Cox, RN, First Vice President, American Federation of Government Employees and Christopher Donnellan, Legislative Affairs, American Nurses Association. Oweda Moorer, Executive Director, Commission of VA Nursing also attended. Legislative attendees included Bill Cahill, Professional Staff, Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, and John Bradley, Majority Staff Director, and Susan Edgerton, Minority Staff Director, Subcommittee on Health, House Committee on Veterans Affairs. Veterans Service Organizations were represented by Patti Orsino, Deputy Director/Health Issues, The American Legion; David Gorman, Executive Director, and Adrian Atizado, Assistant Legislative Director, Disabled American Veterans; Richard Fuller, National Legislative Director, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Dennis Cullinan, Legislative Director, Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The officers for 2002-2003 were:

President: Vincent Elliott (Palo Alto VAMC)
Vice President: Dianne Nelson (Tucson VAMC)
Secretary: Barbara Zicafoose (Salem VAMC)
Membership Secretary: Veronica Kirchhofer (North Texas VAMC)
Treasurer: Cecelia McVey (Boston VAMC)
Directors: Cindy Adamek (Denver VAMC)
Catherine Bailey (Baltimore VAMC)
Marva Banks Fretheim (Richmond VAMC)
Nancy Claflin (Phoenix VAMC)
Mary Raymer (Salem VAMC)
Beverly Ross (Richmond VAMC)
Immediate Past President: Sarah V. Myers (Atlanta VAMC)

2003

Each year the four veterans service organizations (AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America and Veterans of Foreign Wars) submits an Independent Budget to the Administration and Congress for the upcoming fiscal year. Since its inception,
NOVA has endorsed this budget recommendation for the VA. The NOVA Board of Directors decided it was time for NOVA to produce its own version of an independent budget for presentation to the Administration, the Senate and House Appropriations and Budget Committees as well as every Congressional office. The first document, *The Critical Need for a Strong Nursing Workforce*, was developed and shared.

NOVA’s 23rd Annual Meeting was held March 26-30, 2003 in Washington, DC. Audrey Drake RN, MSN, Program Director Office of Nursing Services, began the program with a presentation on the Nurse Professional Standards Board. Faye Abdellah RN, EdD, ScD, FAAN and Vernice Ferguson RN, MA, FAAN, FRCN delighted NOVA members with a book signing and poignant and resourceful remembrances of nursing’s history during a NOVA Foundation fundraiser Celebrating Military Nursing. Mary Raymer, RN, MA, CNAA, a member of the National Commission on VA Nursing, presented information on the Commission’s hearings and NOVA’s plans for representation. Ilisa M. Halpern, MPP, Director of Federal Government Relations for the Oncology Nursing Society, gave an exciting presentation on Working Together for Political Change. The Veterans Service Organization panel was presented by Joy Ilem, National Legislative Director for the Disabled American Veterans (DAV); Cathy Wiblemo, Legislative Affairs for the American Legion; and Michael O’Rourke, Assistant Director Veterans Health Policy for the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). Cecelia McVey, RN, MHA, CNA reviewed legislative issues for NOVA members heading up to Capitol Hill for visits with legislators. Laura Miller, Deputy Under Secretary for Operations and Jonathan Perlin, MD, Deputy Under Secretary for Health, presented A Town Hall Meeting. The Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committee Panel was presented by Bill Cahill, Program Director, Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs; Alex Sardega, Minority Legislative Assistant, Senator Committee on Veterans Affairs; John Bradley, Ranking Staff Director, House Committee on Veterans Affairs; and Susan Edgerton, Minority Staff Director, House Committee on Veterans Affairs. Donna Schroeder, HRM Specialist, gave an update on Locality Pay, including the requirement for an annual survey of nurse pay. Terri Gaffney, RN, Executive Director of the American Academy of Nursing, presented Nursing Technology: Addressing the Nursing Shortage. Dianne Nelson RN, BSN gave an uplifting presentation on Leadership in the VA: Planning for the Future. Beverly Ross RN, MSN, CS presented Women Veterans and Mental Health. Joyce Bounds, RN, presented an update on the Virtual Learning Center (VLC). She discussed the objectives of the center which are to facilitate the sharing of innovations and lessons learned across the VA. She reviewed the use of the center, including how to submit information, and search for meaningful topics. Denise Lester, MD, challenged the audience with her presentation on Pain Management: Current Treatment Issues. Veronica Kirchhofer-Elliott RN, BSN spoke on Malignant Melanoma. Annette Trudeau, SRNA, BS spoke on bioterrorism issues including Smallpox and Anthrax: A Current Perspective.

The NOVA Distinguished Service Award was given to the Disabled American Veterans Organization for hosting the NOVA Legislative Roundtable and providing educational grants for regional seminars. The NOVA Professional Nurse Award for Leadership was given to David Przestrzelski, RN, MSN for developing the Tucson Nurses Week Foundation which recognizes fifty Tucson nurses annually. The NOVA Professional Nurse Award for Clinical Excellence recognizes the work of the Nurse Case Management Team at the VA Connecticut Healthcare System. The team members include Registered Nurses: Margaret Veazey, Phyllis Carlson, Gail Barrows, Lorraine Urquhart, Susan Dicker, Elaine DiCicco, Catherine Smith and Donna Vogel. The NOVA Barbara Chambers Award was given to Margaret Kruckemeyer, RN, a past-president.
of NOVA, for serving NOVA for many years with relentless energy and enthusiasm. The NOVA Veterans Award was given to Max Cleland, former Senator from Georgia, an avid supporter of nursing and of NOVA. He was the first member of Congress to mention NOVA on the Senate floor.

NOVA had not only a voice but a strong presence on Capitol Hill. Once again, NOVA held an extremely successful Congressional Reception in the Rayburn House Office Building on March 27, 2003 during NOVA’s annual meeting. In addition to NOVA members, attendees included Secretary Anthony Principi, Deputy Under Secretary Laura Miller, and Deputy Under Secretary Jonathan Perlin, MD, as well as legislative assistants and other Congressional staff members. NOVA received the following thank you letter from a Member of Congress for this year’s reception: “Sharon Schultze, my Sr. Legislative Assistant, enjoyed speaking with several of your members at your March 27th reception on Capitol Hill. Please do not hesitate to call me whenever I can be of assistance. Best wishes. Sincerely, Bob Filner, Member of Congress.”

NOVA President Vince Elliott, NOVA Board Member Mary Raymer, NOVA Member Deb Kupecz and NOVA President-Elect Dianne Nelson had the honor of having lunch with Secretary Principi on Thursday, March 27th, as a result of a NOVA Foundation Silent Auction item bid.

NOVA’s annual meeting was held Friday, March 28, 2003. Election results were announced as follows: President-Elect, Dianne Nelson; Vice President; Treasurer, Mary Raymer; Secretary, Nancy Claflin; Board of Directors, Linda-Dell Archuleta, Larry Lemos, and Beverly Ross. President Vince Elliott announced that he was appointing Catherine Bailey and Jeanette Siler to one-year terms on the Board of Directors to complete terms for Mary Raymer and Nancy Claflin. Membership increased by100 last year to 2,766.

The National Commission on VA Nursing held hearings in four cities in April, hearing testimony from individuals and organizations. The Commission was established by Public Law 107-135, with a mission to consider legislative and organizational changes to enhance the recruitment and retention of nurses, and assess the future of the nursing profession in VA. The Commission invited organizations and key stakeholders, including NOVA, to present formal written testimony; and at the four cities, to present abbreviated public testimony, summarizing the formal written testimony. NOVA submitted formal written testimony at all four cities addressing these seven questions from a different focus each time. A representative of NOVA also formally spoke, summarizing the longer formal written testimony. NOVA’s testimony focus and representatives were: April 3, New Orleans: focus-advanced practice nurses; testimony presented by Sarah Myers, NOVA's Immediate Past President, advanced practice nurse at the Atlanta VA; April 16, Philadelphia: focus-nurse executives; testimony presented by Cecilia McVey, NOVA's Vice President, nurse executive at the Boston VA; April 24, Chicago: focus-nurse managers; testimony presented by NOVA member Connie Shiverdecker, nurse manager of the hospice unit at the Dayton VA; and April 30, Long Beach: focus-staff nurses; testimony presented by Dianne Nelson, NOVA’s President-Elect, staff nurse at the Tucson VA. In addition to the invited formal testimony by NOVA, many individual NOVA nurses also requested time to testify, either scheduled or at the open forums.

Vernice Ferguson invited NOVA Executive Director Deborah Beck to address the CARES Commission and dialog with Commission members.

NOVA was a sponsor for the reception 9/9/03 on Capitol Hill sponsored by the Americans for Nursing Shortage Relief honoring the uniformed services as well as the federal nurses of the VA and American Red Cross.
The third annual NOVA Foundation Gala was held September 16, 2003 in Washington, D.C. prior to the Nurse Leadership Conference.

NOVA was extremely active on the legislative front this year. NOVA monitored HR 1951, as this bill had several provisions that NOVA did not support, including collective bargaining for staffing, collective bargaining for promotions, and elimination of the BSN requirement for promotion to Nurse II. In response to HR 1951, the NOVA Board of Directors developed a position paper on Mandatory Nurse Staffing Ratios, which was available on the NOVA web site. HR 1951 was replaced by HR 2433, Health Care for Veterans of Project 112/Project SHAD Act of 2003. HR 2433 was passed unanimously by the House Veterans Affairs Committee, which allows for no amendments to the bill. NOVA developed a legislative strategy for dealing with this bill. NOVA’s Legislative Chair, Cecelia McVey, had several successful contacts on Capitol Hill regarding this legislation. In addition, the NOVA Executive Committee made visits to Capitol Hill on Thursday, July 24, 2003, to discuss this important legislation. Concentrating on members of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee staff, the following contacts were made: Lori Schultz Hime, Legislative Assistant (LA) for Senator James Jeffords of Vermont; Carolyn Powers, LA for Congressman Stephen Lynch of Massachusetts (who introduced HR 2433); David Stockwell, LA for Senator Kay Hutchinson of Texas; Bill Turk, Senate VA Committee Majority Staff; Alexa Grollman, LA for Senator Arlen Specter; Kim Lipsky, Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Minority Staff; Jim Lutus, LA for Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts; Vivian Ottman, LA for Senator Ben N. Campbell of Colorado; Eric Pierce, LA for Senator Ben Nelson of Nebraska; Shay Hancock, LA for Senator Patty Murray of Washington; and Kathleen Pierce RN, LA for Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii. All of the staffers supported NOVA’s position by the end of the meetings. A meeting was also held with the members of the House Veterans Affairs Committee staff. NOVA’s position paper on Mandatory Staffing, Questions and Answers regarding the BSN Degree, and information on the locality pay system, advancement process, professional standards board, nurse qualification standards, and employee concerns was shared. In addition, NOVA Executive Committee members met with Secretary Principi, and with Jonathan Perlin, Deputy Under Secretary for Health, and Cathy Rick, Chief Nursing Officer, Office of Nursing Services.

The National Commission on VA Nursing convened in Washington D.C. on June 10th and 11th for its fifth meeting and began preparing the final report in September. Approximately 400 NOVA member letters had been received by the Commission by June 2003.

NOVA again presented testimony before Congress on October 2, 2003. Dr. Sarah Myers, NOVA Past President, presented testimony before the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs. Dr. Myers presented information on recruitment and retention of VA nurses, a critical issue impacting care of veterans.

NOVA held its eleventh Annual Legislative Roundtable on November 22, 2003 at the DAV National Headquarters in Washington, DC. This forum again provided an opportunity for key stakeholders in veterans’ issues to gather and share information. Senate Bill 1156 which had just passed the day before was discussed by the participants, along with legislative priorities for the next session of Congress. Participants included: NOVA Board of Directors; Margaret Kruckemeyer, MSN, CRNP, former NOVA President; Cathy Rick, RN, CHE, CNAA, Chief Nursing Officer Department of Veterans Affairs; Betsy Oliver, Executive Assistant, Office of Nursing Programs Department of Veterans Affairs; Oyweda Moorer, Executive Director, National Commission on VA Nursing; Chris Donnellan, Associate Director of Government Affairs, American Nurses Association; Carol Craig, CRNA, President,

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Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists; Ilona Mallon, RN, representing Association of VA Nurse Recruiters; Bill Booher, Executive Director, National Association of VA Physicians and Dentists; Bill Cahill, Majority Professional Staff, Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs; Don Mooney, Assistant Director of Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, American Legion; Thomas Miller, Executive Director, Blinded Veterans of America; Joy Ilem, Assistant Legislative Director for Medical Affairs, Disabled American Veterans; and Michael O’Rourke, Assistant Director of Veterans Health Policy, Veterans of Foreign Wars.

NOVA scored a significant legislative victory with the passage of Senate Bill 1156, the Veterans Health Care, Capital Asset, and Business Improvement Act of 2003. Members of the NOVA Executive Committee were on Capitol Hill the week this legislation was passed in November, 2003, visiting staff from the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee including William Henderson, Legislative Assistant (LA) for Senator Jim Bunning of Kentucky; Carol Madonna, LA for Senator Daniel Akaka from Hawaii; Meredith Mosely, LA for Senator Lindsay Graham from South Carolina; Cody Johnson, LA for Senator John Ensign from Nevada; and staff with Senator Patty Murray of Washington. S 1156 represents a compromise agreement containing provisions from several other bills, including H.R. 1720, H.R. 2357, and H.R. 2433. NOVA is pleased to report that S 1156 does not eliminate the BSN requirement for promotion to Nurse II. This bill:

- Eliminates the 90 day requirement for former POWs to qualify for dental care and eliminates prescription drug copayments for all former POWs;
- Authorizes VA to provide health care to veterans who participated in chemical and biological testing known as Project 112/SHAD without the requirement to charge co-pays;
- Authorizes health care services to Filipino World War II veterans living in the U.S.;
- Allows VA to contract with smaller non-VA providers to provide nursing and extended care to aging veterans;
- Authorizes VA to appoint chiropractors as clinical providers;
- Increases funding for specialized mental health care services, including therapeutic employment services to patients in need of rehabilitation for mental health disorders, and allocates funds for direct grants to mental health programs, PTSD programs, and substance abuse programs;
- Extends VA’s authority to transfer certain properties to community-based homeless veterans assistance providers;
- Extends the requirement to provide nursing home care to 70% or greater service connected veterans;
- Authorizes VA to carry out a pilot program of assisted living for veterans in one health care region;
- Increases the major medical facility construction projects threshold to $7 million from the current $4 million and streamline VA’s enhanced use authority;
- Gives VA the authority to carry out major construction projects specified in the final report of the CARES Commission and approved by the Secretary 45 days after it submits to Congress a report describing the projects;
Requires VA to notify Congress at least 60 days prior to undertaking any medical facility closures, consolidations, or staff realignments recommended by the CARES initiative;

Requires VA to take steps to ensure that an appropriate mix of health care facilities and clinical staff is available for veterans residing in rural areas;

Authorizes $276.6 million to cover new major medical construction projects of long term care facilities in Lebanon, PA and Beckley, WV; a new bed tower to consolidate two inpatient sites at the West Side Division in Chicago, IL; seismic corrections to buildings in San Diego, CA; renovation of all inpatient wards and establishment of a research facility at West Haven, CT; and construction of a VA-Navy outpatient medical care facility on the grounds of the Pensacola Naval Air Station in Pensacola, FL;

Authorizes funds for new VA outpatient clinic leases in Charlotte, NC and Boston, MA;

Authorizes advance planning funds for major medical projects in Denver, CO; Pittsburgh, PA; Las Vegas, NV; Columbus, OH; and east central Florida.

Requires VA to develop specific plans for meeting the future hospital care needs of veterans who reside in southern New Jersey, southern Texas, north central Washington, and certain counties of Alabama and Florida and submit to Congress by 4/15/05;

Requires VA to conduct a feasibility study in coordination with the Medical University of South Carolina and DOD to consider establishing a joint health-care venture providing comprehensive health care services to veterans, active duty service members, and other beneficiaries in the Charleston, SC area;

Authorizes VA to rename the following: Bob Stump VAMC in Prescott, AZ; Jesse Brown VAMC (Westside) in Chicago, IL; Michael E. DeBakey VAMC in Houston, TX; George E. Wahlen VAMC in Salt Lake City, UT; John J. McGuirk VA Outpatient Clinic in New London, CT; and the Victor J. Saracini VA Outpatient Clinic in Horsham, PA;

Adds several new occupations to the list of hybrid occupations in Title 38 so the entire list includes: audiologists, speech pathologists, audiologists-speech pathologists, biomedical engineers, certified or registered respiratory therapists, dietitians, licensed physical therapists, licensed practical/vocational nurses, medical instrument technicians, medical & dental technologists, nuclear medicine technologists, occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, kinesiotherapists, orthotist-prosthetists, pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, physical therapy assistants, prosthetic representatives, psychologists, diagnostic radiologic technicians, therapeutic radiologic technicians, and social workers;

Adds the above occupations and librarians to groups that VA may hire through temporary full time appointments, part time appointments, and without compensation appointments or fee basis; and may employ in temporary full time appointments in excess of 90 days;

Provides that Title 5 employees providing direct care services (such as nursing assistants) or services incident to direct patient care services are entitled to Saturday premium pay;
Permits Veterans Canteen Service employees to be considered for competitive service appointments in the VA the same as VA employees; and

Establishes an Office of Research Oversight (ORO) to strengthen protections and safety for human subjects and VA employees;

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           Linda-Dell Archuleta (Salem VAMC)
           Catherine Bailey (Baltimore VAMC)
           Larry Lemos (San Francisco VAMC)
           Beverly Ross (Richmond VAMC)
           Jeanette Siler (Miami VAMC)
Immediate Past President: Sarah V. Myers (Atlanta VAMC)

2004

In the spring, Dr. Robert Roswell resigned, and a 10-member commission was developed to recommend candidates for the post of Under Secretary for Health within the Department of Veterans Affairs. ABC News presented a disturbing report on some VA facilities in its Prime Time program, which aired April 8. Dr. Jonathan Perlin, acting Under Secretary for Health, was interviewed by Diane Sawyer for this program.

NOVA’s 24th Annual Educational Program took place in Tucson April 21-24. Audrey Drake, RN, MSN, CNA, Program Director/Nursing Services, opened the program with a pre-conference seminar on professional practice. Wednesday evening, over 60 members and guests took part in the NOVA Foundation Event, Discover Mexico in the Heart of Tucson, at a fabulous dinner outdoors at the home of Dianne and Bill Nelson. On Thursday morning, the keynote speaker, Debra Crumpton, electrified and challenged the conference participants with “Leadership in Health Care for a Diverse Nation.” Joan Ricard, RN, MHA, FACHE, who is in the Associate Director Traineeship Program, gave an enlightening presentation on “Leadership in the Department of Veterans Affairs.” Participants also heard about “Legislative Leadership and Healthcare” from Susan Bitter Smith, CAE, the Executive Director of the Arizona Cable Telecommunications Association. Barbara Zicafoose RN, MSN, ANP, from Salem, gave an excellent talk on fibromyalgia. Sarah Myers, PhD, RN C, from Atlanta, and Sharon Johnson, RN BC, MSN, from Baltimore, talked to participants about new topics in gerontology. Dr. Burt Strug gave a powerful and personal presentation of “The Handle and the Blade—Coronary Artery Disease.” Deborah Antai-Otong RN, MS, PMHNP, CS, ended the day with an outstanding presentation of “Current Trends in Mental Health Care.” Friday morning, the program was opened by Cathy Rick, RN, CNA, FACHE, Chief Nursing Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs, who provided updates on Office of Nursing Services staff. Dr. Charlotte Beason has retired. New staff members joining Audrey Drake are Dr. Anna Alt-White, Becky Kellen, Oyweda Moorer, Karen Ott, and Rose Paradis.
Wlatka Peric-Knowlton RN, MS, ANP-BC, CDE, presented an excellent description of “Diabetes & Dysmetabolic Syndrome: What You Need to Know in 2004.” She was followed by Dr. Jeffrey C. Page, who gave participants an outstanding presentation on “Diabetes-Vascular Disease Outcomes: Maintaining Foot Health.” Linda-Dell Archuleta was the moderator for a panel discussion on Holistic Health Care Models. Brian Cabin, MD (H), PC, an MD and homeopathic physician, discussed his move from traditional to non-traditional medicine, and also discussed vitamins. Barbara Hunt, RN, CHTPL, discussed healing touch. Sunanda Harrell-Stokes, Lac, a licensed acupuncturist, gave an overview of Chinese medicine. Mary Nelson, LMT, gave a fascinating talk about the effects of heat and cold with massage. Gigi Brown presented an overview of Feng Shui.

The annual business meeting was called to order by outgoing President Vince Elliott. NOVA’s 20-year history has been completed, and a professional writer was retained to consolidate NOVA’s history into a 25-page document. Members who participated in the Member-Get-A-Member-Campaign were awarded certificates. This successful campaign will continue for the 2005 annual meeting. The NOVA Foundation awarded six $1500 scholarships and the first Jesse Brown scholarship for $3000. The NOVA Foundation Dinner and the silent auctions held during the annual meeting raised over $11,000 for the NOVA Foundation. The NOVA Foundation is receiving pledges this year made to the 2003 CFC campaign. Although reports from all facilities have not been received, it is expected that the NOVA Foundation will receive over $20,000 from this campaign. A highlight of the meeting included a report from Mary Raymer on the report from the National Commission on VA Nursing. Outgoing board members Cindy Adamek, Catherine Bailey, Sarah Myers, and Jeannette Siler were recognized with plaques for their service to the NOVA board of directors.

Dianne Nelson became NOVA’s eleventh president. Election results were announced as follows: Membership secretary: Nancy Claflin; Board members: Joan Clifford, Ron Hopper, and Cindy Wilkinson. Larry Lemos was appointed secretary to complete Nancy Claflin’s term. Committee assignments for 2004-2005 were: Advanced Practice Nurse representative: Beverly Ross; Annual Meeting: Larry Lemos; Awards: Linda-Dell Archuleta assisted by Dianne Nelson; Hot News: Joan Clifford; Legislative: Cecelia McVey, assisted by Ron Hopper; Membership: Nancy Claflin; Nominations: Vince Elliott; Publications: Nancy Claflin, assisted by Cindy Wilkinson; and Teller: Catherine Bailey.

The second day of the annual educational conference ended with the President’s Reception, sponsored by the Southern Arizona Health Care System NOVA Chapter. Saturday began with the annual awards breakfast. This was followed by a panel discussion on “Promoting Wellness in Diverse Populations.” Sue Pennington, RN PhD, was the moderator. Members of the panel who discussed wellness for different ethnic groups were Carmen Oberg RN; Joyce Morrison RN, MSN; Yvonne Garcia RN, SN; and Marivic Hansen, RN, A.D.N., BS. John Baringer, RN, BSN, entertained participants with a laughter-filled presentation, including a musical interludes, on “Nurses Living Wellness.” Mary Raymer, RN, MA, CNAA, Conference Chair, closed the program and invited participants to the 25th Annual Meeting celebration in Washington, DC next spring.

The NOVA Professional Nurse Award for Clinical Excellence was given to Barbara Zicafoose, an Advanced Practice Nurse in the Salem VAMC, the Women’s Veterans Program Manager and the Women’s Health Clinic Coordinator. Barbara initiated and developed a proposal for a Women’s Health Clinic with goals of increasing health services, improving customer satisfaction, keeping the clinic on schedule, and patient advocacy. The NOVA
Professional Nurse Award for Leadership was given to Carmen Oberg, RN, BSN from the Southern Arizona Health Care System. Carmen has held a number of positions during her nursing career, most recently Nursing Director of Surgical Services, where she supervised the Operating Room, Post-Anesthesia Care Unit, Ambulatory Surgery Center, Intensive Care Unit, Step-Down Unit, and the inpatient surgical ward. She is a past-president of both the local and national Hispanic Nurses Associations and is very active in recruiting young people into nursing.

The NOVA Veteran’s Award was given to Senator John McCain. Senator McCain is one of the most vocal and admired leaders in the United States Senate. Senator McCain is very supportive of legislative issues important to veterans. The NOVA Distinguished Service Award was given to GLHN Architects and Engineers for their support of NOVA and the NOVA Foundation. The President of GLHN, Bill Nelson, has donated his time and treasures to NOVA. The NOVA Barbara Chambers Award was given to Dr. Sarah Myers. Dr. Myers presented testimony to the National Commission on VA Nursing on Recruitment and Retention of Advanced Practice Nurses, and also presented testimony on Recruitment and Retention of VA Nursing Staff to the Oversight and Investigations Committee.

The National Commission on VA nursing publicly released its final report on May 12th, 2004 to a distinguished audience including leaders from health care, labor organizations, professional nursing organizations, veterans organizations and Veterans Health Administration. The report was presented by Dr. Linda Burns Bolton, Commission Chairperson. Following the report presentation, the Honorable Anthony J. Principi recognized and presented awards to Commission Members and Advisors. Dianne Nelson, NOVA president, represented NOVA at this event. The Secretary accepted the report, and concurred with the recommendations. The Commission report recommends:

(1) Strengthening nursing leadership through all levels and ensuring nurse executive accountability and responsibility for nursing practice (for this recommendation, Secretary Principi concurred in principle, with the following rationale: VA endorses, supports, and will ensure that the facility nurse executive is fully integrated into the senior management team and its decision-making process. Nurse executives' line authority, responsibility and accountability for nursing practice will be validated by VHA within six months. VHA supports local authority for determination of medical center organizational structures and does not believe that line authority for nursing personnel is necessary to fulfill the intent of the Commission’s recommendations. Local authority for this determination overrides the Commission’s recommendation for a request for waiver.)

(2) Establishing national guidelines to support nursing education comparable to medical education.

(3) Creating nationwide staffing standards and adopting appropriate Institute of Medicine recommendations from Keeping Patients Safe: Transforming the Work Environment.

(4) Expanding recognition of achievement and performance and creating a culture of value and mutual respect for nursing through all levels of VHA.

(5) Ensuring locality pay policies are competitive, changing hiring compensation policies for LPN’s and NA’s and strengthening Human Resources support.

(6) Engage experts to redesign nursing work processes, give priority to VA Nursing Outcomes Data Base project, and partner with other federal agencies to promote information systems and technology research.

(7) Establishing a Center for Excellence in Quality Nursing Care.
The CARES commission also issued its final report. The national commission that was put together by President Bush to review Veterans Affairs health care facilities recommended that the government close hospitals in Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Gulfport, MS, and transfer large portions of care away from the Waco, TX, hospital. It its recommendations, the panel rejected the VA's initial proposal to close hospitals in Canandaigua, NY, Lexington, KY, and Livermore, CA. The 16-member panel agreed that a new hospital should be opened in Orlando, FL, but disagreed with opening a new hospital in Las Vegas. Instead, the commission recommended the VA continue partnering with Nellis Air Force Base for care.

Gordon H. Mansfield was sworn in as deputy secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). He previously served as VA's assistant secretary for congressional affairs. The deputy secretary, VA's second-highest post, oversees the day-to-day operations of the department, which has a budget of about $64 billion and 224,000 employees. Mr. Mansfield has served as VA's assistant secretary for congressional and legislative affairs since August 2001.

Before coming to VA, Mr. Mansfield served as executive director of the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) since April 1993.

The NOVA Board appointed Jayma Hall as Chair and Margaret Krukemeyer as Vice Chair of the NOVA foundation, and appointed Joan Clifford and Larry Lemos as members. Curtis (Jay) Purser was appointed to the Membership Committee, replacing Veronica Elliott. Providencia Cardona was also added to the Membership Committee, serving while Jeannette Siler is ill. The board also approved revising the membership directory to be mailed to each member in the spring of 2005. The Membership Committee was revised to include all six directors and 5 other NOVA members. Each Membership Committee members serves as the contact for 13-15 NOVA chapters, so that all chapters are included. There were 52 new members from the 2004 membership campaign. The Member-Get-A-Member Campaign for 2005 was approved.

The board also approved revision of the NOVA web page, which was accomplished. NOVA had an active legislative year. Cecelia McVey, NOVA’s Legislative Chair, was extremely active in meeting with legislators. Members of the NOVA executive committee made visits to Capitol Hill. On the Senate side, they met with Kim Lipsky, Legislative Assistant (LA) for the minority members of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and Bill Cahill, LA for Senator Specter, Chair of the Senate Veterans Committee. On the House side, they met with John Bradley, majority LA, and Susan Edgerton, minority LA for the House Veterans Affairs Committee. Among the issues discussed were the report of the National Commission on VA nursing, and legislation for alternate nurse schedules and pay for nurse executives.

The NOVA Membership Committee approved a new award, the Silver Star Award and recommended the Palo Alto Chapter to be the first winner. The committee also approved reinstating membership awards by category. The chapter size for the membership awards is as follows: Small--up to 25; Medium--26-99; Large--100 or greater. The winners will have the largest increase in the number of members. The committee also approved awarding a certificate to chapters who get 25 new members for the NOVA’s 25th anniversary. The Member-Get-A-Member Campaign began after the annual educational conference. Each member who recruits 5 new members through April 15 will receive a free membership. Each member who recruits 15 new members through April 15 will receive a free conference registration for 2005. Each member who recruits 25 new members through April 15 will receive three nights’ hotel free. In addition, the Richmond NOVA chapter issued a challenge for each chapter to recruit 25 new members for NOVA’s 25th anniversary. The NOVA board of directors approved moving its
Annual Legislative Roundtable to January, 2005, in order to enhance attendance from VA and Congressional representatives. NOVA became aware that some stations were inappropriately removing NOVA members from payroll deduction if they became supervisors, due to an automatic message received from the PAID file. This information was published in each issue of News from NOVA to alert members.

NOVA scored another significant legislative victory with Senate Bill 2484, which was passed November 17, and sent to the President for signature. This bill will:
(1) Simplify pay provisions for physicians and dentists.
(2) Authorize alternate work schedules (working three 12-hour tours of duty and be considered full time; working 9 months of the year and receiving 3 months off).
(3) Authorize executive pay for nurses (ranging from $10,000 to $25,000).
(4) Require the VA to certify to Congress that each VA has a policy designed to prevent nurses working more than 12 consecutive hours or more than 60 hours in a week.

In December, Secretary Anthony J. Principi resigned, and Jim Nicholson was nominated by President Bush to be the new Secretary. Previously, Mr. Nicholson had as the U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican since 2001. In 1997, he served as Chairman of the Republican National Committee.

Also in December, NOVA introduced a high quality dental plan for all employees of the VA. The plan is being made available to all NOVA chapters through Uniamerica Dental. NOVA has chosen Gallagher Benefit Services to market and administer this member benefit program, which should help with member recruitment and retention.

To end the year, the NOVA board of directors launched a program to send phone cards to injured service members at National Naval Medical Center and Walter Reed Medical Center.

The officers for 2004-2005 were:
President: Dianne Nelson (Southern Arizona HCS)
Vice President: Cecelia McVey (Boston HCS)
Secretary: Larry Lemos (Greater Los Angeles HCS)
Membership Secretary: Nancy Claflin (Phoenix VAMC)
Treasurer: Mary Raymer (HCSDRO, New Orleans)
Directors: Linda-Dell Archuleta (Salem VAMC)
           Joan Clifford (Boston HCS)
           Ron Hopper (Maryland HCS)
           Beverly Ross (Richmond VAMC)
           Cindy Wilkinson (Palo Alto VAMC)
Immediate Past President: Vincent Elliott (Palo Alto VAMC)

2005

This year, NOVA took a new approach to educating members of Congress regarding VA issues by holding a legislative briefing for members of the House and Senate Veterans Committees’ staff. Legislative staff members were invited to a briefing held Thursday, January 13, 2005, in the Cannon Office Building to meet members of the NOVA Board of Directors, other Congressional colleagues, and learn more about nursing in the VA. Members of NOVA’s Legislative Committee provided information on NOVA and veteran’s issues. NOVA President Dianne Nelson began the briefing with an introduction to NOVA. Legislative Committee Co-Chair Ron Hopper presented information on NOVA’s history, including information on News
From NOVA, the annual meeting, lobbying power and previous legislative accomplishments, including passage of S2484 during the 108th Congress. Legislative Committee Chair Cecilia McVey presented an overview of VA nursing and emphasized that NOVA’s greatest concern this year is with the budget. Other issues concern locality pay and hiring nursing assistants. She reviewed statistics related to nursing, the nursing shortage, and its impact on providing care to our nation’s veterans.

Legislative Committee member Mary Raymer presented information on the National Commission on VA Nursing recommendations, the nurse qualifications standards, and recruitment and retention issues. VA nurses are more highly educated than those in the private sector, with 58% compared to 44% holding a baccalaureate degree or higher. The VA employs more associate degree nurses now than before changes were made to the qualifications standards, 22%. VA employs more male nurses than the private sector, 11% to 4%. Information on scholarship programs and other innovative programs was also shared. In addition, each legislative assistant received a folder with the following documents: Attaining and Retaining a Quality VHA Nursing Workforce, winter issue of News from NOVA, brief NOVA history, and Nurse Qualifications Standards Update.

NOVA held its twelfth Annual Legislative Roundtable on January 14, 2005 at the DAV National Headquarters in Washington, DC. This forum provided an opportunity for key stakeholders in veterans’ issues to gather and share information. NOVA Legislative Chair Cecilia McVey opened the roundtable by presenting information on VA nursing issues and concerns, specifically the VA budget. She discussed passage of Senate Bill 2484 this past year which resulted in changes in physician pay, nurse executive pay, and flexibility for nurse scheduling. Major recommendations from the National Commission on VA Nursing Report were also highlighted including the nurse executive’s role and relationship in the medical facility, with line authority for nursing care and how it is delivered; the work environment, including respect and collaboration among all members of the interdisciplinary team; workplace safety; and recruitment and retention of nurses.

Other topics and issues presented included:
* Concern for VA healthcare budget in light of proposed cuts, including a plan for changing eligibility--limiting VA care to service-connected and indigent patients only which has been proposed by House Veterans Affairs Committee Chair Steven Buyer
* Critical importance of getting the message out regarding the impact of the proposed budget cuts on VA’s missions of patient care, education, and research
* Support for mandatory funding proposal for VA healthcare
* Need for creative alternatives for VA budget
* National Office of Nursing Services Nursing Strategic Plan developed and presented last May to nursing staff in all facilities
* “Best Care Anywhere”—article in the January issue of the Washington Monthly describing VA healthcare
* VA response to the National Nursing Commission Report with support for all initiatives, including support in principle for nurse executive responsibility for practice and nursing personnel
* Needed legislation for addressing LPN and other pay caps and direct hire of nursing assistants
* Use of contract care options within the VA
* Reality of the nursing shortage in the VA healthcare system and efforts at recruitment
and retention
*Clinical Nurse Leader proposal and concerns of Advanced Practice Nurses
*Work environment issues including safe patient handling and the impact on recruitment and retention
*Impact of Magnet criteria on nurse recruitment and retention
*New look of both the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees due to new leadership and members
*Future look of the VA healthcare system in the 21st century

Participants included: NOVA Board of Directors President Dianne Nelson, Past President Vincent Elliott, Vice President Cecilia McVey, Treasurer Mary Raymer, Membership Secretary Nancy Claflin, Secretary Larry Lemos, Directors Linda-Dell Archuleta, Ron Hopper, Beverly Ross, Cindy Wilkinson, Director of Administration Maggie Sullivan, and Executive Director Deborah Beck; NOVA Foundation Chair Jayma Hall and Vice Chair Margaret Kruckemeyer; Department of Veterans Affairs Chief Nursing Officer Cathy Rick, RN, CHE, CNAA and Program Director Karen Ott, RN MSN; Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists President Carol Craig CRNA, President- Elect Maureen Reilly CRNA, PhD, and Executive Director Laura Cohen, CRNA; Friends of Medical Care and Health Research Executive Committee Member Barbara West; American Association of Colleges of Nursing Director of Government Relations Debbie Campbell RN, MSN, and Associate Director Francesca Fierro O’Reilly; American Nurses Association Director Government Affairs Rose Gonzalez MPS, BSN, RN, and Associate Director Michelle Arzt; Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs Professional Staff/Majority Bill Cahill, and Professional Staff/Minority Kim Lipsky; American Legion Assistant Director of Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division Don Mooney; Disabled American Veterans Assistant Director for Legislative Affairs Joy Ilem; and Veterans of Foreign Wars Assistant Director of Health Policy Michael O’Rourke

On January 19, the day before the Inauguration of President Bush, NOVA Executive Director Deborah Beck attended Secretary Principi’s Farewell Reception. A wonderful video celebrating his commitment to our Nation’s veterans and his many accomplishments during his tenure as Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) showcased this reception. During these challenging economic times, Secretary Principi’s enthusiasm energized all VA employees and motivated them to focus on the VA’s mission and to be devoted and committed to the women and men who have served our country with dignity, compassion and respect. He was always committed to duty, honor and service. Under Secretary Principi’s leadership, the VA
  *Increased the number of patients served
  *Decreased processing times
  *Oversaw the greatest cemetery growth since the Civil War
  *Increased quality in both decision making as well as in health care

Secretary Principi’s sons, Tony and Ryan, joined him for this special event. His final remarks as the VA Secretary were very moving and poignant. NOVA members will deeply miss Secretary Principi.

Also in January, 2005, Jim Nicholson was sworn in as the new Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. During his confirmation hearing, Senate VA Committee Chairman Larry Craig praised his background and noted, “You will succeed a man who will be a tough act to follow.” Chairman Craig said the fiscal environment he is inheriting will be considerably less friendly than the past four years.
On February 9, 2005, the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, Jerry Lewis from California, announced a major change in the organization of the House Appropriations Committee. The greatest impact of these changes falls on the VA-HUD and Defense Subcommittees. The functions of the District of Columbia, Legislative, and Veterans, Housing, and Independent Agencies were merged into other subcommittees. The House Appropriations Committee reorganized into ten subcommittees. The Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee is now responsible for the following from the current VA-HUD Subcommittee: Veterans Affairs; American Battle Monuments Commission; Cemeterial Expenses, Army (Arlington Cemetery), and Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. It is also responsible for the following from the Defense Subcommittee: Basic Allowance for Housing; Facilities Sustainment, Repair and Modernization; Defense Health Programs; and Environmental Programs.

On April 20, 2005, the NOVA Foundation held its 25th Silver Anniversary Gala and fundraiser. The kick off to the annual conference began with a star studded evening to remember and a special guest appearance by Naomi Judd at the Gala. This year, NOVA celebrated its 25th Silver Anniversary as an organization. The fund raising event and Silver Anniversary Gala entitled “A Galaxy of Future Stars” was held at the Hyatt in Crystal City. Highlights of the program included a private reception with Naomi Judd and Secretary Principi followed by the awards banquet and keynote address by Naomi Judd. Naomi, who is also a registered nurse, retired from her music career due to a life-threatening diagnosis of Hepatitis C in 1990. Since her recovery, Naomi has been on the lecture circuit sharing her life experiences and inspiring people with her story. Naomi Judd shared her life experiences dealing with Hepatitis C. Naomi also autographed her book, entitled “Naomi’s Breakthrough Guide – Twenty Choices to Transform your Life.” Attendees enjoyed dancing the night away to the sounds of a music ensemble and vocalist provided by Sydney Banda and Friends. The NOVA Foundation has been instrumental in raising funds for nursing scholarships and research. The proceeds from Naomi’s book signing and the silent auction enhanced the fund raising efforts throughout the evening. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet old and new NOVA Foundation friends on the evening before the Annual NOVA meeting celebrating 25 years of caring for America’s Veterans. The gala was attended by many to applaud the Honorable Anthony J. Principi as he accepted the G. V. “Sonny” Montgomery Award from the NOVA Foundation for his commitment to and support of VA nursing. In addition to current veterans who attended the gala were active duty military men and women. Those future veterans will depend on quality healthcare from VA nurses.

The NOVA Foundation developed a strategic plan to increase their support of nursing scholarships and research grants, including strengthening their board. Recognizing that Veterans Service Organizations know the impact that VA nurses have on quality veteran care, in addition to representation from Joy Ilem, DAV, they appointed Velma Hart, AMVETS, Peter Gayton, American Legion, and Michael O’Rourke, Veterans of Foreign Wars. They also appointed Daniel Persut, PH.D, RN, APRN, BC, FAAN, President, Sigma Theta Tau International to the Honorary Board. The Foundation is also raising funds through the sale of VA Nurses caring for America’s Heroes bumper stickers.

The 2005 Annual Educational Program in Washington, DC was outstanding. Audrey Drake, RN, MSN, CNA, Program Director/Nursing Services, opened the program on Wednesday afternoon with a pre-conference seminar on professional practice. Her discussion of the nurse professional standards board process and nurse qualifications standards was greatly appreciated by the audience. She was followed by Jim de la Torre from Gallagher Benefit Services who
discussed retirement options, providing NOVA members with valuable information for both
FERS and CSRS options. Wednesday evening, over 135 members and guests took part in the
NOVA Foundation Gala at the Crystal City Hyatt.

On Thursday morning, participants were informed and entertained by a presentation by
Kathleen Lambert, on “Nursing and Political Activism.” Her presentation was followed by the
Veterans Service Organization Panel featuring Joy Ilem from the DAV, Peter Gayton from the
American Legion, and Rich Jones from AMVETS who discussed concerns with the VA budget.
The next panel represented the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committee staff, including
Susan Edgerton, from the House Minority staff, Bill Cahill, from the Senate Majority staff, and
Alex Sardena, from the Senate Minority staff. The panel gave participants a glimpse of
Congressional thoughts for veterans’ services. Attendees were sorry to say farewell to Susan
Edgerton, who is leaving her position to become a full time mother.

NOVA’s 25th Annual Meeting in Washington, DC was a tremendous success. Over 100
nurses descended on Capitol Hill to make their voices heard and share stories about the crisis in
the VA. Budget shortfalls impact veterans and the staff who care for and support them.
Legislators need to hear these stories. Prior to the Annual Meeting, the National Office staff had
divided the participants into 14 state delegations: Arizona; California; Colorado; Florida;
Georgia; Kansas; Maryland; Massachusetts; New Jersey; New York; North Carolina; Ohio;
Texas; and Virginia. Appointments were made for each delegation to meet with their two
Senators. Four buses transported everyone to Capitol Hill en masse and dropped everyone in
front of the Dirksen Senate Office Building. They were off to tell their stories, and tell their
stories they did. Everyone was empowered and realized how important and powerful they are.
Senator Daniel Akaka (D-Hawaii), Ranking Minority Member of the Senate VA Committee,
reiterated this with these words, “NOVA is a tremendous organization – not just for what the
organization does – but because of who you are: nurses caring for veterans. Legislators heard
these voices loud and clear.

VA hospitals and clinics are suffering under severe funding shortages, which means
overtime hours and overburdened nurses.

* The FY 2005 Emergency Supplemental provides more than $80 billion for the ongoing
war, yet not one dime has been included for VA care.

* Over 20 percent of returning service members are now seeking care at the VA.

* Care needs to be provided to those who are returning without displacing those veterans
currently using the system.

* Because of budget shortfalls, some clinics and hospitals have stopped seeing even the
poorest of patients – sending them hundreds of miles away to other facilities.

* Old medical equipment cannot be updated, and nursing home beds are being closed.

* It is nearly impossible to care for the current veteran population, but it will be
impossible to care for returning veterans in the midst of this kind of situation.

Senate visits were followed by a Congressional briefing for legislative aids for veterans
issues. Senator Akaka opened the briefing with poignant remarks about his and Senator Patty
Murray’s (D-WA) efforts to get an amendment attached to the Iraq Supplemental for nearly two
billion dollars for VA health care. They made the case that emergency funds are necessary this
year to improve care at VA hospitals. Only one Senator from the other side of the aisle, Senator
Arlen Specter, former Chairman of the VA Committee, voted for the amendment. Senator
Akaka concluded by saying, “I tell you this not to discourage you but to energize you. I know
that your voices are strong. And you – better than most – can tell the story about what kind of
resources are needed for VA health care. Members are eager to hear from you.”

Friday morning participants heard from Deputy Under Secretary for Health Gordon Mansfield on the issues facing the VA. His presentation was followed by a town hall meeting and panel discussion with Cathy Rick, RN, CNA, FACHE, Chief Nursing Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs and her staff, including Audrey Drake, Deputy Director, responsible for professional practice and the qualifications standards; Rose Paradis, responsible for workforce development, recruitment and retention; Oyweda Moorer, responsible for technology and system design; Anna Alt-White, responsible for research and advanced practice; Karen Ott, responsible for academic and legislative initiatives; Michael Grove, responsible for education and training initiatives for qualifications standards and facilitating other work groups; and Becky Kellen, responsible for clinical and data management. Sandra Janzen, RN MS CNA, Nurse Executive from the VA’s first magnet facility, Tampa, ended the morning with a presentation on magnet status. After the awards luncheon, participants attended the annual business meeting, followed by committee meetings.

Saturday morning, Anne Lafond and Brenda Faas, social workers from the Washington, DC VAMC, gave an eye-opening presentation on “Serving Our Newest Veterans.” The new veterans are younger, with a higher level of athletic functioning and an amazing recovery rate, more female, have more polytraumatic injuries, are more knowledgeable about health care options, and expect immediate gratification. This was followed by an emotionally charged panel presentation of four generations of veterans, moderated by Joycelyn King. June Springer represented World War II; Tom Porter represented the Korean War; Carroll Williams represented the Vietnam War, and Juanita Wilson and Wasim Khan represented the Iraq War, Christa Hojlo, RN DNSc, Chief VA Nursing Home Program, gave a presentation on the “Cultural Transformation of the VA Nursing Home.” The conference ended on an uplifting note with a presentation by Mary Seaman on “Nursing: Reach for the Stars.” Larry Lemos, Conference Chair, closed the program and invited participants to the 26th Annual Meeting in Miami, FL, next spring.

NOVA honored nurses at an Awards luncheon during the conference. The Professional Nurse Award for Clinical Excellence recognized the work of Jeanette McCain, Nurse Practitioner at the James A. Haley VA Medical Center in Tampa, FL (JAHVAMC). She was the first master’s prepared nurse practitioner hired by the institution and has continued her work for the past 17 years. Her leadership and excellent clinical skills have led to the expansion of over 70 nurse practitioners in many different areas. Ms. McCain is the JAHVAMC’s Heart Transplant Coordinator and Primary Care Provider where she is responsible for coordinating needs with community transplant centers and VA Transplant Centers throughout the country. She is innovative, knowledgeable, and a mentor and role model for other nurses.

The Distinguished Service Award was given to Bill Cahill, Legislative Assistant for Senator Larry Craig, Chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. He has supported adequate funding for VA health care, has been a strong voice for VA nurses, supported an environment in VA health care which makes VA the employer of choice, and supported legislation to make the VA the leader in quality health care. Mr. Cahill has been active in the annual NOVA Legislative Roundtable sessions. He is committed to VA nurses and VA health care. He not only talks the talk, but also walks the walk as is demonstrated by the magnitude of his actions. The Barbara Chambers Award was given to Vince Elliott. He has been a nurse in the VA since 1982 and is currently a Clinical Nurse Specialist at the Mental Health Clinic in San Jose, a part of the Palo Alto Health Care System. He has been involved on the NOVA Board.
since 1993 as Director, Treasurer, Vice-President, President, and Immediate Past President. Under his leadership since 1986, the Palo Alto Chapter has consistently had membership in NOVA with 229 current members. He was the first editor of Hot News, led the development of the NOVA Newsletter, led legislative interventions, and has been involved in every annual conference since 1990.

The Silver Star Chapter Award is a new award this year and was awarded to the Palo Alto Chapter. The Palo Alto Chapter currently has 229 active members, more than any other chapter. This chapter has quarterly board meetings where they plan quarterly membership educational programs that include an all-day Annual Meeting every January. There have had many members on the National NOVA Board of Directors including past Presidents. The Palo Alto Chapter continues to support the NOVA Foundation in the pursuit of supporting nursing education and research. This chapter also has the distinction of having initiated a resolution at a NOVA Annual Meeting regarding crediting sick leave for FERS employees. NOVA’s support of this concept contributed to legislation, including the recently passed bill that gave employees enrolled in FERS the benefit of crediting sick leave for retirement, similar to the benefit enjoyed by employees enrolled in CSRS.

Highlights from the 2005 Annual Meeting included the announcement of the NOVA dental program, administered by Gallagher Benefit Services, available to all VA employees. The accounting firm retained to conduct a review of NOVA’s finances for the fiscal year reported assets of $58,775 and liabilities of $28,395, leaving NOVA with assets of $30,380 as of June 30, 2004. Dianne Nelson created panels for the NOVA Gala showing 25 years of NOVA and U.S. History, which will become part of NOVA’s history. The NOVA Foundation Board applied for the CFC designation. NOVA increased the number of chapter contacts from 49 to 91. The Chapter Starter Kit, which was begun by Dianne Nelson, was updated and sent to all chapters. For the first time, each member was mailed a copy of the Annual Report and Membership Listing. Results of the NOVA membership survey were shared. Over 11% of the membership responded. Outgoing board member Beverly Ross was recognized with a plaque for her service to the NOVA board of directors. Teller Catherine Bailey submitted the election results as follows: President Elect: Cecilia McVey; Vice President: Mary Raymer; Treasurer: Ron Hopper; Secretary: Larry Lemos; Board members: Linda Archuleta, Magalene James, and Cheryl Knowles. Committee assignments for 2005-2006 are: Legislative: Cecelia McVey, assisted by Ron Hopper; Membership: Nancy Clafin; Annual Meeting 2006: Joan Clifford; Awards: Linda-Dell Archuleta assisted by Dianne Nelson; Nominations: Vince Elliott; Publications: Nancy Clafin. Hot News; Joan Clifford.

The NOVA board approved a plan to allow individual Local NOVA Chapters to have a presence on the Web at a very minimal cost. Geo-Net Marketing & Design, who designed and maintains the NOVA National Website – www.vanurse.org – put together a plan making a webpage affordable for every local chapter.

Dr. Jonathan B. Perlin was sworn in as the Under Secretary for Health in the Department of Veterans Affairs. VA’s health care system includes 196,500 health care professionals, 125,000 volunteers, 80,000 health profession trainees and 25,000 affiliated medical faculty. Dr. Perlin, who was sworn in by Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Gordon H. Mansfield, serves as the chief executive officer of the nation’s largest integrated health care system, which treats more than 5 million people annually with a budget of nearly $30 billion. "Dr. Perlin is a man of great skill and boundless compassion," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs R. James Nicholson. "America's veterans are lucky to have him lead VA's health care system." A native of Maryland,
Dr. Perlin earned an M.D. and a Ph.D. in pharmacology from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in Richmond, VA. He later served on the staff at the Medical College of Virginia Hospitals at VCU and continues to hold an adjunct faculty appointment there. "I'm honored by the trust shown by Secretary Nicholson, President Bush and the Senate," Dr. Perlin said. "And I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve our nation's veterans." Dr. Perlin, a Fellow of the American College of Physicians, has held several appointments at Richmond VA Medical Center, and moved to the Department's Washington headquarters in 1999, serving as chief quality and performance officer, deputy under secretary for health, acting chief of research and development, and acting under secretary for health.

On July 21, 2005, the House Veterans Affairs Committee held a hearing to discuss with VA officials HR 3130, the Veterans’ Healthcare Supplemental Appropriations Act. This bill was passed on June 30, 2005 and appropriated an additional $965 billion in supplemental funds for the 2005 fiscal year. The Board of Directors was in Washington, DC for a meeting the following day and was able to attend this hearing. It was the first time many Board members had attended a Congressional hearing. Upon the passing of HR 3130, a Department of Veterans Affairs press release stated, “Secretary Nicholson said the administration will reassess the fiscal year 2005 budget and in the near future submit an amended veterans’ budget for fiscal year 2006.” The purpose of the hearing was to investigate the miscalculation of funds for the 2005 and 2006 fiscal years. Under Secretary for Health Jonathan B. Perlin, MD, PhD, MSHA, FACP was the lead witness for the Department of Veterans Affairs. The House Veterans’ Affairs Committee Chairman Steve Buyer (R-IN) sought answers from the VA regarding its request for an additional $1.9 billion for FY 06 to fund higher-than-expected veteran’s health care needs. The proposed FY 2006 budget amendment included: $300 million to replenish carry-over funds to be expended in FY 2005 to cover the increase in average cost per patient; $677 million to cover an estimated additional 2 percent increase in the number of patients expected to seek care in FY 2006; $400 million increase in recognition of the expected cost of providing more costly treatment; and $600 million to correct for the estimated cost of long term care.

This was a very informative and educational process for board members that had never attended a Congressional hearing. The NOVA board members all wanted to give support to Dr. Perlin in his quest to obtain additional funding for our veterans. The NOVA and NOVA Foundation Board members in attendance had a picture taken with Chairman Buyer and thanked him for his oversight of this committee and its continued support to ensure that our veterans have the access to healthcare that they deserve.

Earlier that day there was a ceremony at DAR Constitution Hall commemorating the Department of Veterans Affairs 75 years of service attended by the NOVA Board members. The ceremony included remarks by Vice President Dick Cheney introduced by Michael Deakey. Adrian Kronauer, on whom the movie “Good Morning Vietnam” was based, served as master of ceremonies. The Marine Corps band provided entertainment as veterans from different eras were honored, including a World War I veteran. Each members in attendance received a commemorative pin. Chairman Buyer also stated, “On the 75th anniversary of the VA, let us move forward, with a firm resolve to ensure that our veterans and their families know that the VA has every dime it needs to provide the best heath care and services possible. To do any less is unacceptable”.

A budget that includes additional FY 2005 and 2006 funding for the Department of Veterans' Affairs was passed by both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Senate authorized adding $1.5 billion to the Interior Appropriations bill on a 99-1 vote and the House...
approved the spending by a 410-10 vote. VA officials in June told Congress that its healthcare system will end FY 2005 with a $1 billion deficit. The VA had said it could make up the deficit by using surpluses and other operational funds, but next year's budget would again include a $1 billion deficit. "I am cautiously optimistic that VA and the Office of Management and Budget have gotten it right this time. Working with Congress, they submitted an FY 2005 and 2006 budget amendment that identified the needs for an additional $2.952 billion. This bill provides a $1.5 billion down payment that goes towards meeting that identified need," said Chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs Larry Craig, R-Idaho, in a press statement. The additional $1.5 billion raised VA's FY 2005 healthcare budget to more than $28 billion. Under the legislation, any of the funding not spent in FY 2005 will carry over into FY 2006. In mid-July, President Bush asked Congress to add a $1.977 billion to the FY 2006 budget and $975 million for FY 2005. One of our NOVA Baltimore Chapter 218 nurses, Diane Bailey, was featured in an article by the Washington Post in Washington, DC. The Washington Post, August 22, 2005, article entitled, “Revamped Veterans’ Health Care Now a Model”, Staff Writer Gilbert M. Gaul reported.” For years, the Department of Veterans Affairs’ sprawling health care system was criticized by veterans groups and government investigators as a dangerous backwater of medicine. But in the past decade, largely unnoticed by the public, the system has undergone a dramatic transformation and is now considered by some to be a model. Researchers laud the VA for its use of electronic medical records, its focus on preventive care and its outstanding results. The system outperforms Medicare and most private health plans on many quality measures, including diabetes care, managing high blood pressure and caring for heart attack patients. Demand at veterans clinics and hospitals is soaring – so much so that Congress last month appropriated $1.5 billion in emergency funds to cover a budget shortfall that the department did not anticipate.

Some experts point to the VA makeover as a lesson in how the nation’s troubled health system might be able to heal itself. Since 1995, the VA says, the number of patients it is treating has doubled, to about 5.2 million. At the same time, the department reports that it has trimmed its staff by about 12,000 people, opened hundreds of outpatient clinics and shifted its focus to primary care, while cutting costs per patient by about half. “If we’ve proved anything...in the last 10 years, it is that quality is less expensive”, said Jonathan B. Perlin, acting undersecretary for health. The VA’s new medicine is on display at the bedside. One recent morning in Room 148 on the third floor of the Baltimore VA Medical Center, nurse Diane Bailey prepared to give Francis Xavier Lee, 79, a World War II veteran, medication for asthma. A large part of that shift is the result of the investment in computers. Perlin estimated that it costs the VA about $78 per patient per year to operate the electronic health record. “Roughly the equivalent of not repeating one blood test,” he said. Later this year, the VA plans to allow patients to access their electronic medical records over the Internet through it My HealthVet program. “The patient is often the forgotten partner in health care,” Perlin said. Sharing the records “recognized a person has interests in how his care is managed.” The target for the rollout: Veterans Day in November. This article truly gave the VA a positive image for a change.

On August 22, 2005, Laura Miller began a long-term detail in the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). She had served four years as Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management. In her new job, she will help to implement President Bush's vision for widespread adoption of interoperable electronic health records within the next ten years. Dennis M. (Max) Lewis was designated Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and
Management. Mr. Lewis is a 35-year VA employee and a Presidential Rank Award recipient. He has had fifteen permanent assignments at VA facilities during his career. Mr. Lewis is the Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management, and is also serving as the Acting Director of VISN 20 in the Pacific Northwest.

Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans on August 31. VA nurses watched in horror the effects of Hurricane Katrina as she washed ashore in New Orleans, Gulfport and Biloxi. The flooding was devastating, as well as the physical damage to homes and other structures. Katrina continued to leave a wake of destruction as she headed north, finally losing force and subsiding, but not before inflicting other damage on structures and lives. Our thoughts and prayers were with our fellow citizens along the Gulf Coast who suffered so much from Hurricane Katrina. The same goes for our colleagues who worked diligently to fulfill their mission at VA facilities throughout the disaster area. This was a trying time for everyone, particularly VA employees with family and loved ones in the region. The most critical patients were successfully evacuated on Tuesday from the New Orleans VA Medical Center following extensive flooding and power outages. They began evacuating the remaining patients Thursday morning, moving them to other VA medical centers in Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, and the evacuation of employees and family members from the flooded medical center was completed on Friday. The Gulfport, MS, VA Medical Center took the brunt of Katrina, but it was evacuated before the storm hit, with all patients moved safely to other VA medical centers. Crews cleared roads at the VA Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System in Biloxi, and that facility was one of two hospitals still operating in that community. More than 750 VA employees volunteered for relief duty in the stricken areas and evacuation sites. Many donated funds to assist VA employees in the disaster area. A VA employee relief fund was created. A month later, Hurricane Rita caused major flooding in Texas and Louisiana. VA employees responded to assist with disaster relief. Relief shelters were staffed by VA nurses in Marlin and Waco, Texas.

The total discretionary spending for the fiscal year 2006 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill approved by House and Senate Conference committees was $44.14 billion. Overall, the conference agreement by the House and Senate recommends over $70 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs. Of this amount, $36.995 billion was for mandatory programs (benefits and compensation) and $31.818 billion was for discretionary programs. There is an additional $1.225 billion in contingent emergency funding for medical services to fill a budget shortfall disclosed in June, which requires President Bush to declare the funding an emergency before he can use it. The emergency designation allows appropriators to remain below budget caps. The bill provided an 8.5 percent funding increase over fiscal 2005 as well as an increase of 0.8 percent over the president’s budget request. The priorities reflected in the conference agreement show an increase for mental health for veterans, treatment of post traumatic stress disorder, and additional funding into Gulf War Illness research.

In a new program by the NOVA Foundation to donate to the NOVA foundation in honor of a colleague, the following were the first recipients honored. The colleagues of Jean Revak, RN donated $250 to the NOVA Foundation to honor her nearly 40 years of service at the Erie, Pennsylvania VAMC. Jean retired from the VA on September 30, 2005. The majority of her nursing career was dedicated to caring for our veterans. She served in many roles during her tenure at the medical center. For many years, Jean was head nurse of the surgical unit where she mentored all levels of nursing. She worked closely with and earned the respect of physicians and other allied health care professionals. Jean also worked in nursing education, utilization review and was instrumental in implementing a wound clinic. Jean was sought out by her peers for her
expertise in all aspects of nursing. She always put her patients and staff first. We have been honored to call Jean a colleague and friend, and the veterans have been fortunate to call her nurse.

NOVA President Dianne Nelson’s husband’s company, GLHN Architects & Engineers, was established in 1963. It is an employee-owned, multidiscipline firm of more than 40 full-time employees. GLHN works for major universities through the West and Midwest, large governmental agencies such as the Department of Veterans Affairs and Bureau of Land Management, local municipalities, and clients in private industry like Qwest/AT&T and Grubb & Ellis. GLHN sponsored two $1,500 NOVA Foundation scholarships for the 2005/06 academic year. GLHN Architects & Engineers honored President Dianne Nelson with a scholarship in her name. She has been on the NOVA Board of Directors since 1997 and has worked tirelessly to enhance health care in the Department of Veterans Affairs. Dianne graduated from the University of Arizona with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing in 1973 and immediately began her nursing career at the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System in Tucson. Dianne is a staff nurse in the Telehealth Program. Dianne has been an active NOVA Member since 1992, serving as Tucson Chapter President, and then joining the National Board of Directors in 1997. She has been NOVA’s Membership Secretary and the Editor of the NOVA publications, NEWS FROM NOVA, Legislatively Speaking and the Membership Directory. She has served as Vice President, President-Elect, and President. Additionally, she serves on the Veterans Health Administration Registered Nurse Qualification Standards Implementation Steering Committee. In all of her NOVA roles, Dianne strives to provide services that will keep NOVA members interested, energized and engaged.

Thomas F. Fiala’s family made a $50 contribution to the NOVA Foundation in honor of his passing on April 5, 2005. He was born in 1925 and worked at the Hines VA from 1960 to 1985. Tom was one of the founders of NOVA and wrote the first draft of the NOVA Articles of Incorporation and bylaws in the spring of 1980. He served two terms as the First Vice President and was on the Board since its inception. He served on the Historical Committee, the “Adopt a Chapter” Committee and many others. He received the 1985 Barbara Chambers Award as part of the NOVA Founder’s Group. He declined to serve as an officer in 1984 because of his pending retirement from the VA in January 1986. As an anecdote for NOVA’s 1st Annual Meeting in 1981 at the Bismarck Hotel in Chicago, he had to write a personal check to cover the hotel deposit. He was later reimbursed, but it demonstrates his commitment to NOVA. His daughter, Marsha Rasmussen, says, “I am very proud of my Dad and his accomplishments in the VA service and with NOVA.

By a vote of 408-0, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 4061, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Information Technology (IT) Management Improvement Act of 2005. After years of cost overruns, mismanagement and lack of accountability at the Department of Veterans Affairs, this legislation will make the VA Chief Information Officer (CIO) accountable for the VA's entire IT infrastructure, with authority over its budget, as well as control over IT policies, procedures, personnel and assets. The VA has historically funded IT efforts in the general administration accounts of the Veterans Health Administration, the Veterans Benefits Administration and the National Cemetery Administration, essentially spending billions of dollars on three separate IT infrastructures within the Department.

Gartner Consulting, VA's IT consultant, recently completed its review of VA IT infrastructure and reaffirmed many of General Accounting Office (GAO) past criticisms of VA. Specifically, VA's IT budgets lack accountability regarding how and when funds are spent. The
GAO has testified since 1998 that VA has encountered numerous and consistent problems managing its IT programs. Gartner Consulting concluded that savings could exceed $1.7 billion over the course of five years if the VA carries out the option to centralize the management of IT budgeting. "In the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, we saw how the lack of a nationwide IT infrastructure placed veterans at a disadvantage for receiving the healthcare they needed. In the coming years, it is my hope that veterans will not have to carry medical documents and x-rays from Medical Center to Medical Center. In this day and age, there is no excuse for this. Technology continues to move at lighting pace and the VA healthcare delivery system should take advantage of this for the sake of our veterans," Buyer added.

The VA has spent about $1 billion per year over the last decade to upgrade its IT infrastructure. The VA's FY 2005 budget request for IT is $1.6 billion. In 2004, the VA received $1.4 billion for its IT program, and over the past decade has received close to a billion dollars each year for IT initiatives. Craig B. Luigart, a former naval aviator and Virginia resident, was recently selected to be the chief information officer (CIO) for the health care system of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Luigart will also serve as the Department’s deputy chief information officer for health, reporting to the Department’s CIO and Assistant Secretary for Information Technology, Robert McFarland. Along with Luigart’s appointment, Dr. Robert M. Kolodner has been appointed as the chief health informatics officer (CHIO), a position which he held in an acting capacity. As CHIO, reporting to Luigart, he is responsible for defining VA’s health informatics strategy.

Bridget C. Maybury, MSN, RN, ANP, from the Bronx VAMC, recently won an award from Nursing Spectrum/Nurse Week. Bridget, who is the Patient Safety Specialist, won the Nursing Spectrum/Nurse Week 2005 national award in the Advancing Nursing Practice category. Her picture appeared on the cover of the magazines for the November 7, 2005 issue.

The officers for 2005-2006 were:

President:  Dianne Nelson (Southern Arizona HCS)
President-Elect:  Cecelia McVey (Boston HCS)
Vice President:  Mary Raymer (HCSDRO, New Orleans)
Secretary:  Larry Lemos (Greater Los Angeles HCS)
Membership Secretary:  Nancy Claflin (Phoenix VAMC)
Treasurer:  Ron Hopper (Maryland HCS)
Directors:  Linda-Dell Archuleta (Salem VAMC)
           Joan Clifford (Boston HCS)
           Magalene James (Augusta HCS)
           Cheryl Knowles (Bath VAMC)
Immediate Past President:  Vincent Elliott (Palo Alto VAMC)

2006

NOVA held its thirteenth Annual Legislative Roundtable on January 13, 2006 at the DAV National Headquarters in Washington, DC, providing an opportunity for key stakeholders in veterans’ issues to gather and share information. NOVA President Elect and Legislative Chair Cecilia McVey opened the meeting by acknowledging NOVA’s concern about the VA’s budget and continued unfunded mandates. She also expressed NOVA’s concerns about the centralization of information technology and the implementation of Nurse Executive pay. Ron Hopper, NOVA’s legislative vice chair, thanked VA officials for their continued implementation
of the Commission on VA Nursing recommendations, and expressed concerns about Vet Pro, which may cause delays in hiring and negatively impact VA’s ability to bring in staff nurses. Mary Raymer, a member of NOVA’s legislative committee, expressed appreciation for adequate funding for NNEI and EISP programs, and concern regarding inadequate funding of the Education Debt Reduction Program (EDRP), which has been a critically important recruitment and retention tool.

Major topics and issues presented included:

- Independent budget prepared by the Veterans Service Organizations
- Nurses’ key roles in proving an early warning system for quality of care at the bedside
- NOVA members advocating for patient care and for nurses in a public forum to Congress
- HR1588, a comprehensive bill on PTSD introduced by Lane Evans, which includes care for the impact of PTSD on families
- Implementation of PL 108-445 which provides alternate schedules of working 36 hours and getting paid for 40 and working 9 months with 3 months off; staffing policies; and tracking nurses who work more than 60 hours in a week or 12 hours in a 24 hour period
- Implementation of physicians’ pay enhancement and nursing executive pay
- Issues with recruitment and retention of CRNAs
- Requesting increased funds for VA research, including nursing research
- Support for mandatory funding for VA healthcare
- Implementation of laws without additional resources
- Lack of VA strategic plan for long term care and issues of aging veterans
- VA’s polytrauma centers caring for Iraqi war veterans

Response to the National Commission on VA Nursing Recommendations including:

- Implementation of the VA Nursing Outcomes Database (VANOD) in all facilities with more automatic data collection, including using clinical reminders technology
- Clinical Nurse Leader pilot program with more than 50 sites for nurse qualifications standards to fit different career paths, administrative, clinical, and consultative
- Survey of nurses regarding performing non-nursing tasks
- Implementation of CREW (civility, respect, and engagement in the workplace) for working on nurse-physician collaboration issues
- Nursing innovations awards
- Support for facilities seeking Magnet status including monthly phone calls
- Research for attracting new hires in the VA

Participants included: NOVA Board of Directors President Dianne Nelson, Vice President Elect Cecilia McVey, Vice President Mary Raymer, Treasurer Ron Hopper, Membership Secretary Nancy Claflin, Secretary Larry Lemos, Directors Joan Clifford, Magalene James, and Cheryl Knowles; NOVA Executive Director Deborah Beck; Director of Administration Susan Dove; NOVA Foundation Vice Chair Margaret Kruckemeyer; Department of Veterans Affairs Chief Nursing Officer Cathy Rick, RN, CHE, CNAA; Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists President Maureen Reilly CRNA, PhD, President Elect Angela Mund,
The NOVA Board of Directors met in Washington D.C. on January 12 and 13, 2006. The board approved a motion for a two year financial review (fiscal years 2005 and 2006). Boston was selected as the site of the 2008 Annual Meeting and Palo Alto/San Francisco Bay Area as the site of the 2010 Annual Meeting. Larry Lemos was appointed as the APN liaison to the NOVA Board. The Board approved a line of credit to the NOVA Foundation to underwrite the direct mail campaign as well as Marine Corps Marathon entry fee. They also approved donation to the NOVA Foundation in honor of Vernice Ferguson’s recent International Distinguished Leadership Award from the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools.

The Professional Nurse Award for Clinical Excellence was awarded to Terry Tucker, RN, MS, CCRN, CEN, Critical Care Coordinator at the VA Maryland Healthcare System (VAMHCS). He is the founder and coordinator of the Chesapeake Critical Care Consortium, Baltimore, MD, a compendium of 19 hospitals, and serves as a senior instructor teaching advanced resuscitation topics and emergency cardiac patient management. Mr. Tucker has a lifelong history of learning, and has served as a positive and experienced role model to the nursing staff at VAMHCS, as well as to nurses throughout the Baltimore Metropolitan area.

The Distinguished Service Award was given Nancy Valentine, RN, PhD, D.Sc (Hon.), MPH, FAAN. Dr. Valentine has made numerous contributions to VA nursing, NOVA, and the NOVA Foundation. Secretary Jesse Brown appointed Dr. Valentine as the Assistant Chief Medical Director for Nursing Programs/Chief Nursing Consultant in 1993. She served in this capacity until 1998. Some of her achievements include establishing a leadership paradigm for senior nurse leaders to pursue Magnet Status, championing the launch of the electronic medical record, and institution the first national virtual learning opportunity for graduate nurse practitioners. She fulfills the criteria of improving the quality of national and VA healthcare and the enhancement of the nursing profession.

The Vernice Ferguson Award was given to Jayma Hall, RN, MSN, CNAA, BC. She has had a 35- year career in the VA, retiring in 2004 from the Northampton VA Medical Center as Associate Director of Patient Care Services and the Acting Service Line Director for Sensory and Rehabilitative Services for the New England Healthcare System. In July 2004, she accepted the position of Chair, Board of Directors, of the NOVA Foundation. Under her leadership, the NOVA Board of Directors worked to build on successes of the past and developed a strategic plan with actions to increase support for nursing scholarships and research grants. Under her leadership, the NOVA Foundation is committed to ensure that current and future veterans receive outstanding health care.

The Silver Star Chapter Award was awarded to the Boston Chapter. The Boston Chapter has been active since the early days of NOVA. Despite undergoing many changes, not the least of which has been a major upheaval in the integration of 3 sites under one healthcare system, the presence of a NOVA chapter has always remained. In the past two years, they have held two daylong programs, as well as a number of Meet and Greet programs to educate nurses about
NOVA. In addition to monthly meetings, they produce a monthly newsletter to go to all units which discusses chapter updates, meeting dates, and reminders of the next NOVA annual meeting. Chapter members are instrumental in shaping Nurses Week activities. Current membership is at an all time high.

Jenice Guzman, Geriatric Nurse Practitioner, West Los Angeles Health Care System, was congratulated on the occasion of her winning the VHA Mark Wolcott Award for Clinical Excellence. Sarah Myers, Associate Nurse Executive, Nursing Home Care Unit, Atlanta VAMC, and former NOVA President, was congratulated on the occasion of her selection to the Leadership VA program. Lynda Olender, Nurse Executive at the James J. Peters Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Bronx, NY was congratulated on the occasion of her induction into the New York State Nurses’ Association Leadership Institute at their annual convention.

The NOVA Foundation began the year with an updated strategic plan to ensure success in advancing our mission to fund VA nurse education and research to improve clinical practice and promote quality health care for veterans and the nation. The NOVA Foundation Board of Directors was energized with the addition of new members Cathleen C. Wiblemo, Deputy Director, Health Care Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division at The American Legion; and Terri Gaffney, Vice President for Professional and Editorial Services at Nursing Spectrum.

Jayma Hall completed her term as chair of the NOVA Foundation and was replaced by Lula Cumberlander, Associate Director for Patient and Nursing Services at Bedford VAMC, Bedford, Massachusetts. Lula started her 28-year VA career at Washington, DC VAMC where she held staff nurse and nurse manager positions. She went to Prescott, Arizona VAMC as the Associate Chief for the Nursing Home Care Unit. She then transferred to the Hampton VAMC as Associate Chief Nurse for the Geriatrics and Extended Care Service Line. It was during her time at Hampton that she was asked to serve as Acting Chief Nurse for almost a year. It was a wonderful opportunity which helped to define her career goal of wanting to become a Chief Nurse. She then transferred to the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System as the Program Leader for the 400-bed LTC facility after which she was appointed as the Nurse Executive for the Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital, where she currently works.

The revised NOVA Foundation strategic plan recognizes the need for sound fundraising programs and initiatives to support academic and research goals of VA nurses in order to recognize the significant impact from VA nurses’ on the healthcare of veterans and the VA Health Care System. The NOVA Foundation has two new brochures, one for corporations and one for the general public, for Board members and staff to disseminate information about the NOVA Foundation and for fundraising activities. The brochures will also be used by a full-service fundraising firm to execute an individual direct mailing campaign. These actions will be a basis to develop a donor database.

Two research grants were funded by the Disabled American Veterans Charitable Trust and three scholarships were awarded this year. Nursing Spectrum funded the $3000 NOVA Foundation Jesse Brown Scholarship. Jeanean L. Barney of the Sheridan VAMC was the recipient. There was also a $1,500 scholarship funded in the name of NOVA President Dianne Nelson by her husband’s company, GLHN Architects and Engineers. Dianne presented her scholarship to David Renfro during Palo Alto’s annual meeting in January. Bill Nelson’s firm also funded a $1,500 GLHN Architects & Engineers scholarship which he presented to Nicolette Estrada at an employee meeting at the Phoenix VAMC.

Thanks to two grants from the DAV Charitable Trust, the NOVA Foundation also funded two research grants. A $5,000 research grant funded a pilot project by Jill Bormann, PhD, RN of...
the San Diego Healthcare System. The project, C.A.L.M.S. (Curb, Alter, Lower Stress for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder): The Power of a Cue Word or Mantra, will be a one-year study of a non-pharmacological approach to treating PTSD. Many veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq suffer from PTSD and experience intrusive, negative thoughts exacerbated by depression and anxiety. This treatment therapy will explore the feasibility and efficacy of a six-week, complementary, portable intervention of frequently repeating a silent mantram (a word or phrase with spiritual associations) to manage symptoms and improve quality of life in military veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq.

The second grant in the amount of $20,000 funded a research project entitled Readjustment Process of OIF/OEF Veterans and Families Living in Puerto Rico. Connie Uphold, PhD, RN is the principal investigator for this team of researchers at the North Florida VAMC. The impact of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) on veterans and families in Puerto Rico is far reaching. Over 3,000 individuals have been deployed from Puerto Rico. Because of limited job opportunities and high poverty rates, military service has high appeal in Puerto Rico. Although little is known about OIF/OEF effects in Puerto Rico, it is known the toll on soldiers and families in the mainland United States is huge. Readjustment after returning to civilian life may be even more stressful than actual deployment because there is little information or training on what to expect or how to reintegrate into new family and community roles.

The NOVA Foundation initiated a new fundraising program in the winter issue of the newsletter. Honoring NOVA’s Treasures: Friends, Family Members & Colleagues has been highly successful and is off to a great start. Vince Elliott set the tone when he announced to the NOVA Foundation Board and his colleagues at the Palo Alto VA that, in lieu of gifts, he would like donations to the NOVA Foundation be made in his name. The $1,100 donation from his colleagues is a testament to their respect and admiration for him. Other $250 donations were made in honor of: Nancy Claflin by the Carl T. Hayden chapter; Carolyn “Kay” Morris by the Tucson chapter; Beverly Ross by the Richmond chapter; and Lynna C. Smith by Deborah Beck and Bill Bergman.

Several years ago, the Boston VA printed brief cases and bumper stickers imprinted with VA Nurses: Caring for America’s Heroes. Since that time, Margaret Kruckemeyer has had them reprinted and sold them as a fundraiser for the NOVA Foundation. Last year, the Board decided to purchase 10,000 bumper stickers and make them available for sale. Because the sales weren’t as vigorous as anticipated, Board member Phyllis West volunteered to set-up a table at the Marine Corps Marathon and sell them. Although this wasn’t possible, it did lead to the NOVA Foundation being named a Marine Corps Marathon Charity Partner.

The NOVA Foundation continues to rely on the support of individuals but in the past has sought this support solely from NOVA members. The building of a donor database began recently with a letter to over 7,300 AMVETS members requesting a donation. The letter was signed by the National Commander, and responses are just beginning to be received. Most donors don’t give upon the first solicitation but need to be asked to give repeatedly and on a regular basis. A local fundraising firm has been retained to handle all aspects of a 25,000 piece, donor solicitation mailing in the fall. Included in the mailing will be a letter, along with personalized mailing labels. NOVA members will receive this solicitation, and I encourage everyone to make a donation. Successful individual donor programs, along with the promotion of planned giving, are the cornerstones of a successful charitable organization. Before completing his ex officio term on the Board, Vince Elliott began promoting a planned giving
program. He and Margaret Kruckemeyer did some preliminary research and presented it to the Board, which realized the necessity of implementing a planned giving program. A brochure has been developed and will be included in future membership mailings. Vince’s final words to the Board were that the NOVA Foundation is the beneficiary of his San Bruno condominium upon his passing. Vince leads the way once again.

Patients give the VA health care system high marks. In a survey released by the American Customer Satisfaction index in 2006, veterans reported they are very satisfied with their health care in the Department of Veterans Affairs. The veterans gave VA’s inpatient care a rating of 83 on a 100-point scale. That is 10 percentage points higher than the 73 rating given by private sector patients. The VA rating for outpatient care was 80, five percentage points higher than the rating for the private sector and 9 percentage points higher than the satisfaction rating for all federal services. These latest findings mark the sixth consecutive year the VA health care system has outranked the private sector for patient satisfaction.

Every month the president, president-elect and executive director hold a conference call with Cathy Rick, Chief Nursing Officer, and her staff. During these call, information is shared about what is happening in the legislature, in headquarters and in the field. The Office of Nursing Programs has set many strategic goals and they are meeting these goals to improve nursing practice and patient outcomes, incorporating the recommendations of the National Commission on VA Nursing.

In April, citing the Department of Veterans Affairs' leadership role in transforming health care in America, Harvard University recognized VA's computerized patient records as one of the "top 50 government innovations of 2006." "VA is again recognized as a leader in the health care industry for the use of electronic patient records," said the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "This affirms that VA is providing America's veterans with world-class medical care and raising the bar for all health care providers." VA's selection as a "top 50" innovator qualifies it as a contender for Harvard's prestigious Innovations in Government Award, which is considered the "Oscars" of government service. Eighteen finalists for the award will be announced May 4, as part of the observances of Public Service Recognition Week.

NOVA’s 2006 Annual Educational Program was held in Miami, FL, April 26-29, 2006. Outstanding educational presentations and patriotic fun on the beach combined to create wonderful memories for attendees. Wednesday afternoon attendees chose from three pre-conference sessions. Judith A. Faris, RNP, MSN, APRN-BC, presented a thoughtful and challenging look at job satisfaction of advance practice nurses in the VHA. James L. Harris, RN, PhD, provided attendees with a comprehensive overview of the Clinical Nurse Leader program in action at Nashville. The third presentation was given by Jim de la Torre from Gallagher Benefit Services who discussed retirement planning. Wednesday evening, members had the opportunity to attend a NOVA foundation event on staffing effectiveness and flexible workforce management presented by BidShift.

On Thursday morning, after opening remarks by Dianne Nelson, the Miami Chapter presented a memorial to Jeanette Siler, a former NOVA board member from Miami. Donna Cardillo, RN, MA, presented a fascinating look at nurse power. Attendees were privileged to hear from William Feeley, Deputy Under Secretary for Health, Operations, and Management, on challenges and issues facing VHA today. He was followed by Claire Monzeglio, RN, MSN and Toni Smith, BS, from the Miami VA who spoke on emergency preparedness. In the afternoon, for an exercise in team building, we met on the beach, split into ten teams, and built sand
sculptures with a patriotic theme, and selected a name and a cheer. Check out the NOVA web page for pictures of the amazing sculptures created by NOVA members. Thursday evening, attendees participated in a reception and silent auction for the NOVA Foundation.

Friday morning opened with the exhibit hall, where participants viewed 15 outstanding posters and viewed the latest information in equipment and techniques to improve patient care. A highlight of the program was a town hall meeting with Cathy Rick, RN, CNAA, FACHE, Chief Nursing Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs. She was followed by a riveting and poignant panel presented by nurse managers from the VA’s polytrauma centers on defining and advancing polytrauma care in the VA. The panel was moderated by nurse executives Sandra Janzen, MS, RN, CNAA-BC from Tampa and Alice Naqvi, RN, MS, from Palo Alto. Participants included Lori Pawelski, RN, MSN, from Minneapolis, Titania Araneta, RN, from Palo Alto, Sylvia Johns, RN, MSN, CRRN, from Richmond, and Marti Veneman, RN, BSN, CRRN, CBIS, from Tampa. That session was followed by a session on women’s health presented by Peggy Mikelonis, ARNP-C, MS, CNA, from Tampa and Ann Thraillkill, MSN, FNP, CNS, from Palo Alto. The morning ended with a presentation on AARP’s health care perspectives by Terry Elder. The Awards Luncheon, annual business meeting, and committee meetings filled the afternoon. Friday evening, a president’s reception was sponsored by the Boston Chapter.

Saturday morning began with an intriguing presentation on the “R” factor by Kevin P. Fealy, PhD, which gave attendees a look at a unique method of communication. Clair Monzeglio, RN, MSN, provided an overview of care coordination. Attendees were entertained in the final presentation by Mary Seaman RN, MS.

President Dianne Nelson opened the annual business meeting with a new format as she presented an integrated report from the entire NOVA board detailing NOVA’s accomplishments for the year. NOVA’s 25 year history has been edited into a document for sale, “NOVA: Celebrating 25 Years.”

NOVA again provided a chapter on nursing to the Independent Budget, authored by AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Veterans of Foreign Wars. In the spring a survey on workplace issues was placed on the website, followed in the fall by a survey on legislative issues. NOVA, as part of a collation of 51 national nursing organizations as a member of the American Nursing Shortage Relief (ANSR), requested Congress appropriate $175 million in fiscal year 2007 to fund Nursing Workforce Development Programs. NOVA also partners with the Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research (FOVA).

The Membership Committee increased membership to over 3,000 for the first time in NOVA’s 25 year history and also worked to establish contacts at each VA facility, increasing the number of contacts from 49 to 98. Membership is everyone’s responsibility. The Membership Committee, under the leadership of Membership Secretary Nancy Claflin, diligently worked to establish a contacts at each VA facility; the number of contacts increased from 49 to 98. The 2005/06 Committee members were: Jeff Allen; Marian Allen; Janice Arceneaux; Linda-Dell Archuleta; Providencia Cardona; Joan Clifford; Lee Fealy; Magalene James; Cheryl Knowles; Larry Lemos; Janet Parrish; Curtis (Jay) Purser; and Thelma Roach-Serry.

The Membership Committee finalized the awards for the period May 1, 2005 – April 1, 2006. The Silver Star Award was presented to the Boston chapter for serving as an exemplary chapter. Additional chapter awards were given to three chapters with the greatest increase in membership during this period: Brooklyn small (up to 25); Los Angeles for medium (26-99); and
Miami for large (100 and greater). To encourage all members to participate in membership development, a Member-Get-A-Member campaign is held each year (May 1 – April 1). Members recruiting five new members receive a free membership; 15 new members results in a free Annual Meeting registration; and a complimentary registration as well as three room nights will be given to individuals recruiting 25 new members.

Cindy Adamek of Denver served as the Teller for the 2006/2007 elections. Nancy Claflin from Phoenix was re-elected for Membership Secretary. Joan Clifford from Boston was re-elected to the Board of Directors. She will be joined by new directors Marian Ehrhart from Pittsburgh and Mary Seaman from Tampa. Outgoing board member Vincent Elliott was recognized with a plaque.

Following the annual meeting in April, Cecilia McVey became NOVA’s twelfth president. She has held progressively responsible leadership positions within VA nursing service since beginning her career in 1972. In 1997, she was appointed as Chief, Nursing Service for the former Boston VA Medical Center. Upon the merger of that entity with the West Roxbury division in 1999, she was named Chief, Nursing Service for Integration and subsequently Associate Director for Nursing/Patient Services (ADN/PS) for Boston and West Roxbury. When the Brockton division was reintegrated in June 2000, Mrs. McVey was appointed to her current role of ADN/PS for the entire Boston Healthcare System. In this role, she is accountable for the delivery of nursing care throughout the BHS and the management of nearly 1000 employees at the three main divisions as well as satellite facilities. As a member of the BHS Leadership Quadrad, she contributes to policy development and decision-making and participates in strategic planning and resource management.

She received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Boston College in 1972, completed a certificate program in Nursing Administration at Clark University in Worcester in 1986, and received her Master of Science in Health Administration from Clark in 1988. She has published several articles in professional journals, and remains certified in Nursing Administration by the American Nurses Association. Her professional memberships include Sigma Theta Tau (National Honor Society of Nursing), the Massachusetts Organization of Nurse Executives Nurses Associations, and the Boston College Nurses Association. She joined the NOVA board as a director in 1994. She served as treasurer from 1999 through 2003, vice president from 2003 through 2005, president-elect from 2005 through 2006, and began her term as NOVA’s twelfth president at NOVA’s annual meeting in Miami.

The NOVA Board of Directors met in Miami, FL, on April 26 and 29, 2006. The board approved the December 31, 2005 financial statement, and discussed the NOVA 25 year history book to be available at the conference. The board also looked at increasing nurse executive support for NOVA and reviewed a draft of a white paper on Information Technology in the DVA. “Hot News” was renamed “E-News from NOVA.” The board also welcomed new board members Marian Ehrhart and Mary Seaman, and reviewed Committee Chair responsibilities for 2006-2007: Membership-Nancy Claflin; Publications-Nancy Claflin; E News from NOVA-Mary Raymer; Legislative-Ron Hopper; Nominations-Dianne Nelson; Awards- Linda-Dell Archuleta.

On May 8th, 2006 VA Eastern Kansas Health Care System honored Sue Kinnick RN, with the planting of a tree and a monument. This was a fitting way to begin Nurses' Week by honoring a nurse who was truly a pioneer and worked tirelessly to make her dream a reality. In 1992, Sue, after attending a nursing convention, was returning a Hertz rental car at the Seattle Tacoma International Airport and observed an employee using a handheld device to scan a barcode located in the trunk of the car. Sue learned that through this simple bar code, the car
rental company was able to track and record information about its cars throughout the country. It occurred to her that a similar system at the bedside could improve patient safety by reducing medication errors. She brought the idea back to Topeka and persuaded administrators to give it a try. Working with minimal funding and fulfilling their full-time job responsibilities, Sue, pharmacist Chris Tucker, computer programmers, and fellow nurse Russ Carlson, RN, BSN developed software, convinced a private company to produce the hardware, and had the project up and running throughout the hospital in 1995.

In May, NOVA joined the Department of Veterans Affairs and the entire veterans' community to mourn the passing of Sonny Montgomery, known as "Mr. Veteran," on Capitol Hill, in Washington, D.C., and in his home state of Mississippi. Sonny was a veteran of two wars, served in the Mississippi state legislature and, later, in the halls of Congress, where he became a giant. He was one of America's strongest advocates for the men and women in uniform, and he was a dedicated statesman. After nearly three decades on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, including 13 years as its chairman, Sonny left an indelible mark on the history of veterans and military services in America. His efforts to improve veterans' educational benefits reached a zenith in 1984 with what we now refer to as the Montgomery G.I. Bill of Rights. Sonny Montgomery once said, "Patriotism is a pretty simple word, but also a beautiful word to most Americans." Sonny Montgomery exemplified patriotism, and he will be greatly missed.

In May, the Portland VA Medical Center was designated as a Magnet Hospital by the American Nurses Association Commission on Magnet, joining the James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital in Tampa, and the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston. These organizations exemplify the leadership and perseverance needed to instill the 14 forces of magnetism throughout Nursing Services as well as through other disciplines to create an integrated cohesive team. While Texas and Oregon are newer recipients of the award, the Tampa VA has undergone one redesignation process and is planning to write another application for redesignation in 2008. The process for redesignation is as challenging and perhaps even more difficult at times than a first application, since each renewal process increases the demands on the organization to excel and achieve more than it has in the past. This continuous “raising of the bar” ensures that organizations do not become complacent about their position and are always challenging the status quo.

The redesignation process for Tampa was unique in that the materials were presented in an innovative fashion. All narratives, documents, pictures and video clips were combined into a web based format on a single CD, thereby eliminating hundreds of pages and saving a few more trees. To utilize this particular format special permission was obtained as once again VA nurses lead the way with a new approach.

On May 22, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced that it had recently learned that an employee, a data analyst, took home electronic data from VA. In this case the employee had written permission to take the data home. This data contained identifying information including names, social security numbers, and dates of birth for up to 26.5 million veterans and some spouses, as well as some disability ratings. The affected data did not include any of VA’s electronic health records nor any financial information. The employee’s home was burglarized and this data was stolen. In June, the stolen laptop computer that may have held personal data on more than 26.5 million veterans and active-duty, National Guard and reserve members was found and the hard drive was recovered. This incident resulted in completion of privacy and security training for all VA employees by June 30 as well as the addition of encryption software
NOVA continues to be the voice on Capitol Hill for VA registered nurses and a powerful voice it is. Executive Director Deborah Beck attends Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committee meetings and has regular contact with Hill staffers. The Board and Executive Director hold meetings with Hill staff members and senior management in Central Office before each Board meeting. The annual Legislative Roundtable, regular Congressional briefings and Board representation on both local and national task forces increases NOVA’s influence and power in Washington, DC.

The *Independent Budget*, authored by AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Veterans of Foreign Wars, is a detailed budget advocating appropriate funding for the upcoming fiscal year. Annually, NOVA submits a chapter on nursing, and the 2007 fiscal year section was entitled Attracting and Retaining a Quality VHA Nursing Workforce. NOVA stated: The shortage of nursing personnel to meet the demand for health care is an underlying symptom of the veterans health care budget crisis. Because the VA health care budget has not kept up with rising health care costs, the situation grows more critical each fiscal year. Inadequate funding has resulted in nationwide hiring freezes. These hiring freezes have had a negative impact on the VA nursing workforce as nurses have been forced to assume non-nursing duties due to shortages of ward secretaries, building management, and other support personnel. These staffing deficiencies impact both patient programs and VA’s ability to retain an adequate nursing workforce.

*NEWS FROM NOVA* continues to be one of NOVA’s most popular member benefits and is published quarterly with Nancy Claflin serving as the Editor. For the second year, each member received a membership directory in order to facilitate communication with colleagues from around the country.

Dianne Nelson served on the Qualifications Standards Committee which is finalizing the five-year report to Congress. This report is a summary of the history and effects of the Qualification Standard on VA nursing. Upon submission of this report, the Committee will cease to exist. There are some changes postulated for the Qualifications Standard, and NOVA will collaborate with the Office of Nursing Services on these changes during monthly conference calls with Cathy Rick and her staff.

In recognition of Mr. Elliott’s retirement from the Department of Veterans Affairs, the staff at the Palo Alto Health Care System has forwarded $1100.00 to the NOVA Foundation, in order to further enhance the organization’s mission. NOVA Chapter 420 made a $250 contribution to the NOVA Foundation on behalf of Beverly Ross, APRN, BC, Psychiatric Clinical Nurse Specialist, Women’s Veterans Program Manager, and Minority Veterans Coordinator. The Tucson Chapter donated $250 to the NOVA Foundation in honor of Carolyn “Kay” Morris, RN, BSN, Nurse educator.

Nearly 9% of NOVA members responded to the spring membership survey. When asked if they received NOVA’s Hot News (now renamed E News from NOVA), 92.2% indicated that they did. When members were asked to indicate the usefulness of Hot News on a scale of 1 to 5, the average was 3.69, which shows that it is very useful, and 96.5% of NOVA members would encourage others to sign up. In addition, 95.3% of members indicated they would like more Hot News stories about VA-specific information; 96.9% of members like the nursing-specific stories. Nearly 78% of NOVA members share Hot News with their colleagues. Last year was the first year that NOVA membership directories were mailed to individual NOVA members; however, only 57.2% of the member surveyed indicated that they received a directory. Please be sure that
the NOVA office has your correct address so you receive News from NOVA and the annual membership directory. Members were also asked how important it was to have names and addresses listed in the directory, and most did not think this was important. On a scale of 1 to 5, the average was 2.87. However, 78% did agree with having their address and phone number in the directory. Members were asked how many annual meetings they attended.

A surprising 62.7% of members responding to the survey had never attended an annual meeting; 29.0% had attended from 1 to 4; 3.5% had attended from 5-9; 2.8% attended from 10-14, and nearly 2% have attended 15 or more. Most NOVA members receive no assistance to attend the annual meeting; 69.4% didn’t receive tuition funds, and 73.3% didn’t receive travel funds. Members were also asked to rank on a scale of 1 to 5 what would encourage them to attend NOVA annual meeting. The most important were educational content, 3.93 and funds from chapter to attend, 3.84. These were followed by location on the East coast, 3.0; location in Washington DC, 2.86; sharing hotel cost, 2.73; able to have a family vacation, 2.67; location on the West coast, 2.65; and a central location, 2.54. The impact of hotel rates on annual meeting attendance was identified by NOVA members as important; 72.1% said that hotel rates would impact attendance at annual meetings. When asked specifically about factors that would encourage attendance, NOVA members overwhelmingly identified tuition and travel funds from the facility or chapter. Other factors identified included having an active local chapter, locations close to where people live or work, and methods for identifying room sharing.

NOVA members ranked legislative presence as the most important member benefit, 3.99; followed by News from NOVA, 3.80; Hot News, 3.72; NOVA Website, 3.51; dental insurance, 2.87; and annual meeting, 2.81. Other benefits identified by members included discounts for travel, other ways to reduce the cost of attending the meeting, and disability insurance. Over half of the respondents (56.8%), indicated that they were interested in NOVA’s dental insurance, and 21.9% indicated that they have signed up. Members who had attended Congressional visits as part of a NOVA annual meeting ranked the visits as very important, 4.8. Nearly 82% of NOVA members indicated that they have visited the NOVA website. Most members visited the NOVA website every 1-2 months. Other information members identified for the website included information about job opportunities throughout the VA, basic information on how Congress works, speaking points for current legislative issues that need to be addressed, scholarship information, lists of legislative representative representatives, information on obtaining degrees, why it’s so important for nurses to belong to NOVA, a link to the Independent Budget and NOVA’s chapter in that budget, links to other nursing specialty organizations, dates and times of CSPAN broadcasts of items of interest to NOVA, and pictures of hospitals and local chapters.

NOVA is considering the formation of an electronic chapter. Over half (58.0%) of the respondents indicated that they would be interested in an electronic chapter. Most said that dues should be similar to local chapter dues. Many were interested in an electronic chapter because they didn’t have access to an active local chapter. Other reasons included ease of participation for staff who didn’t have a local chapter or couldn’t attend the local chapter meetings, availability of information, electronic networking, feelings of being more connected to NOVA, being able to discuss issues and ask questions via the website, being able to keep track of what’s going on, having an up-to-date source for information, being able to reply quickly regarding concerns, better national communication, and a unified voice.

Fewer than half of respondents indicated that they have contributed to the NOVA Foundation, 44.3%. A smaller percentage (31.8%) indicated that they have seen the NOVA Foundation brochure. When asked what would encourage contributions to the NOVA
foundation, members wanted more information on the NOVA foundation and what is done with the donations. They also identified that many organizations are seeking contributions. Suggestions were made for information on how the scholarship recipients are doing, and how the grant helped them. Additional suggestions included an updated donor listing on the website and an endowment fund. When asked about gifting the NOVA foundation, 35.7% indicated an interest. NOVA members were asked if they would be interested in signing up for the Marine Corps Marathon through the NOVA Foundation, and 18.4% expressed interest. Regarding other issues, recruitment and retention were identified as very important. Members identified that fact that most NOVA nurses could find work in the surrounding community at an increased salary with more control over working conditions and hours. Funding for education was also identified as a very important issue, as well as communication about what NOVA is advocating for on Capitol Hill.

At the 2006 Nurse Excellence Awards Gala honoring outstanding nurses from the Washington, D.C, Maryland, and Virginia regions, the Nursing Spectrum award for Advocating and Leading the Profession was given to Cathy Rick, RN, MSN, CNAA, FACHE, Chief Nursing Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, Washington, D.C. Margaret Kruckemeyer, RN, ANP, former NOVA President from Dayton, Ohio, received first place for her essay “DAR (E) To Care” in the Career Category for the East Central Division of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution Women’s Issues Essay Contest 2005-2006. Beverly Ross APRN, BC, represented NOVA at the 3rd National ANA Stakeholders Meeting on Advanced Practice Nurses.

William S. Bergman, the husband of Executive Director Deborah Beck, died on June 15, 2006 from complications of an infection. He was an active supporter of VA nurses, their education, and nursing research in the service of caring for veterans. His company, William S. Bergman Associates (WSBA), serves as the management company for NOVA and the NOVA Foundation. In his honor and in celebration of his life, the William S. Bergman Memorial Research Fund has been established to support a VA nurse researcher whose study is in the area of infectious disease. Your generous contribution will support research aimed at developing better ways to diagnose, treat and prevent immunologic disease in veterans.

In July, the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) model system of electronic health records, developed with extensive involvement of front-line health-care providers, won the prestigious "Innovations in American Government Award." The annual award, sponsored by Harvard University's Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the Kennedy School of Government and administered in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government, honors excellence and creativity in the public sector. VistA is one of seven government initiatives chosen from 1,000 applications to receive this year's Innovations awards. Because the programs are models for government's capacity to do good, and do it well, the $100,000 grant specifically supports sharing of program information with other organizations.

The NOVA Board of Directors met in Washington D.C. on July 20 and 21, 2006. The Executive Board met July 20 with House and Senate Committee staff members, and Deputy Secretary Gordon Mansfield. Joan Clifford was appointed chair of the Awards Committee. The board also agreed to add a section to website for NOVA products (stickers, books, pins). They also approved purchase of one-year membership to Survey Monkey to tabulate results of membership survey and approved conversion of membership video to DVD. They approved sending a member to the First Annual Advanced Practice Meeting and the Association of Nurse Executives conference for membership poster presentations. They also agreed to join Coalition
for Patient Rights.

Idalia Cabrera, RN, Clinical Nurse Coordinator, Orthopedic Clinic, Long Beach, CA, won the Best in Category Award at the VHA E Health University Conference in Nashville, TN, with her poster “C.P.R.S. User Friendly for Clinic.” Her poster was the best of 160 posters from 154 VA facilities. Janet G. Campbell, ARNP-C, COHN-S, Employee Health Manager, who is from the Augusta, GA, VAMC, was named an Employee of the year. Janet is the Manager for the Employee Health Program. Way to go, Janet! She was also the recipient of the 2006 Secretary’s Excellence in Nursing Awards, RN.

On August 11, Dr. Jonathan Perlin, VA’s Under Secretary for Health, who has led the Department’s health care transformation since 2004, resigned. Dr. Perlin, who has held several positions with VA since 1999, accepted a position as chief medical officer and senior vice president for quality at HCA, a Nashville-based health care provider. Under Perlin’s leadership, VA’s health care has received numerous accolades for innovation and continues to outperform the private sector for quality, safety and customer satisfaction. Also in August, Dr. Michael J. Kussman was named VA’s Acting Under Secretary for Health while the Department conducts a search to replace outgoing Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Jonathan Perlin. Before coming to VA, Dr. Kussman had a military medical career spanning three decades. His service included stints as commander of the Walter Reed Health Care System in Washington, D.C., commander of the Europe Regional Medical Command, command surgeon for U.S. Army Europe, and TRICARE lead agent for Europe. Dr. Kussman retired from military service as a brigadier general. Also in August, an article appeared in Time magazine, “How VA Hospitals Became the Best.”

In September, the NOVA family suffered another loss with the passing of Joe McVey, husband of NOVA President Cecilia McVey.

On October 26, Beverly Ross presented a NOVA poster that was developed by the NOVA Membership Committee at the First Annual APN Advisory Conference “Bridging the Dimensions of Evidence Based Practice” in San Antonio, Texas.

The NOVA Foundation Board of Directors celebrated its success for participating in their first annual Charity Partnership with the Marine Corps Marathon! The NOVA Foundation congratulated its marathon and 10K runners in accomplishing their race goals, and thanked them for raising funds to support the NOVA Foundation’s nursing scholarship and research programs. The NOVA Foundation also expressed appreciation to the volunteers who donated their time, energy, and money to support the runners and the NOVA Foundation. Those who attended shared in the success of this wonderful event. The following identifies NOVA Foundation winners and fundraising stars:

MARATHON RACE WINNERS:                 Official Time
                                      First Place: John Heiges  4:26:50
                                      Second Place: Kathryn Haddock  4:30:56
                                      Third Place: JP Boulder  4:34:46

10K RACE WINNERS:
                                      First Place: Nancy Gendreau  0:55:42
                                      Second Place: Frederick Mugler  1:00:12
                                      Third Place: Gaye Broadway  1:03:05

MARATHON FUNDRAISING STARS:                Funds Raised
                                      First Place: Ann Narciso  $2,300
Second Place:  Cathy Wiblemo  $2,000
Third Place:  Susan Esteras  $1,643

10K FUNDRAISING STARS:
First Place:  Deborah Beck  $6,550
Second Place:  GiGi Beckner  $2,673
Third Place:  Mary Seaman  $2,390

The NOVA Foundation expressed a special thanks to Phyllis West, Marine Core Marathon Committee Chair, and all who participated for helping to make this 1st annual NOVA Foundation Marine Corps Marathon event such a success! Members were reminded to mark their calendars for next year’s Marathon and 10K Race on October 28, 2007.

NOVA member Bridget Maybury from the James J. Peters Medical Center has been working very hard with her Representative E. Engle who co-sponsored a resolution in the House of Representatives on September 25 to establish a National Myositis Awareness Day which will be every September 21st. Linda Olender, Nurse Executive at the James. J. Peters Medical Center received the outstanding honor of being selected by Advance for Nurses magazine in the October 30, 2006 issue as editor’s choice for the 2006 Best Nurse Leader Award. Margaret Kruckemeyer from the Dayton VA Medical Center has been named an Ambassador for the Freedom Team Salute and attended the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States (AMSUS) annual meeting in San Antonio November 5-8, 2006. She has served as an Ambassador since May, 2006.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has historically taken a career advancement approach for nursing by providing professionally challenging opportunities that are based on qualifications and performance. The Nurse Qualification Standards (NQS) provide a framework for professional development, rewards and promotion consideration for registered nurses. The Commission recommended that Veterans Health Administration (VHA) “should structure career development opportunities to assure that every nurse in VHA can actualize his or her goals within one or more career paths with the opportunity for professional growth and advancement". In response to Commission recommendation, a work group was established to describe career paths for nurses in grades Nurse I through Nurse III. The Career Paths Work Group was charged to address mechanisms to enhance and expand the framework for clinical roles. The goal was to assess and make recommendations for the application of the NQS to current and emerging nursing roles, from the beginning practitioner to those nurses performing at highly complex levels of practice. The Career Paths Work Group is comprised of nurses in all career paths with representatives of staff nurses, nurse managers, clinical nurse specialists, nurse practitioners, and nurse executives. Fifteen (15) VAMCs were chosen as pilot sites, which were selected to achieve a representative mix of urban/rural settings, various sizes of facilities, geographic diversity, and willingness to participate. The pilot sites are: San Diego, Fort Harrison, Puget Sound (Seattle), Houston, Kansas City, Central Texas, Washington (DC), Pittsburg, Tampa, Canandaigua, Dublin, Nashville, Indianapolis, Northampton and Huntington.

In December, the Baltimore VAMC was featured on the CBS Evening news with a segment titled “VA Gets A+ for Healthcare.”

The officers for 2006-2007 were:
President:  Cecelia McVey (Boston HCS)
Vice President:  Mary Raymer (HCSDRO, New Orleans)
NOVA held its fourteenth Annual Legislative Roundtable on January 12, 2007 at the DAV National Headquarters in Washington, DC, providing an opportunity for key stakeholders in veterans’ issues to gather and share information. John Bradley, Legislative Consultant for the DAV, welcomed everyone to the event. NOVA President Cecilia McVey identified NOVA concerns about the effects of the continuing resolution on VA facilities, and expressed NOVA’s support for the Independent Budget. She identified NOVA’s concerns regarding providing care for new veterans, the impact of the new regulations for background checks resulting in additional delays in hiring staff, centralization of information technology, and unfunded mandates. NOVA also supports direct hire for nursing assistants. Mary Raymer, NOVA’s legislative chair, added her welcome and invited participants to discuss concerns.

Major topics and issues presented included:

Legislation to eliminate the salary cap for registered nurses at grade 5, which currently results in a pay disparity of approximately $10,000 with similar positions in the private sector
Legislation to allow restructuring of the nurse pay grades to result in a seven grade pay scale, and allowing nurses in the lowest three grades a more defined rank acceleration and more visible advancement (related to outcomes of National Commission on VA Nursing)
Legislation to recognize nursing assistants as part of the hybrid title 38 series, which would result in the ability to hire them directly
A legislative proposal to develop a VA nursing academy, beginning with similar affiliations with schools of nursing to those currently in place with schools of medicine
Reinstating legislation for the Health Professions Scholarship Program, providing funds for students to obtain a BSN in exchange for work at a VA facility after graduation
Legislation to waive the federally mandated per diem travel rules so that the Travel Nurse Corps members can be paid according to locality pay
Implementation of the physician pay bill
Research identifying occurrence of homelessness in veterans within 8-10 years after discharge
Supportive services for homeless veterans including access to health care, ensuring income security, affordable housing, and prevention of homelessness
Concern with VA budget, support of Independent Budget, and need for mandatory funding for VA
Funding for veterans requiring mental health care
Ensuring disability compensation for disabled veterans
A GI Bill for the 21st century
Support for VA medical care and research
Accountability from VA regarding funding priorities
Concerns regarding VA’s proposal to use anesthesia assistants

Participants included: NOVA Board of Directors President Cecilia McVey, Past President Dianne Nelson, Vice President Mary Raymer, Treasurer Ron Hopper, Membership Secretary Nancy Claflin, Secretary Larry Lemos, Directors Joan Clifford, Marian Ehrhart, Magelene James, Cheryl Knowles; and Mary Seaman. Executive Director Deborah Beck; Director of Administration Susan Dove; Account Executive Luke Zorich; Past President Margaret Kruckemeyer; Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Chief Nursing Officer Audrey Drake RN MS; AMVETS Deputy National Legislative Director Joe Chenelly; Disabled American Veterans Legislative Consultant John Bradley; Veterans of Foreign Wars Field Representative Mark Potter; Friends of Medical Care and Health Research Executive Committee Member Gary Ewart; National Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists President Angela Mund; National Association of VA Physicians and Dentists Executive Director Mike McLendan; National Coalition for Homeless Veterans President and CEO Cheryl Beversdorf; and American Association of Nurse Anesthetists Legislative Staffing Officer Brian Bullard.

The NOVA Board of Directors met in Washington D.C. on January 12, 2007. The board reviewed NOVA Foundation Legacy Award to be presented at the gala event on May 9. They also approved support of Office of Nursing Services objectives: The board also reviewed information on the 2008 Annual Meeting to be held at the Radisson in Boston April 12-14, 2008.

The Professional Nurse Award for Clinical Excellence was awarded to Jenice Guzman RN MSN. Jenice Guzman is the Nurse Practitioner in the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center (GRECC) Outpatient Clinic. She is well-respected and highly regarded as an excellent clinician in her care of frail older adults. She has always believed in the importance of excelling and combining clinical practice, education, research, and community awareness in raising the quality of nursing as a profession. She initiated an interdisciplinary project to develop a GRECC Medication Review Clinic involving members from medicine, nursing, and pharmacy to provide a one-time clinic visit for the geriatric clinician to review all of the elderly patient’s medications, provide education, and make recommendations to the patient’s primary care provider using the Beers Criteria for Potentially Inappropriate Medication Use in Older Adults. She is both the first nurse and the youngest person to receive one of VA’s most prestigious awards, the 2005 Mark Wolcott Award for Excellence in Clinical Care Delivery.

The Professional Nurse Award for Leadership was awarded to Cynthia McCormack RN MS. Cynthia McCormack has served as the Nurse Executive and Associate Chief of Staff for Inpatient Care Service at the Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona since 2000. She is an active NOVA member and strong supporter of NOVA, currently serving as the local chapter treasurer. She established a vigorous Evidence Based Practice Committee which has sponsored many exemplary projects directly related to the delivery of safe patient care. In a groundbreaking move, she created and hosted the first Arizona VA Evidence Based Practice Consortium, including VA registered nurses from Phoenix, Prescott, and Tucson. She created a new position of Nurse Researcher for Inpatient Care Services to serve as a resource for staff and management by facilitating nursing professional activities related to research and academic supports, and supporting the evidence based practice culture within nursing.

The Distinguished Service Award was given Kenneth Kizer MD, MPH. This award is given for distinguished service to the registered nurses of the Department of Veterans Affairs and
for dramatically and significantly improving the health care of veterans. Dr. Kizer served as Under Secretary for Health in the Department of Veterans Affairs beginning in 1994. He had a vision for VA health care to change the Veterans Health Administration from a tertiary care, bureaucratic system with poor quality outcomes to a system focused on providing high quality primary care delivered in outpatient community clinics using resources much more efficiently. He also envisioned VHA using information technology to create a paperless medical record and significantly improve patient care. These goals have been achieved, and VHA is now considered the leading health care organization in the United States, a monumental change from just fifteen years ago.

The Vernice Ferguson Award was given to Phyllis West. Phyllis served as the chair of the first NOVA Foundation Marine Corps Marathon Charity Partners event. Orchestrating NOVA’s participation as a charity partner required a tremendous amount of organization and planning, as well as enthusiasm. Phyllis devoted many hours of her personal time to assure the success of this event. Her careful attention to detail assured that all of the NOVA Foundation Marine Corps Marathon participants were well-informed and on schedule with their assigned tasks. Phyllis skillfully organized the volunteers for not only the hospitality tent, but also for the water and first aid stations. The event generated over $50,000 for NOVA Foundation scholarships and research grants. Throughout the planning and fulfillment of this event, she never wavered in her enthusiasm. On the day of the race, she was on the sidelines cheering the runners and walkers, as well as keeping all of the volunteers on track, and followed up to begin planning for the 2007 event. In addition to her efforts related to the Marine Corps Marathon, she also contributes monetarily to other NOVA Foundation fund raising activities.

In January 2007, a comprehensive study by Harvard Medical School concludes that federal hospitals, including those run by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), provide the best care available anywhere for some of the most common life-threatening illnesses. "This recognition by Harvard should assure veterans of the quality of VA's world-class health care system," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. "Veterans have earned only the best. And we can prove that's exactly what VA is providing." Researchers looked at congestive heart failure, heart attack and pneumonia across the health care industry and found that patients in federal facilities are more likely to receive high-quality care than those in for-profit hospitals. The study found that hospitals operated by the federal government and the military received higher performance ratings than other hospitals studied. A large percentage of federal hospitals are operated by VA.

Also in January 2007, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD) agreed to make joint inpatient electronic health records a reality -- a move that will transform the way both departments deliver health care and that can be a model for the health care industry nationwide. In recent years, the two departments have developed a string of pioneering initiatives to improve the way they care for men and women transitioning from military to civilian life. In testimony before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, VA Deputy Secretary Gordon H. Mansfield said, "Our two departments understand that we are responsible for the same people, only at different times in their lives. Our greatest challenge, and our greatest opportunity, is to build systems that meet the needs of veterans and DoD beneficiaries for today and tomorrow. We will continue to persevere toward that goal."

In March 2007 the NOVA Membership Committee created another opportunity for networking and communicating with other NOVA members. The NOVA website contains message boards for members to post information or ask questions. There are categories for
The 2007 Annual Educational Program was held in Crystal City, VA, May 9-12, 2007. The program began Wednesday afternoon with a strategic planning session facilitated by NOVA President Cecilia McVey RN, MHA and NOVA Board Member Joan Clifford RN, BSN, MSM. NOVA members had the opportunity to provide input towards the strategic direction of the organization.

Wednesday evening, members had the opportunity to attend the NOVA Foundation Gala 2007 “The Tapestry of VA Nursing: Weaving a Profession and a Passion.” The event included a silent auction to support the NOVA foundation, a keynote address by Adrian Cronauer, and the presentation of awards. The GLHN Scholarship Award was given to Beatrice Grant. The NOVA Foundation G. V. “Sonny” Montgomery Award was given to Adrian Cronauer, who is perhaps best known as the inspiration for the Robin Williams film, “Good Morning, Vietnam.” He currently serves as the Special Assistant to the Director of the POW/MIA Office at the Department of Defense. The NOVA Foundation inaugural Legacy Award was given to Audrey Drake, RN, BSN, MSN, CNAA. She is the Deputy Chief Nursing Officer, Office of Nursing Services of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

On Thursday morning, after opening remarks by Ron Hopper, RN, BC, MSN, CNAA, Program Chair; and Cecilia McVey, NOVA President, a moment of silence was held for lost friends. Participants heard a powerful keynote address “Women in Military Service” from Brig. Gen. Wilma Vaught USAF, Ret. MBA. Frank Purcell, BS, Senior Director, Federal Government Affairs for the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, next spoke on “Making a Difference: Practical Advocacy for Nurses.” The Veterans Services Organizations Panel provided insight on key concerns from these veterans’ groups. Participants in the panel included Joy Ilem, Assistant National Legislative Director, Disabled American Veterans; Teresa P. Morris, Manager, Action Corps, VFW National Legislative Service, and Kimo Hollingsworth, Legislative Director, AMVETS. This panel was followed by the Senate and House VA Committees Panel. Participants heard from Kim Lipsky, Deputy Staff Director, Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, U. S. Senate and William T. Cahill, Republican Chief Counsel, Committee on Veterans Affairs, U. S. Senate.

Following this panel, participants boarded buses for a trip to Capitol Hill. NOVA nurses met in the basement of the Capitol and heard presentations from Rep. Julia Carson, D-IN and her Chief of Staff. Ms. Carson spoke highly of nurses. “Nurses are unsung heroes. You alleviate pain and trauma, and you do such a tremendous job. Thank you.” The meeting was followed by an afternoon of Congressional visits. At the end of the day, NOVA members met with Cathy Wiblemo, a staff member for the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

Friday morning opened with the exhibit hall. NOVA members had the opportunity to talk with vendors and see new patient care products. Cathy Rick RN, MS, CNAA, FACHE, Chief Nursing Officer, Office of Nursing Services, Department of Veterans Affairs, introduced the nursing services panel from her office. Oyweda Moorer, RN, MSN, CAN; Karen Ott, RN, MSN; Marla Weston, RN, PhD; Becky Kellen RN, MS; and Alan Bernstein, RN, MS. This was followed by a town hall session with Cathy Rick and the panel. The town hall session was followed by an opportunity for participants to view an outstanding display of posters. This was followed by the Awards Luncheon and Annual Business Meeting.

Cathy Rick, RN, MS, CNAA, FACHE presented an Outstanding Service award to Dianne Nelson, RN, BSN, NOVA Past President. NOVA President Cecilia McVey RN MHA presented the Professional Nurse Award for Clinical Excellence to Jenice Guzman, RN, MSN. The
Professional Nurse Award for Leadership was presented to Cynthia McCormack, RN, MS. Phyllis West received the Vernice Ferguson Award, and the Silver Star Award was given to the Tucson Chapter. Ken Kizer, MD, MBA will receive the Distinguished Service Award as unexpected circumstances kept him from being able to attend the ceremony.

Later that afternoon participants heard from two NOVA Foundation scholarship winners. Jill E. Borman, PhD, RN, presented “Efficacy of Mantram Repetition for PTSD Symptoms in Veterans.” Connie Uphold, PhD, RN, presented “Readjustment Process of OEF/OIF Veterans and Families Living in Puerto Rico.” Friday evening participants attended a reception in honor of NOVA President Cecilia McVey, sponsored by Dianne and Bill Nelson.

Saturday morning began with a thought-provoking presentation on “OIF/OEF Women Veterans Issues” by Juanita Warman, RN, NP. This was followed by a special recognition ceremony honoring the NOVA Membership Committee, NOVA Chapter Contacts, and NOVA Chapter Membership award winners. Cheryl Beversdorf RN, MHA, MA who spoke on homeless veterans, “The Crisis Facing America.” Maureen Levesque gave an introduction to Boston and invited everyone to attend next year’s meeting. Mary Seaman RN, MS closed the program with an enlightening presentation on Florence Nightingale.

President Cecilia McVey opened the annual business meeting as she presented an integrated report from the entire NOVA board detailing NOVA’s accomplishments for the year. NOVA ended the 2006 fiscal year with net assets of $16,232. NOVA is heavily dependent upon membership dues and continues to research nondues sources of revenue. A detailed version of NOVA’s 25-year history is available on the website. This is an elegant, keepsake document which outlines the history of NOVA. The document includes an appendix listing Board members and award winners during NOVA’s 25 years, since it’s formation at the Hines VA in 1980. Chapters should think about purchasing the history book for both members as well as potential members.

The Membership Committee, under the leadership of Membership Secretary Nancy Claflin, increased membership to over 3200. The Committee also worked diligently to establish a contact at each VA facility, with 103 contacts identified. The NOVA membership video was converted to a DVD format and sent to all NOVA chapter contacts who are members. The 2006/2007 Committee members were: Jeff Allen, Marian Allen, Providencia Cardona, Joan Clifford, Marian Ehrhart, Lee Fealy, Magelene James, Cheryl Knowles, Kathleen Lehmann, Janet Parrish, Ron Patrick, Mary Powe, Jay Purser, Thelma Roach-Serry, and Mary Seaman. The Membership Committee developed a NOVA poster which was presented at the first VA Advance Practice Meeting in San Antonio by Beverly Ross. The Membership Committee implemented message boards on the NOVA website to increase networking among NOVA members. The NOVA chapter awards for the greatest increase in membership were awarded to Las Vegas (small chapter), Lebanon (medium chapter), and New York (large chapter).

NOVA underwrote a reception at the April Nurse Executive Leadership Conference in Crystal City, VA. President Cecilia McVey and Vice President Mary Raymer addressed the group of approximately 260 leaders and asked everyone to join NOVA. Additionally, Cheryl Knowles presented a NOVA poster at the American Organization of Nurse Executives meeting in April.

The NOVA foundation funded a $3000 Jesse Brown Scholarship as well as four $1500 scholarships in 2006. Additionally, a $20,000 and $5,000 research grants were funded. The NOVA Foundation became the first nursing organization selected as a charity partner for the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, DC. NOVA had 17 individuals who participated in the
marathon and 28 who participated in the 10K walk/run. Together, the NOVA team was able to raise over $90,000 to create scholarship and research grants for VA nurses.

Maureen Levesque of Boston served as the Teller for the 2007 elections. Nancy Claflin from Phoenix was elected President-Elect. Larry Lemos from Los Angeles was elected Vice President. Ron Hopper from Baltimore was re-elected Treasurer. Joan Clifford from Boston was elected Secretary. Cheryl Knowles from Bath was appointed Membership Secretary. New directors elected to the board include Sharon Johnson from Baltimore and Sharon Simpson from Tucson. The following chair assignments were made: Annual Meeting Chair, Maureen Levesque; Awards Chair, Sharon Johnson; History Chair, Sharon Simpson; Legislative Chair, Nancy Claflin; Nominations Chair, Dianne Nelson; Publications Chair, Larry Lemos, and Website Chair, Joan Clifford. Outgoing board members Magelene James and Mary Raymer were recognized with plaques in recognition of their contributions to the NOVA Board of Directors.

The NOVA Board of Directors met in Crystal City, VA on May 9 and May 12, 2007. The board approved a dues increase of $10 annually beginning July 1, 2007. The board also approved upgrading the Director of Administration staff position to Deputy Director. A Website Chair responsibility will be added to the Board of Directors; Joan Clifford will serve as the Website Chair.

On May 25, 2007, the United States Senate confirmed Dr. Michael J. Kussman as Under Secretary for Health for the Department of Veterans Affairs. “I am extremely honored that the Senate has approved my nomination. I am proud to be given the opportunity to lead VA’s dedicated health care workers in serving our nation’s veterans,” Dr. Kussman said. Dr. Kussman joined VHA in 2000 following a distinguished, quarter-century career in the U.S. Army in which he served as commander of the Europe Regional Medical Command and command surgeon for U.S. Army in Europe. As commander of the Walter Reed Army Health Care System in Washington, he received the rank of Brigadier General. With VA, he served in a number of progressively responsible positions, including Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Health. At the time of his confirmation, he held the title of Acting Under Secretary for Health. He was sworn in on May 30, 2007.

Also in May 2007, Congress finally passed war supplemental funding legislation and sent it to the White House for the president’s signature. Of particular interest to the VA research community, the bill contains $32.5 million for VA medical and prosthetic research “related to the unique needs of returning Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans.” This item survived months of deliberations as the bill was whittled down to avoid a second presidential veto. The VA R&D funds are available during the current fiscal year and “remain available until expended.”

Overall, VA fared well with HR 2206, receiving nearly $1.8 billion in additional funding for medical services, administration, facilities, research, IT and minor construction. Credit for this good news and the House Mil-Con Appropriations Subcommittee recommendation of $480 million for VA R&D in FY 2008 goes to the many members of Congress who responded positively to the hard work of the Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research (FOVA), the Independent Budget (IB) and the Federation of American Scientists for Experimental Biology (FASEB), all of which coordinate their VA research advocacy efforts for greater effectiveness, and other VA research supporters.

In May, 2007 VA announced a formal, 17-person committee that will advise on ways to improve VA programs serving veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and their families. Members of the VA Advisory Committee on

On May 30, 2007, the formation of a workgroup to make recommendations to streamline the hiring process for Title 5 and 38 employees was announced. This group consists of representatives from VAs across the country.

In June 2007, to address a shortage of nurses across the nation and ensure that veterans continue to receive personalized, world-class care in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities, VA has announced creation of a new multi-campus Nursing Academy. VA has one of the largest nursing staffs of any health care system in the world, with about 61,000 registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, vocational nurses and nursing assistants at the Department's 153 medical centers and nearly 900 clinics. A five-year, $40 million pilot program will establish partnerships with 12 nursing schools across the country during the next three years, beginning with four for the 2007-2008 academic years. The VA nursing academy is a virtual organization with central administration in Washington and teaching at competitively selected nursing schools across the country who partner with VA. VA currently provides clinical education to nearly 100,000 health professional trainees annually, including students from more than 600 schools of nursing. The first nursing schools selected to participate for the 2007-2008 academic year are the University of Florida in Gainesville, San Diego State University in California, the University of Utah in Salt Lake City and Fairfield University in Fairfield Connecticut.

On July 17, 2007, Secretary of the VA Nicholson announced his resignation to be effective 10/17/07. His intention is to return to the private sector.

On July 19, 2007 the NOVA Board went to Capitol Hill and met with legislative staff member David Tucker for the House Committee on Veterans Affairs and legislative staff members Kim Lipsky and Ted Pusey for the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs. The topics discussed were as follows:

- Resignation of Secretary Jim Nicholson
- Support for the VA Health Professions Scholarship Program
- Problems with hiring staff due to length of time to complete VetPro
- Removal of the cap on Nurse V Salary
- Direct hire of nursing assistants
- Locality pay issues
- Retention and recruitment of nurses
- Information and technology support
- Budget issues with continuing resolutions
- VA Nursing Academy

The NOVA Board of Directors met on July 20, 2007 in Washington, DC. The NOVA Strategic Plan was a major focus of this meeting. The board is working to strengthen the plan’s Professional Practice section. Issues supported by the NOVA Board are evidence-based practice as the basis for clinical and administrative practices in VAs nationwide. Other issues that NOVA supports are funding initiatives for the reestablishment of the VA Professional Scholarship Program, employee debt reduction program, Nursing Academy Initiatives, the implementation of
the Clinical Nurse Leader role, and impact of information technology centralization on professional nursing practice. Membership, communications, legislation and support of the NOVA Foundation were also included in the strategic plan.

The NOVA Board heard the members’ comments about holding the NOVA Annual Meeting every other year in Washington DC and now will hold a one day Legislative Session beginning in January, 2009 and the locations for the NOVA Annual Meetings will be Boston in 2008, New Orleans in 2009, and San Francisco in 2010. NOVA would like feedback from the membership concerning these plans. Also in July, the Shalala-Dole report was released. This report describes methods for veterans to receive better health care.

Ann Narcisco RN, MPA who is a Clinical Application Coordinator at the Palo Alto Health Care System and Thelma Roach–Serry RN, BNS, CAN, BC who is a Clinical Nurse Manager of Specialty Clinics in Ambulatory Care at the Hunter- Holmes Mc Quire VAMC in Richmond Virginia were appointed to the NOVA Board of Directors after the July, 2007 NOVA Board Meeting to fill vacant board positions.

Plans for the NOVA Annual Meeting entitled “A Revolution in VA Nursing,” which will be held in Boston, Massachusetts, on April 9-12, 2008 are underway. The Annual Meeting starts on Wednesday afternoon with a strategic planning session led by NOVA President Cecelia McVey. Wednesday evening the NOVA Foundation will hold a reception and silent auction. The keynote session on Thursday morning is titled “Serial Murder by Healthcare Providers: Lessons Learned - Healthcare Administration & Quality Management Departments & Direct Care Providers & Clinical/Forensic Investigation.” Dr. Kenneth W. Kizer, MD, MPH and Mary K. Sullivan MSN, RNC, CARN, FAAFS will present this timely session. The day continues with sessions on hospice care, polytrauma, system redesign, and ends with a bit of humor. That evening an optional event is conveniently located in the hotel theater. Instead of the traditional HRT, (Hormone Replacement Therapy) there will be an opportunity to embrace the new HRT (Humor Relief Therapy), celebrating life over 40, with “Menopause the Musical”.

Friday begins with “Revolutionary Thoughts from the Office of Nursing Services” and a town hall meeting with Cathy Rick. The poster session, awards luncheon, and annual business meeting also takes place. The day finishes with a team building event which will take participants into the city. Saturday is the final day and features exhibits, sessions of success in education, and writing for publication. The grand finale features Mary Seaman creatively preparing participants for the next annual meeting, which happens to be in New Orleans in 2009. Don’t miss out on the fun, friendships, and learning!

The VA has opened a National Suicide Prevention Hotline to provide veterans with emotional crises with 24 hour access to trained help. A veteran or concerned person can call 1-800 273-TALK (8255) and they will reach trained staff at the Canandaigua VA in Canandaigua, NY. Canandaigua is being remodeled and modernized. These plans include construction of a one story 120 bed nursing home, a 50 bed residential rehabilitation center and renovating an outpatient building to meet the changing needs of area veterans. The center is also being designated as a “Mental Health Center of Excellence” which will focus on suicide prevention, post traumatic stress disorder, and other mental health issues.

Audrey Drake, Deputy Chief Nursing Officer for the Office of Nursing Services received the Legacy Award from NOVA and in May 2007 a health and dental clinic was named after her by the District of Colombia Army National Guard (DCARNG). Carolyn Bennet RN, BSN, CRN, a NOVA member from Phoenix Arizona was honored with a scholarship established in her name. This honor was bestowed upon her by the Grand Canyon State Chapter of the American
Radiological Nurses Association. Lynda Oleander, Chief Nurse Executive at the James J Peters Medical Center, was presented with the 2007 New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) Nursing Service Administrative Award. Bridget Maybury who is the Performance Improvement Coordinator at the James J Peters Medical Center had an article, describing a creative approach to the national nursing shortage, published in *Advance for Nurses*.

In July 2007, NOVA annual dues were increased from $90 to $100. Payroll deductions increased from $3.80 to $4.10 per pay period. The NOVA Foundation is a charity partner in the Marine Corps Marathon for the second consecutive year. The NOVA Foundation is also a charity participant in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Therefore VA employees can choose to contribute to the foundation as a charity. Fundraising items that are being sold in support of the Marathon by the NOVA Foundation include duffel bags, blankets, and sweatshirts. A portion of the proceeds will go toward scholarships and research grants. Another NOVA Foundation fundraising program and chapter fundraiser is that of selling bumper stickers that say “VA Nurses Caring for America’s Heroes.” The NOVA Foundation said goodbye to a very loyal and dedicated board member at the last meeting. Joan Clifford, Associate Chief Nurse at VA Boston Healthcare, has decided to step down from her role as the treasurer/secretary for the NOVA Foundation. Joan was very active on the Scholarship Selection Committee. She will continue her term as secretary for the NOVA Board. Thank you to Joan for a job well done.

The following written testimony was submitted by NOVA in October, 2007 to the House Committee on Veterans Affairs on the topic of Retention and Recruitment in the Department of Veterans Affairs. NOVA continues to monitor the issues important to registered nurses and the NOVA Legislative Committee welcomes input.

Retention & Recruitment: The Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) has identified retention and recruitment of healthcare staff members as a critically important issue in providing high quality health care to veterans. Shorter lengths of stay, higher patient acuity, more sophisticated technologies and procedures, and increasing care complexity place greater demands on health care workers today. For VHA to provide high quality health care there must be a dramatic increase in retention and recruitment efforts. As VHA executives face growing vacancies, elevated turnover due to retirements is imposing an additional tremendous burden on VHA facilities, especially in a time of shortage. The result is lost productivity, increased use of premium labor, escalating recruiting expenditures, and damage to employee morale.

There are several key issues that impact the ability of VHA to provide excellent health care.

Nurse Executive Pay and Pay Cap: Another important issue for retention and recruitment involves Nurse Executive pay. Recent changes in pay for non-SES leaders in VHA have worsened the issue of pay inequity. Nurse Executives do not receive pay comparable with their peers. Due to the recently implemented Physician Pay Bill, Medical Center Chiefs of Staff received substantial pay increases averaging 8% to an average level of $210,000 and reaching $250,000 at the most complex (Tier 1) VA medical centers. The mean salary for Nurse Executives is $129,000. Many Nurse Executives did not receive additional pay in the form of a bonus that is included in retirement computation under Public Law 108-445, because the bonus was not mandatory. This underscores the need for VA to move quickly to remedy a problem that is already manifesting itself in turnover and in recruitment problems for key upper level positions in the organization. Currently, individuals appointed under Section 7306 of Title 38 serve in executive level positions that are equivalent in scope and responsibility to positions in the Senior Executive Service.
Examples of such positions are the Director, Pharmacy Benefits Management Strategic Health Group; Director of Optometry; Director of Podiatry, and Director of Dietetics. The pay schedule for section 7306 appointees is adjusted each year by Executive Order and is capped at the pay rate for Level V of the Executive Schedule (currently $136,200). Locality pay is also paid up to the rate for Level III of the Executive Schedule (currently $154,600). In addition there is a need to increase the pay limitation contained in 38 U.S.C. 7451 (c)(2) for VA nurses from Level V (currently $136,200) to Level IV (currently $145,400) of the Executive Schedule to address the pay disparity between the Nurse V maximum rate and the GS-15 maximum rate in some geographic areas.) A change to 38 USC 7451 is needed to increase the pay cap under the nurse locality pay system. With an increase to EL-IV, each nurse pay schedule that is currently limited by the EL-V cap would be recalculated based upon the existing beginning rate for the grade.

October 1, 2007- Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Gordon H. Mansfield was named acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs following the resignation of Jim Nicholson on July 17, 2007 to become effective October 1, 2007. Mr. Mansfield assumes this position under the terms of the Federal Vacancies Reform Act. He will serve as Acting Secretary until the next nominee is confirmed by the President.

Genomics is coming to the Department of Veterans Affairs. This is according to an article by Christine Kasper, PhD, RN, FAAN, VA Office of Nursing Services in the Fall Issue of News from NOVA. In March, 2006 “the formation of a committee of internationally recognized scientists and veterans advocates was announced to advise the Department on emerging issues in genomic health care. The new Genomic Medicine Advisory Committee will assist to establish policies for the use of genetic information to better customize treatments and therapies to the individual patient. For example, the response of each person to a specific drug is unique and currently often unpredictable. Genetic screening for the unique metabolism and efficacy of drugs can be used to accurately prescribe and dose medications to prevent adverse drug reactions. The use of a patient's own genetics to drive their healthcare has come to be known as ‘genomic’ or ‘molecular medicine’ and will move us from providing care that is prevention based to care that is predictive of future health status.” Currently genomics is not consistently included in “entry level nursing programs or licensing exams. The successful provision of individualized genetic care will center on the ability of nurses to create the necessary evidence based care and interventions.”

On October 18, 2007, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced that 46 grants worth over $16 million have been awarded to public and private non profit groups to help homeless veterans. This will create 950 beds for homeless veterans for a total of more than 12,000 VA funded community based beds in 34 states and the District of Colombia.

On October 28, 2007 Gordon Mansfield Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs announced a conference with the Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Defense, and the National Institutes to improve the designs and methodologies of research studies concerning Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The Institute of Medicine released a report on October 18, 2007 that stated that exposure based therapies have been proven to be effective for PTSD. The IOM report also stated that more research is needed to determine the effectiveness of pharmacotherapy.

The NOVA Foundation was again a charity partner in the 32nd Annual Marine Corp Marathon on October 28, 2007. Thank you to everyone who walked, ran, or volunteered time and resources to the success of this event. A special thank you goes to Bill and Dianne Nelson.
and Bill and Margaret Kruckemeyer for their work in the NOVA Hospitality Tent. This year NOVA had a team of 8 marathon participants, 30 -10K participants, and 46 volunteers at the water station, medical tent, and hospitality tent. Checks are still arriving in the mail and so far more than $40,000 has been raised this year for nursing scholarships and research grants. Again, thank you to all who participated in the success of this event.

The following identifies NOVA Foundation winners and fundraising stars:

**MARATHON RACE WINNERS:**

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<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Tom Chaney</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Terri Bortot</td>
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**10K RACE WINNERS:**

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<td>Second</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third</td>
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**NOVA FUNDRAISING WINNERS:**

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<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>Janine Young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Steven Gordon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Jack Woodruff</td>
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James W. Peake MD was sworn in as the sixth Secretary of Veterans Affairs by President George W. Bush on December 20, 2007. Dr. Peake is a native of Saint Louis Missouri who obtained his Bachelors of Science Degree from West Point Military Academy. He served in Viet Nam and was awarded the Silver and Bronze Stars and the Purple Heart. He retired from the Army in 2004 after serving four years as the Army Surgeon General.

On December 18, 2007, Dr. Michael Kussman Under Secretary for Health, signed a VA Memorandum dated December 7, 2007 and titled Request for Exception, Administrative Requirements Relating to Appointment VA Handbook, 5005. This will expedite hiring of nurses and other clinicians. VA facilities, nationwide were advised to implement the content of this memo immediately.

Membership Chair Cheryl Knowles announced in the winter issue of News from NOVA that the NOVA Member Get A Member Campaign is ongoing and ends on April 1, 2008. Any member who signs up five new NOVA members receives a free membership for the next year. If a member signs up 15 new NOVA Members he or she will receive free registration for the 2008 Boston Annual Meeting. The NOVA membership count remains at 3200 members as of December, 31, 2007.

The officers for 2007-2008 were:

- President: Cecelia McVey (Boston HCS)
- President-Elect: Nancy Claflin (Phoenix VAMC)
- Vice President: Larry Lemos (Greater Los Angeles HCS)
- Secretary: Joan Clifford (Boston HCS)
- Membership Secretary: Cheryl Knowles (Bath VAMC)
- Treasurer: Ron Hopper (Maryland HCS)
- Directors: Marian Earhart (Pittsburgh VAMC)
  Sharon Johnson (Maryland HCS)
NOVA introduced its disability plan underwritten by Federal First. The first flyers were mailed in early January, 2008. NOVA held its fifteenth Annual Legislative Roundtable on January 18, 2008 at the DAV National Headquarters in Washington DC. NOVA President Cecelia McVey welcomed everyone. Nancy Claflin, NOVA’s Legislative Chair and President -Elect identified the following concerns.

- Mandatory funding
- Equity pay for nurses at the Nurse V level
- Consistent implementation of the Locality Pay law
- Adequate funding for OEF/OIF Veterans
- Adequate training and support for Human Resources Departments
- Hybrid Title 38 status for Nursing Assistants
- Healthcare costs for part time employees
- Needed revisions in travel pay for the Travel Nurse Corps
- Scholarships
- Decreasing delays in hiring staff
- Expansion of the VA Nursing Academy
- Revision to the 36/40 work schedule
- Support for Information Technology initiatives
- Support for the Magnet environment

Participants included NOVA Board of Directors President Cecelia McVey, Past President Dianne Nelson, President -Elect Nancy Claflin, Treasurer Ron Hopper, Membership Secretary Cheryl Knowles, Secretary Joan Clifford, Directors Mary Seaman, Sharon Simpson, Sharon Johnson, and Thelma Roach-Serry, Executive Director Deborah Beck, Deputy Director Susan Dove, and Account Executive Luke Zorich. Other participants included Audrey Drake RN, MS, Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Chief Nursing Service, Carl Blake Paralyzed Veterans of America, Joy Ilem Disabled American Veterans, Angela Mund National Association of Nurse Anesthetists, Cheryl Beyersdorf National Coalition of Homeless Veterans, Kim Lipsky of the VA Senate Committee, Gary Ewart Friends of Medical Care and Health Research, Suzanne Begany of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, and John Bradley, Consultant in Veterans Affairs.

The NOVA Board of Directors met in Washington DC on January 17-18, 2008. The following activities and actions took place.

- Approved the FY08 budget
- Met with the VA Office of Nursing Services staff
- Revised the NOVA strategic plan
- Approved a $100 donation to the American Heart Association in memory of
CONGRESSWOMAN JULIA CARSON

- President-Elect Nancy Claflin accepted an invitation to participate on the Planning Committee for the VHA Annual Nursing Leadership Conference in April, 2008
- NOVA awards procedure was reviewed and updated
- NOVA awards recipients were selected
- Disability Program has been implemented and over 1000 individuals have enrolled.

The Annual Meeting for 2009 will be held at the Royal Sonesta Hotel on Bourbon Street in New Orleans. Joan Clifford is the Chair of the Program Committee and will be assisted by Thelma Roach-Serry and Mary Seaman. NOVA has a longstanding commitment to supporting the Magnet Environment, and strengthening the nursing practice and work environment of VA Nurses. In conjunction with this, Sandra K. Janzen RN Nurse Executive of James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital, which is the first Magnet VA organization, has written a series of articles about the Tampa VA’s Magnet Journey. These articles are being published in News from NOVA. The first article appeared in the Spring issue of News from NOVA.

Maureen Levesque of the Boston VA HCS served as Teller for the 2008-2009 elections. Mary Seaman was elected Treasurer and Cheryl Knowles was elected Membership Secretary.

The NOVA Board of Directors held a Board Meeting on April 9, 2008 in Boston, Massachusetts. The following actions took place:
- Reviewed and updated the NOVA strategic plan
- Tabled proposed revisions of NOVA Policy and Procedure Book until July meeting
- Bylaws chair to submit suggested revisions at the July meeting
- Approved nomination of Joy Ilem for the Vernice Ferguson award which will be presented at the January, 2009 Legislative Roundtable
- NOVA history was updated and made available on the website
- Thelma Roach-Serry was appointed co-chair of the membership committee
- Reviewed plans for the 2009 Annual Meeting in New Orleans at the Royal Sonesta Hotel, April 22-25, 2009
- Approved pilot of two regional NOVA meetings, one in Washington DC metropolitan area, and one in Southern California. The tentative date for both meetings is November 8, 2008.

On April 9-12, 2008 the NOVA 28th Annual Meeting was held at the Radisson Hotel in Boston Massachusetts. Maureen Levesque of Boston was the Chairperson of this event. NOVA President Cecelia McVey RN, MHA, kicked off the meeting by leading a strategic planning session. That evening a reception and silent auction, emceed by Vince Elliott, was held. Approximately $5,000 was raised from auction proceeds and donations. On Thursday morning, Audrey Drake RN, BSN, MSN, CNAA, Deputy Chief Nursing Officer shared some “Revolutionary Thoughts“ from the Office of Nursing Service and also held a “Town Hall Meeting.” This was followed by a presentation on Hospice Care: What to Tell the Patient” by Mathew Russell, MD, Medical Program Director, Vista Care. During the afternoon session, participants learned about “Polytrauma: Finding Your Way Through the Maze.” This was presented by Sunil Sabharwal, MD, MRCP, SCI Chief, Boston Health Care System. Following this was a presentation titled “System Redesign” presented by Joan Clifford, RN, BSN, MSN, Deputy Chief Nurse, VA Boston Health Care System and John Marinello RN, ADN, Nurse Manager Emergency Department, VA Boston Health Care System. This was followed by a great deal of humor titled “Laugh Til Your Stitches Burst” presented by Susan D. Mc Ginnis RN, MS, NP, CCRN. On Thursday evening, participants had the option of attending the musical
“Menopause” which had the audience laughing so hard they were literally falling out of their seats.

On Friday, the keynote session entitled “Serial Murder by Healthcare Providers: Lessons Learned—Healthcare Administration and & Quality Management Departments and Direct Care Providers and Clinical/Forensic Investigation” was presented by Dr. Kenneth W. Kizer MD, MPH and Mary K. Sullivan MSN, RN C, CARN, FAAFS. A Strategic Planning Update was given by Cecelia McVey RN, MHA, NOVA President. Poster presentations preceded the Awards Luncheon and Annual Business Meeting. This meeting was sponsored by Gallagher Benefit Services and John A. Evans III Area Senior Vice President; Gallagher Benefit Services welcomed all participants. Cecelia McVey RN, BSN, MHA, President of NOVA was the moderator. The Barbara Chambers Award was presented to Catherine Bailey RN, BSN, CNA; the Professional Nurse for Clinical Excellence Award was awarded to Joy Edvalson, MSN, RN, FNP, and CWOCN. She was unable to attend so the award was presented to her during Nurses Week at her workplace in Greater Los Angeles. Joy, Wound Care Program Coordinator and NOVA member was also the recipient of the Secretary’s Award for an RN in an expanded role. The Professional Nurse Award for Leadership was given to Joan Clifford, RN, BSN, MSN. Ron Hopper and Marian Ehrhart received recognition plaques for their service to the NOVA Board of Directors. Following the Awards Luncheon, participants went out on the town on a Boston Scavenger Hunt. Saturday was the final day of the meeting and it started with a presentation on “Success in Education” by Mary Raymer RN, MA, CNAA, VACO-Healthcare Recruitment and Retention Office. This was followed by “Writing for Publication” presented by Terri Gaffney RN, MPA, Vice President, Gannett Healthcare Group. Mary Seaman RN, MS, CNAA-BC, Director closed the meeting with her delightful presentation titled “Harbor Lights.”

The idea of establishing a VA Nurse Emeritus group was presented during the NOVA Annual Meeting. The group enthusiastically embraced this new idea and a core group got to work. There is now have an Emeritus Council comprised of a Chair, Mary Raymer, a Vice Chair, Dianne Nelson, and members Ron Hopper, Marion Ehrhart, Catherine Bailey, Linda Johnson, and Vincent Elliott. The NOVA Board of Directors has approved the initial charter, the Mission Statement, and the Council members.

Reasons to have an Emeritus Program

1. Currently 15% of VA nurses are retirement eligible and projections are 4% will actually retire each year through 2013.
2. Applying those same percentages to the NOVA membership it is anticipated that the organization will be loosing a minimum of 120 members per year due to retirement.
3. NOVA members rarely continue their membership into retirement and if they do, their involvement in the organization tends to be minimal. Currently there is not an established role for retired nurses; the NOVA programs are focused (as they should be) on working VA nurses and thus those nurses retiring from the system have little incentive to remain actively involved in NOVA.
4. Subsequently, the VA and NOVA lose the knowledge, commitment, and skill sets held by these retiring nurses.

The Emeritus program is very exciting and several ideas have been discussed for the first project. The Emeritus Council agreed the project would be veteran related and found a wonderful organization that is already established and doing great things for active duty soldiers as well as veterans: Soldiers’ Angels. The organization was started by a mother of a deployed soldier sending care packages to him and his fellow troops. This mother recognized the joy
care packages gave her son and his friends but she also recognized how many soldiers never receive a letter much less a care package. The organization now has over 200,000 volunteers in America and other countries, providing support to our brave men and women in uniform. The Soldiers’ Angels Mission Statement says it all: “May no soldier go unloved. May no soldier walk alone. May no soldier be forgotten— until they all come home.” www.soldiersangels.org

VA Nurse Emeritus Mission Statement

□ VA Nurse Emeritus exists to support the mission and vision of NOVA through continuing engagement of nurses who have retired or have immediate plans to retire from active employment in the VA.

□ VA Nurse Emeritus seeks to recognize and value the expertise of retired VA nurses through substantive projects that support the working VA nurse and the veterans we serve.

□ VA Nurse Emeritus strives to recognize and celebrate the contribution of retired VA nurses through positive affirmation programs and projects.

In April 2008, President Nancy Claflin attended the Nurse Executive Leadership Conference in Seattle to discuss NOVA and the importance of joining the organization as well as promoting membership to their staff members. This conference is organized by the Office of Nursing Service and is held in conjunction with the American Organization of Nurse Executives meeting. Additionally, NOVA’s voice was heard in the publication ADVANCE for Nurses. The article “Good Nursing, Bad Places” written by Sarah Lebo who used quotes from Cecelia McVey from the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs.

NOVA partners with the nursing community to address the nation wide nursing shortage. Executive Director Deborah Beck is a member of the American Nursing Shortage Relief (ANSR), a coalition of 51 national nursing organizations that united in 2001 to identify and promote creative strategies for addressing the nursing and faculty shortages. Another NOVA partner is Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research (FOVA), a coalition formed 16 years ago to ensure America’s veterans receive high quality health care. This 85 member coalition represents: national academic, medical and scientific societies; voluntary health and patient advocacy groups; and veteran focused associations.

In May 2008 NOVA joined the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and several other professional nursing organizations in support of the Troops to Nurse Teachers Act. (S205). This bill was introduced in the Senate in March 2008. Its purpose is to authorize programs to increase the number of nurses within the Armed Forces through assistance for service as nurse faculty or education as nurses, and for other purposes.

Cathy Rick, Chief Nursing Officer, Office of Nursing Service wrote a memorandum represented by AFGE (WebCIMS #405264). Its purpose was to clarify NOVA’s role at facilities where registered nurses are represented by the American Federation of Government Employees. This memorandum was sent to nurse executives at these facilities.

NOVA has built relationships with the House and Senate Committees on Veterans

Cecelia McVey, NOVA Past President, presented testimony before the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs in support of the Essential Veterans Retention Act of 2008 on May 21, 2008. She then presented testimony before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health at a hearing on Human Resources Challenges within the Veterans Health Administration on May 22, 2008. Two key Congressional hearings on veterans’ issues heard NOVA’s voice.

Testimony Submitted By
May 22 2008 by Cecelia McVey, Immediate Past President of NOVA To the U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON VETERANS’ AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH Regarding HUMAN RESOURCES CHALLENGES WITHIN THE VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION:

“Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Health, the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) would like to thank you for inviting us to present testimony on Human Resource issues in the VA.

I am Cecilia McVey, BSN, MHA, RN, Associate Director for Patient Care/Nursing at the VA Boston Healthcare System and am here today as the Immediate Past President of NOVA. NOVA is the professional organization for registered nurses employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

NOVA respects and appreciates what our labor organizations, such as AFGE and NAGE, do for VA nurses. NOVA clearly deals with VA on RN professional matters, not working conditions for which VHA RNs have their union representatives. Because this Committee has invited NOVA to share its views on this bill, however, I am here to offer the following observations.

The Veterans’ Health Administration (VHA) is the third largest civilian employer in the Federal Government and one of the largest health care providers in the world. VHA is facing significant challenges in ensuring it has the appropriate work force to meet both current and future workforce needs. This workforce is critical to ensure we are able to provide the care our Nation’s heroes deserve. These challenges are further exacerbated by an aging workforce in general and in nursing specifically and the high number of employees’ retirement eligible each year.

Nursing and other Medical Center workforce members are dependent on timely and efficient recruiting. Human Resources Departments across VHA are not able to function optimally due to systems that have not kept pace with private sector recruitment abilities. Although there are numerous barriers to timely and efficient recruiting the following three are the top three:

1. Although certain pay setting flexibilities do exist, such as recruitment bonuses/retention allowances, above minimum entry rates, and the special rate authority, additional pay flexibilities are needed in order for VA to be able to successfully compete for the best candidates in the marketplace. The current general schedule and locality pay system which works hand in hand with the classification system is antiquated, cannot respond quickly enough and has a number of major barriers. For example:
   a. Retention allowances.
      (1) They are not considered base pay for benefits such as retirement and life insurance. Candidates declined positions based on this limitation.

   Special pay rates.
   (1) There are restrictions on how far the pay table can be expanded.
   (2) You cannot use special rates to address recruitment/retention issues of a subgroup within an occupation
   (3) Approval process for special rates is too slow to address current market conditions.
   (4) The major focus of the criteria is whether you are getting qualified candidates to apply and not whether the candidates are highly qualified.

   Above minimum rates.
   (1) Allows manager to appoint the applicant above the minimum step. There are many situations
where the manager needs to offer a highly qualified candidate more money than the existing experienced staff. There is no mechanism to increase the pay of the existing staff to maintain pay parity.

2. The application process (how to apply) is too cumbersome and very confusing for those in the private sector who are used to a much faster and simpler process. Staffing specialists must help many of the would-be applicants to navigate through the maze of the federal application process. Applicants are frustrated by the duplication of information that they are required to provide, such as the information on federal application for employment, information for background investigations, and credentialing. The enormous amount of paperwork, data base entries, and checklists associated with fulfilling all of the hiring requirements further delays the process. This leads to hiring additional FTE to manage the processes.

3. A consistent theme across the country is that applicants are looking for money for professional development not just in clinical occupation but administrative as well. Tuition reimbursement is limited to a few select occupations at this time such as Nurses.

Some suggested policy changes recommended are as follows:

1. More positions should be converted to Excepted Service, i.e., hybrid Title 38 such as Nursing Assistants, Health Technicians, Medical Support Assistants, Radiation Safety Officers, and Information Technology Specialists for example. Due to the constraints associated with recruiting through the Delegated Examining Units, the process is often too difficult and generally does not provide a list of “highly qualified candidates” and discourages potential hires.

2. More pay flexibilities should be provided. Pay reform similar to the Physician pay reform where there is a market pay component would provide the needed flexibility for VA facilities at the local level. Another option would be to provide legislation that would address the barriers in paragraph 1 above.

3. Classification Standards are in need of review and revision. Many of them are too old and no longer reflective of the types of duties and responsibilities that are typically performed. Given that these are used to determine the pay, they often serve as a barrier to appropriate and effective pay setting.

4. Given the sizeable numbers of employees at or near retirement age, succession planning is becoming increasingly more important, especially for critically important positions. In order to successfully transition workload from retires who possess a wealth of experience to their successors; transitional recruitment is required which can take up three to six months of addition FTE per situation.

One other critical issue of concern relates to the impact on patient care if 38 USC 7422(b) exclusions were to be repealed. Some of the issues that I foresee would have a negative impact on the care of our Veterans include the following:

- RN reassignment decisions made on the basis of clinical competence
- Performance appraisals/proficiency reports
- Fitness for duty issues as determined by Professional Standards Boards
- Clinical competence issues as determined by Professional Standards Boards
- Disciplinary and major adverse actions based on patient care or clinical competence issues.

That quality patient care is delivered. Our veterans deserve the best that VA has to offer and although the majority of our employees are excellent, there are a few marginal performers who put patient safety at risk. Moreover, clinical supervisors and managers must retain the authority to make clinical decisions such as which personnel are best suited for particular assignments and
the appropriate staff mix for a given clinical setting. Inherent in bargaining is the element of timeliness. If an employee needs to be removed from direct patient care or if providers’ hours must be extended to meet growing patient care needs, those changes must be made immediately and cannot wait for the completion of protracted negotiation. National Level bargaining on policy or program changes is currently taking 120 days or longer. Local bargaining usually takes less time but still can result in delays, despite the best of intentions. If clinical matters were subject to bargaining, critical clinical programs such as extending the hours of mental health clinics or mandating traumatic brain injury training for all providers could not be implemented for months, which would unacceptably put patients at risk.

VHA has been a leader in health care and has earned an excellent reputation as one of the best health care providers in the country. In order to continue to this reputation, VHA staff will need to have new skills and competencies to treat this new generation of Veterans. Nimble and flexible HR processes are critical to VA’s future success.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, for the opportunity to testify here today about these important personnel issues.”

The Honorable James B. Peake MD, Secretary US Department of Veterans Affairs testified before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs to provide information on the issues related to veterans suicide: what VA knows, including the sources of information it uses; what it does not know, and what staff intends to do about that problem; and what staff has been doing to directly address the issues of suicide from a clinical perspective, and how staff is expanding their outreach, even as they seek better ways to measure the problem. On May 21, 2008 Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake announced the names of members appointed to two special panels that will make recommendations on ways the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) can improve its programs in suicide prevention, suicide research and suicide education.

NOVA has the advantage of being able to act quickly in response to issues. NOVA’s voice was also heard by the American Medical Association (AMA) in response to a proposed resolution before their House of Delegates restricting use of the word doctor to those holding medical degrees. The proposed policy resolution advocated for legislation to limit the use of the titles doctor, resident, and residency to physicians, podiatrists, and dentists, or those in training for those professions. NOVA joined many other nursing organizations, including the American Nurses Association and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, in strongly urging them not to pass the resolution. As a result of efforts by NOVA and other organizations, the original resolution was watered down significantly in its final form. The AMA ultimately settled on language that advocates for legislation that requires health care professionals to "clearly and accurately identify to patients their qualifications and degree(s)" and makes it a felony to "misrepresent one's self as a physician."

NOVA President Nancy Claflin sent the following letter to David Lichtman MD, the chair of the AMA reference committee C, medical education. Dear Dr. Lichtman,

The Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) is the professional organization of the approximately 40,000 registered nurses employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Resolution 303 proposes to limit the title “Doctor” in a “medical setting” only to physicians, dentists, and podiatrists; the title “Resident” to physicians, dentists, and podiatrists in-training, and “Residency” only to those training programs. This resolution is directed at schools of nursing which have “re-titled their training program as a Residency and their students and residents.” Resolution 303 states that “title encroachment” is “of concern because patients will be confused when the titles of Doctor, Resident, and Residency, are applied to non-
physicians who hold non-medical doctorates, or to non-physicians in training.”

NOVA supports the position of the American Nurses Association (ANA) that the term “doctor” has been used for centuries to identify teachers, scholars, and persons of higher learning in our society. Those who have earned a doctorate degree, including nurses, may be called “doctor,” so there is no legitimate reason to exclude them.

NOVA supports efforts aimed at decreasing patient confusion with caregivers. Patients have the right to know the names, credentials, and roles of their caregivers. Doctors of nursing are an integral part of the entire interdisciplinary health care team, and play a different role than a medical doctor. Patients benefit when the members of the interdisciplinary team work together to provide the best care.

NOVA supports ANA’s statement that use of doctor is appropriate for those individuals who have earned the highest or one of the highest academic degrees conferred by a university, and that there is no legitimate reason to exclude nurses from this practice. NOVA supports the nursing community’s assertion that all patients have the right to understand who is taking care of them, and what credentials qualify them to provide healthcare services.

The Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs appreciates the opportunity to provide our views on this resolution. We urge Reference Committee C to make a resolution for either withdrawal or unfavorable consideration of this resolution. Sincerely,

Nancy C. Laflin
CCRN CPHQ FNAHQ President

In June 2008, NOVA also supported Health Care Availability for Veterans and Their Families as stated in the Action Report to the American Nurses Association 2008 House of Delegates. This report offers recommendations concerning insuring adequate resources for veterans returning from combat as well as support for their families and communities. It also addresses the need to provide increased awareness and education for communities as well as reduction of potential barriers of receipt of medical and mental health services. The nurse’s role in assisting with this is also defined.

NOVA Board of Directors regularly solicits input from its members/potential members via an electronic survey. NOVA’s Spring/Summer 2008 Membership Survey was available online during June 2008 through a hyperlink on NOVA’s website: www.vanurse.org.

An E-News message was sent to all NOVA members encouraging survey participation and 123 responses were received. The intent was that the questions to be actionable, so that the results could be used to implement various strategies for strengthening NOVA. Reduced attendance over the past few years at the NOVA Annual Meeting directed the majority of the survey questions this year. The focus was on seeking NOVA members’ viewpoints related to the NOVA Annual Meeting and other potential options being considered, such as having regional meetings and/or a legislative one-day event for NOVA members. Members were also asked what legislative issues they felt NOVA should focus on in the upcoming year, if there was an interest in NOVA providing nursing Continuing Education Units (CEUs), and what their preference was for NOVA communications. The following are key highlights from the survey results:

71.1% of the respondents indicated NOVA should consider planning a few regional meetings each year.

73% of the respondents indicated they would consider attending an annual one-day legislative event in Washington, D.C. at a minimal cost.

53% of the respondents indicated that they were interested in room sharing with another NOVA member for attending the Annual Meeting.
65% of the respondents utilized “E-News from NOVA” as the major source to obtain information about what NOVA is doing for them, followed by “News from NOVA” newsletter, and the NOVA website was the third most utilized communication mechanism.

Recruitment and retentions issues were key themes that emerged from the survey question that asked nurses to identify specific legislative issues that NOVA should focus on. Nurse pay, staffing ratios, nursing schedules were noted as areas of interest and concern. Complete results of the 2008 survey can be accessed through NOVA’s website, www.vanurse.org. A special thank you is extended to the VA nurses who took the time to complete the survey.

Member recruitment and membership campaigns and programs continue to be a dynamic and vital part of NOVA in 2008. Cheryl Knowles is NOVA’S Membership Secretary from 2008-2010 and the following people are the membership contacts.

| VISN 1, 2, 3 | Kathleen Lehman |
| VISN 4, 5 | Annette Nelson, Thelma Roach-Serry, Dolores Zander |
| VISN 6, 7 | Magalene James, Mary Powe |
| VISN 8, 9 | Lee Fealy, Providencia Cardona |
| VISN 10, 11 | Janet Parrish, Ron Patrick |
| VISN 12, 15 | Sharon Johnson, Rainee Mitchell |
| VISN 16, 17 | Portia McDaniel, Jenny Urban |
| VISN 18, 19, 20 | Sharon Simpson |
| VISN 21, 22, 23 | Ann Narciso, Sonia Olivar, Ethel Warren |

Membership campaigns and programs are described in the following paragraphs:

The Every-Member-Get-A-Member campaign has already begun and will conclude on December 31. For each new member you sign up, you will become eligible for a drawing in January. Every member recruited gives the recruiter one chance; ten new members and the recruiter has ten chances. What could be easier? The Grand Prize winner will receive $250 cash and $100 will be donated to the NOVA Foundation in the winner’s name. A letter from the NOVA President stating the winner will also be included when you submit your annual membership form.

NOVA has been conducting a spring Member-Get-A-Member campaign for about a decade. This campaign annually generates over 200 members and will continue in 2009. Members recruiting 15 new members will receive a complimentary Annual Meeting registration and by recruiting an additional 10 members a complimentary three night stay at the Royal Sonesta/New Orleans will be included. The Annual Meeting program is excellent and provides networking opportunities with colleagues from around the country.

Board members will be contacting non-renewing members to ask them to rejoin but also find out why they let their membership lapse which will provide valuable information in setting policy and developing programs for NOVA.

NOVA joined the American Nurses Association and 30 other nursing organizations in a letter of support to Representative Tom Latham, who introduced the Nurses’ Higher Education and Loan Repayment Act of 2008. According to a July 2007 report released by the American Hospital Association, hospitals in this country need approximately 116,000 nurses to fill positions that are currently vacant nationwide. The shortage is projected to intensify as...
experienced nurses retire and the demand for nursing care grows. Complicating the problem further is the inability of nursing schools to expand capacity and educate the next generation of nurses. Each year schools of nursing across the country turn away qualified applicants in the tens of thousands. The number one reason cited by nursing schools is a significant lack of faculty. This bill will help address the faculty shortage by offering a loan repayment program to current students enrolled in graduate nursing programs and to advanced degree nurses who have recently graduated. The essential component of the bill is the nurse’s commitment to serve as faculty for four years in an accredited school of nursing. This legislation will supplement and complement the current Nurse Faculty Loan program authorized under Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act by awarding grants to individual nurses. Due to heavy educational debt and higher salary for advanced practice nurses, a loan repayment program provides a viable incentive for nurses with advanced degrees to choose a career in education.

The NOVA Board of Directors held a meeting via teleconference on Friday July 11, 2008. The following actions were taken:

- Approved fiscal year 2009 operating budget
- Approved December 1, 2008 deadline for award submission for nominees for the 2009 NOVA Awards
- Approved pilot regional meeting sites for Baltimore and Los Angeles for November 2008 (Editor’s note: Los Angeles regional meeting has been postponed until summer 2009)
- Approved revised NOVA policy and Procedures Book
- President Nancy Claflin called for another NOVA Board Meeting via teleconference in October 2008
- Updated NOVA Strategic Plan
- Plan to expand Legislative Roundtable in January 2009 to include no more than 25 additional participants

“Saluting our VA Nurses” first annual charity roast was held in July 2008 in Annapolis, Maryland. Inspired by the NOVA Foundation’s desire to provide more scholarships and grants than ever before, the NOVA Foundation Board explored a new way to raise capital – and it was a great success. With over 120 participants and company and organization sponsorships such as Lockheed Martin and AMVETS, the NOVA Foundation raised over $4,300. The Moose Lodge of Annapolis provided a great location, sponsorship, and a catered event while the crowd enjoyed the sounds of great dancing music by KAOS; one of Baltimore’s best legendary bands.

Highlights of the afternoon included raffles, the great spinning money wheel, along with a silent auction which included an array of fantastic donations such as an autographed football from NFL Hall of Famer, Darrell Green. Special guests also included Cathy Rick, the Chief Nurse for Veterans Affairs. Attendance at the event covered the U.S. from New Jersey to as far away as the state of Washington. The NOVA Foundation Board thanks all that made this inaugural event a success and looks forward to planning the Second Annual Charity Roast in the fall of 2009. Appreciation goes out to the following for their thoughtful donations, sponsorship and time:

Cathy Snyder, Committee Chair, Board Member
Teresa Morris, Board Member
Phyllis West, Board Member
Dan Matthews, Lockheed Martin
Darrell Green
Homestead Gardens

Table Sponsors:
AMVETS
Kate Bent, Board Member
Disabled American Veterans
Lockheed Martin Corporation
Veterans of Foreign Wars
William S. Bergman Associates

The NOVA Foundation CFC # is 10873 and once again contributions can be made to the NOVA Foundation. Dates of CFC Campaigns varied among VA Facilities but generally, they were October through December.

Despite challenging economic times and decreased donations to charitable organizations, NOVA MCM participants rallied once again to raise funds in support of nursing scholarships and research grants. This year, NOVA had a record number of participants register. The total was 72 in total (33 ran in the marathon and 39 in the 10K portion of the race). NOVA’s focus on enhancing visibility in the community took precedence and resulted in the most participants ever taking part in NOVA’s yearly fundraising running event. The celebrations began this year at the Holiday Inn in Arlington with an evening reception on the eve of the event. The great food and social networking was energizing and got everyone off to a great start. The weather cooperated this year (no mud for a change) and the race went off without a hitch. The new “red” t-shirts (a gift from the Tampa Chapter) certainly made it easy for everyone to see our nurses running the race and of course special thanks go to VA Boston nurses who traveled just to volunteer to work in the medical tent on race day. VA nurses are the best! Following the race, everyone gathered in the NOVA tent to receive their hard earned medals and enjoy the culinary delights donated by Bill and Diane Nelson. The Chili just seems to get better with each passing year!

The top fundraisers are ranked as follows: Catherine Bailey, Nancy Claflin, President and Mary Seaman, Treasurer.

Beginning in 2008 small tax-exempt organizations have new filing requirements. The process is short, easy, and electronic and can be done with the new e-Postcard. What happens if you don’t file? You risk losing your tax-exempt status. Chapters were notified that if they had annual gross receipts of $25,000 or less and did not have to file Form 990 or 990 –EZ, they must file the e-Postcard by November15, 2008 and then annually. Information on this new filing requirement as well as a way to sign up for Exempt Organization’s free email newsletter can be found at www.irs.gov/eo.

New sites for the VA Nursing Academy were announced. They are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VA Facility</th>
<th>School of Nursing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charleston, South Carolina</td>
<td>Medical University of South Carolina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hines, Illinois</td>
<td>Loyola University of Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan Consortium (Detroit, Saginaw, Battle Creek, Ann Arbor)</td>
<td>University of Detroit Mercy, Saginaw Valley State University</td>
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</table>
NOVA held an extremely successful regional meeting in Baltimore on November 8, 2008. NOVA nurses who attended shared the following comments: “Very enjoyable seminar. Great networking opportunity and useful information. Awesome! Leaving feeling nourished and supported! Looking forward to the next one! Yes, do more of these meetings!”

On December 6, 2008 President-elect Barack Obama selected retired Gen. Eric K. Shinseki to be the next Veterans Affairs secretary, telling NBC News in an exclusive interview that "both he and I share a reverence for those who serve."

NOVA announced the formation of a new committee to research the protocol and develop an ANCC certification exam for a VA Nurse Specialty Certification in December, 2008. Kathy Lehman is the chairperson and can be contacted at (kathleen.lehmann2@med.va.gov).

The officers for 2008-2009 were:

President:    Nancy Claflin (Phoenix VAMC)
Vice President: Larry Lemos (Greater Los Angeles HCS)
Secretary:    Joan Clifford (Boston HCS)
Membership Secretary: Cheryl Knowles (Bath VAMC)
Treasurer:    Mary Seaman (Tampa VAMC)
Directors:    Sharon Johnson (Maryland HCS)
              Ann Narciso (Palo Alto VAMC)
              Thelma Roach-Serry (Richmond VAMC)
              Sharon Simpson (Southern Arizona HCS)
Immediate Past President: Cecelia McVey (Boston HCS)
Executive Director: Deborah Beck
Deputy Director: Susan Dove
Administrative Specialist: Luba Litvinova

2009

In January, 2009, Audrey Drake RN, MSN, Deputy Chief Nursing Officer Central VA Office and NOVA member retired from the VA after 44 years of service. She has functioned in a variety of clinical, educational, and administrative positions at several Veteran Health Administration (VHA) Medical Centers including Acting Chief Nursing Officer as well as her distinguished Army career.

Senator Daniel Akaka (D-HI), Chair of the Veterans’ Affairs Committee, re-introduced legislation to improve veterans’ health care on January 15, 2009. The Veterans’ Health Care Authorization Act of 2009, S.252, is an updated version of the bill introduced last year to improve medical personnel incentives and other aspects of veterans’ health care.

The NOVA Board of Directors met in Washington, D.C. on January 15 and January 16, 2009. The following activities and actions took place:

☐ Met with VA Office of Nursing Services staff
☐ Approved minutes from November Board of Directors call
-reviewed and revised NOVA strategic plan
Approved proposal for VA Emeritus program to selling Soldier’s Angels scarves at the annual meeting
Recommended a line item be added to budget for VA Emeritus program
Approved the VA Emeritus logo
Charged the awards committee with revising guidelines for awards process
Charged finance committee with developing an Investment Policy and Reserve Funds policy.
Selected 2009 NOVA Award recipients
Approved 2009 nominations for slate of candidates
Approved Annual Meeting to be held in Washington DC in conjunction with the Marine Corps Marathon, October 2010
Selected Thelma Roach-Serry as program chair for 2010 Annual Meeting
Approved plan to continue with regional meetings in addition to the Annual Meeting
Requested former Board member Marian Ehrhart, to attend VA Special Interest Group for the Ambulatory Care Nurses Association meeting to be held in Philadelphia, March 2009.

At the January Board meeting, the Board thanked NOVA Foundation Chairman Lula Cumberlander for her dedicated service during the past three years. The Board also welcomed Mary Seaman as Chairman, Cecilia McVey as Vice Chairman, and Larry Lemos as Secretary/Treasurer. These 2009 Officers and Directors are dedicated to keeping expenses down and raising funds to ensure the maximum number of scholarships and research grants that can be awarded to VA nurses.

NOVA held its sixteenth Annual Legislative Roundtable on January 16, 2009 at the DAV National Headquarters in Washington, DC, providing an opportunity for key stakeholders in veterans’ issues to gather and share information. NOVA President Nancy Claflin welcomed everyone, and Past President and Legislative Chair Cecilia McVey invited participants to discuss concerns and issues. Participants included: NOVA Board of Directors President Nancy Claflin, Past President Cecilia McVey, Vice President, Larry Lemos, Treasurer Mary Seaman, Membership Secretary Cheryl Knowles, Secretary Joan Clifford, Directors Sharon Johnson, Ann Narciso, and Thelma Roach-Serry; Past Board Members Dianne Nelson and Mary Raymer; Executive Director Deborah Beck, Deputy Director Susan Dove, and Luke Zorich. Other participants included Cathy Rick, Chief Nursing Officer, Office of Nursing Services; Reji John, Administrative Assistant, Office of Nursing Services; Betty Moseley Brown, Center for Women Veterans; Angela Prudhomme, Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs; Cathy Wiblemo, House Committee on Veterans Affairs; Andrea Buck, Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs; Joy Ilem, Disabled American Veterans; Carl Blake and Alethea Predeoux, Paralyzed Veterans of America; Teresa Morris, Veterans of Foreign Wars; Bernie Edelman, Vietnam Veterans of America; Annie Minguez, American Association of Colleges of Nursing; Kathryn White, Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists; Gary Ewart, Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research; Cheryl Beversdorf; National Coalition for Homeless Veterans; and John Bradley, Consultant in Veterans Affairs.

Topics covered included:
Waiver of offset from pay for certain reemployed annuitants
Senior Executive Schedule Position in VHA to ameliorate pay inequities for Nurse
Executives and Medical Center Directors
- Increase the pay limitation contained for VA nurses from level five to level four of the Executive Schedule to address the pay disparity between the Nurse V maximum rate and the GS-15 maximum rate in some geographic areas.
- Increase the pay cap under the nurse locality pay system. This change would also favorably affect the Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNA).
- Information and training on Locality Pay Surveys to assist in applying the law to ensure VA nurses receive appropriate pay raises
- Reestablishment of the Health Professionals Scholarship Program (for non-VA employees)
- Inclusion of the revised definition of nurses who wish to work the 36/40 work week as utilized in the community
- Direct hire authority for nursing
- Concerns regarding the centralization of Information Technology resulting in a loss of local control and inability to access and use needed equipment and software, specifically Class III software
- Concerns regarding the LMS (learning management system) not functioning appropriately and not meeting pre-established timelines
- Support for the VA Nursing Academy so all VA facilities will benefit
- Support for the principles of Magnet
- Succession planning, particularly for nurse executives
- Incentives, special pay, and recognition for advance practice nurses
- Oversight of medical centers, both internally and externally
- Increased retirements
- Incentives for facilities to use Travel Nurse Corps pilot program, and expansion to a VA Travel Corps
- Decreasing non nursing tasks assigned to nursing
- Stand Up for Veterans--awareness and advocacy initiative
- Support for strengthening federal policies/programs for health care services to disabled veterans
- Ensure that VA has resources, programs, services for health care for wounded and disabled veterans in recovery and rehabilitation
- Properly screen and treat psychological wounds, including PTSD, utilizing most effective evidence-based tools and therapies
- Properly screen and treat veterans with TBI, including moderate and mild TBI, using validated assessment tools and proven, effective treatments
- Provide comprehensive support to family caregivers of severely wounded and disabled programs
- Reform federal budget process to provide sufficient, timely, and predictable funding necessary to sustain the VA health care system and the "Best care anywhere." budget reform from mandatory funding to advance funding method
- Ensure that VA programs responsive to gender specific needs of women veterans, and encourage research activities
- Ensure outreach to improve women veterans’ awareness of services, benefits, and eligibility criteria
Construction issues
National VA healthcare leasing project, direct privatization of care, in joint ventures.

Contracting of care
Rural health care, lack of capacity and providers; concerns with Project Hero
Need more points of contact between VA and community based organizations
Homeless veterans; women are fastest growing homeless veteran population; 3%
homeless, increased 15% last year: VA program serves only 25% of homeless veterans
Accountability, whether VA using money wisely
Growing backlog of claims
Outreach; approximately 70% to 75% of veterans don’t use the VA
1.8 million Veterans with no insurance; many don’t know about available benefits
Issues for OEF/OIF veterans include musculo-skeletal disorders and amputations
VA needs to provide all services, orthopedic physicians, physical therapists, and nurse specialists to expand these services
Access for priority 8 veterans; Congress has given VA $250 million to open access
Questions about Project Hero
Minority veterans are a concern, specifically health care and access
CARES initiative will be revisited in second session of Congress
Delays in healthcare
What the VA will look like in 10 to 20 years; keeping up infrastructure
Implementation of GI bill due in August, 2009
Nurse and nurse faculty shortages
Crisis for VA regarding CRNAs; one third of current CRNAs can retire within the next five years
VA research funds provided to any clinician at least 5/8 FTEE; supports TBI, PTSD, and homeless veterans; requested $575 million; separate request for $142 million to improve VA lab space
Shortage of staff on the benefits side, with experienced staff retiring; fully funding VA’s disability compensation program and preserving current form
Enforcement of employment and re-employment acts; guard and reserve education for employers on hiring returning troops
Seamless transition between VA and DOD
Independent budget with 7 critical issues; sufficient, timely, and predictable funding for medical facilities infrastructure; improvements needed in the claims process; seamless transition from DOD to VA; human resources challenges facing the Department of Veterans Affairs and national cemetery administration

NOVA has submitted an application to the American Nurses’ Credentialing Center (ANCC) for a VA nursing certification. Kathy Lehman from Bedford is chairing the group working on developing the core competencies.

Barack Obama entered the United States on January 20, 2009
Retired Army Gen. Eric Shinseki retired his office on January 21, 2009 as the Nation’s seventh Secretary of Veterans Affairs, assuming the leadership of the Department of Veterans Affairs following confirmation by the Senate. Shinseki said “The overriding challenge I am addressing from my first day in office is to make the
NOVA joined the Nursing Community, www.thenursingcommunity.org a forum of professional nursing related organizations to collaborate on health care and nursing issues. In February 2009, NOVA collaborated with the Nursing Community to support the $215 million request for Title VII in Fiscal Year 2010 and the Nurses’ Higher Education and Loan Repayment Act of 2009. NOVA also joined with the Nursing Community in February to communicate with HRSA to request the division of the stimulus health provisions funding.

Any NOVA member who recruited a member was entered into a contest for the grand prize. The grand prize winner is Ethel Davenport RN, member of Chapter 446, Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center in Milwaukee, WI. Ethel received a check for $250 and a $100 donation was made to the NOVA Foundation in her honor.

Known as the VA Nurse Emeritus has taken Soldiers' Angels as their platform for giving back to the Veterans. They sewed “Cool Scarves” and then invited people at the April 2009 Annual Meeting to sponsor each scarf with a donation. They raised $1320 for the NOVA Foundation, and the scarves will be distributed to the troops by Soldiers' Angels. Each scarf included a personal note of thanks to the soldier from a VA Nurse.

NOVA’s legislative committee was very active. Cecilia McVey and Sharon Johnson made several visits to Capitol Hill to discuss issues regarding VA nursing, including support for Senate Bill 252.

The revisions to the VA Handbook on Staffing were published in March 2009 and included the compression of the Nurse Qualification Standards, the establishment of career paths, and credit for LPN experience. There are now Four Dimensions of Nursing, which are Practice, Professional Development, Collaboration and Scientific Inquiry.

NOVA collaborated with the Nursing Community in March/April 2009 to support the healthcare reform document titled Commitment to Quality Healthcare Reform: A Consensus Statement from the Nursing Community.

NOVA uses its Members Networking Message boards to allow an exchange of information and sharing of ideas and opinions, related to individual subgroups or based on specific topics. In March, 2009, an Evidence-Based Practice category was added to the NOVA Message Board.

Elections for the NOVA National Board for 2009-2011 were held and the names of the new officers were announced at the NOVA Annual Meeting in April, 2009. They are Joan Clifford, President-Elect, Larry Lemos, Vice President, Sharon Johnson, Secretary, and Janet Minard, Melissa Nixon, Dee Zander, Thelma Roach-Serry, and Kelly Skinner Directors. Sharon Simpson was appointed to fill a director’s vacancy from 2009-2010.

The NOVA Board of Directors met in New Orleans LA on April 22, 2009. The following activities and actions took place:

- The 2010 Annual Meeting has been moved from April to October. It will be held in conjunction with the Marine Corps Marathon in order to make it more economically feasible to participate in both events.

- The 2010 Annual Meeting will be held in Washington, DC from October 28-30. The program will have a legislative focus.

- The Marine Corps Marathon will be held on Sunday, October 31, 2010. Individuals can sign up for either the marathon or 10K walk/run.

- The Board has agreed to hold three to four regional meetings in the spring of 2010.
NOVA continues to monitor legislation impacting veterans and the nurses who care for them. Hearings have been attended; written testimony has been submitted; a briefing for Senate staffers was hosted by NOVA; and numerous individual meetings with legislative aides/veterans issues have been held.

The NOVA Annual Meeting was held in New Orleans from April 22-24, 2009. It was a truly outstanding conference. On April 23, 2009, "Stimulating Staff Nurses’ Spirit of Inquiry Through Nursing Innovation" was presented by Karen Rice, DNS, APRN, ACNS, BC, ANP, Program Director from the Center for Nursing Research Ocher Medical Center. This was followed by “Safe Patient Handling, Where are We Now?” presented by Mary Seaman, MS, RN, NEA-BC, Director of Staff Relations/Nursing, James A. Haley VA Hospital. The morning ended with a presentation by the NOVA Thespian Players, Sharon Simpson, RN, MSN, Catherine Bailey, RN, CNA-BC, Art Briggs RN, BSN, MSA, and Miriam Rogers, RN, BSN. The skits and audience/player interaction was moderated by Mike Holy RN, MS. Beverly Ross, PMHCNS, BC, Clinical Nurse Specialist from Hunter Holmes Mc Quire VAMC presented Suicide Prevention. This was followed by “Post Traumatic Stress Disorder” which was presented by Ronald Nardi, MSN, APRN, Director Intensive Outpatient Treatment Program Newington, Kentucky. The afternoon was completed by a presentation called “Clinical Nurse Advisors” given by Christine Engstrom, PhD, CRNP, AOCN, Program Manager, Women’s Health Oncology Clinical Nurse Advisor, Office of Nursing Service VACO.

In the evening NOVA members were treated to a buffet at the NOVA Foundation Reception and Silent Auction. While enjoying the food, they bid on many different types of treasures. Mary Seaman, MS, RN, NEA-BC, Chairperson NOVA Foundation emceed the event. The auction was attended by 50 people. A total of $5000 for the NOVA Foundation was raised at the Annual Meeting. On April 24, 2009 Joan Clifford, RN, FACHE, began the morning with a presentation on the “Bedside Care Collaborative”. This was followed by Mary Ramer PhD RN, CNAA’s introduction to the group called the Soldier’s Angels. Just before lunch, Maureen Levesque, RN, BSN, and James Doeling, BSN, MS presented “Transitioning from Student to Professional.” Immediately before lunch, participants were treated to poster presentations by several of our NOVA Colleagues. This was followed by the Awards Luncheon and Annual Business Meeting which was moderated by Nancy Clafin RN, PhD, CCRN, COHQ, FNAHQ, and President of NOVA. The following people won and were presented with awards at the Annual Meeting: Dianne Nelson, RN, BSN was given the Barbara Chambers Award; Hazel Jackson, RN, ACNS-BC, CHPN, RN-BC won the Professional Nurse Award for Clinical Excellence; and Donna Soroczak won the Professional Nurse Award for Leadership. The Lebanon, PA Chapter 346 was given the Silver Star Chapter Award, and the Veterans Award went to the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Texas, Post 658. The afternoon began with a presentation on “Nurse Recruitment and Retention: An Overview” by Marisa Palkuti, Director, VHA Healthcare Retention and Recruitment Office, New Orleans. This was followed by “Innovations in Nurse Recruitment by Shawanda Poree, BSN, MBA. Cathy Rick, RN, NEA-BC, FACHE, Chief Nursing Officer, Office of Nursing Services Department of Veterans Affairs held a Town Hall Meeting and the meeting was closed by Mary Seaman, MS, RN, NEA-BC with one of her delightful vignettes called “NOVA- Take Note”.

On Saturday, April 25, 2009 following the 29th Annual Meeting, NOVA held a special optional event for NOVA members to serve the local community. Thirty NOVA members and friends spent the day volunteering for Habitat for Humanity, New Orleans. The group helped
build two homes in the 9th ward which was one of the areas that was hit hardest by Hurricane Katrina.

Nancy Claflin, National NOVA President, attended a NOVA Meeting at the Milwaukee VA in May 2009.

In June 2009, NOVA joined with the Nursing Community to commend the work of the Senate Health Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee in crafting the Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009. This legislation represents a movement towards comprehensive and meaningful reform for our nation’s healthcare system.

The NOVA Board of Directors made visits to Capitol Hill on July 16; the NOVA and NOVA Foundation Boards got together on Friday, July 17, from 8:00am to 10:00am to discuss strategic planning and other plans for the future. The following activities and actions took place:

- With the success of the 2008 pilot Regional Meeting in Baltimore, MD, the Board approved three new educational offerings for members: Saturday, November 14, 2009 – Hershey Lodge, Hershey, PA; Saturday, March 20, 2010 – Ritz Carlton, Phoenix, AZ; Saturday, May 1, 2010 – St. Louis, MO (Hotel TBD).
- The Long Term Disability Insurance Program continues to grow and NOVA staff continues to explore other membership benefits.
- The Board agreed to establish an Investment Fund for the Organization and approved the investment policy proposed by the Finance Committee.
- The “Every Member Get-A-Member” campaign will continue as an integral part toward building NOVA’s membership and will begin October 1.
- In lieu of a dinner at the Monocle Restaurant the NOVA Board supported a $1,500 NOVA Foundation scholarship.
- Audrey Drake joined the board for lunch on July 17 and was presented a gift honoring her retirement.

The NOVA Foundation held the 2nd Annual Bull Roast Charity Event on September 19, 2009 at Martin’s Camelot, with over 250 folks making their way to Upper Marlboro, Maryland to support the “Saluting our VA Nurses” event. Some of corporate sponsorships included: Lockheed Martin, the Kirk Group, G&B Solutions, Bridgegate International, Olive Strategies, Alliance Engineering, TechVision 21, Intekras, Lexus Nexus, Cisco, McAfee and many more. VSOs were also a key sponsor including AMVETS, VFW, and PVA. The Foundation netted more than $8,400 that will go directly toward 2010 nursing scholarships. A NOVA Chapter Contact conference call was held on October 21, 2009. On October 22, 2009 the President signing the VA Health Care Advanced Funding into Law. The new law will provide timely, predictable funding for the Veterans Health Administration, the nation’s largest health care system, one-year ahead of the regular appropriations process.

The NOVA Foundation was a charity partner in the 34th annual Marine Corps Marathon on Sunday, October 25, 2009 in Washington, DC. It was decided that the 2010 National NOVA Meeting will be held in October 2010, to coincide with the Marine Corp Marathon. A successful Member-get-a-Member campaign was initiated with the slogan: You Can Make a Difference TODAY; and was extended past its original date which was October 1 – December 31, 2009 to March 31, 2010. The members of NOVA’s Membership Committee are assigned to VISNs. Each NOVA chapter has been assigned to a member of the committee as their NOVA contact for information, including starting new chapters. Membership Secretary - Cheryl Knowles, VISN 1, 2, 3 Kathleen Lehmann, Kelly Skinner, VISN 4, 5 Annette Nelson, Dee Zander, VISN 6, 7 Magelene James, Mary Powe, Thelma Roach-Serry, VISN 8, 9 Lee Fealy,

NOVA provided input to the revision of the Nursing Section of the Independent Budget including a new separate Human Resources section containing information on the nursing workforce.

NOVA made a contribution to the NOVA Foundation in the names of the two VA nurse practitioners killed during the Fort Hood shootings that occurred in November 2009, Russell G. Seager and Juanita L. Warman.

The NOVA Foundation held its first annual golf tournament at Tampa Palms Golf and Country Club on November 11th, 2009. The event was a huge success with over $6,400 raised for the NOVA Foundation.

NOVA’s regional meeting VA Nurses: Caring for Our Heroes by Caring for Ourselves was held November 14, 2009 at the Hershey Lodge in Hershey, Pennsylvania. The program began with a welcome by the Nurse Executive at the Lebanon VAMC, the home of Chapter 346. The day continued with presentations focused on how VA nurses can take care of themselves. Bradley Davidson, MD presented “Creating a Healthier World for You” and Candy Yingling, CTRS from the Alzheimer’s Association reminded us to “Create a Healthier Body by Maintaining Your Brain.” Kathy Jesiolowski, NP, presented "Creating a Healthier Body--Boning Up on Osteoporosis." Chapter 346 sponsored the presentation given by Elaine Boltz on creating a healthier outlook by laughing away your stress. Bruce Eagleson, MD, spoke on creating a healthy community and brought quite a sense of humor to what would usually be a dry presentation on the H1N1 Virus. Connie Perry-Simon, RN, MSN, presented, "Creating a Healthier Career for You: Proficiency Writing." She explained the Nurse Qualification Standards and presented information to decrease the stress related to writing your proficiency. "Managing Your Stress and Anxiety” was presented by Psychologist Amy Kurcirka. Yoga instructor Denise Smith presented "Stretch & Breathe"; the perfect relaxing end to an enjoyable day of education and fun.

With the leadership of Cheryl Gates, Chapter 346 President, a mini health fair was organized and available throughout the day. The health fair included bone density screening, blood pressure screening, depression screening, diabetic screening, and body mass index (BMI) measures. Chair massages were also available to help the attendees relax. Reviews and comments from attendees were very positive. The success of the regional meeting can be credited to the team work of Susan Dove and Chapter 346 planning committee which includes Cheryl Gates, Janet Minard, Malis Rutt, Maria Graham-Shaulis, Pam Shaffer, Tammy Wessner and Cathy Capiotis.

NOVA planned three regional meetings in an effort to reach out to members who may be able to travel to a local area one day meeting. These meetings are not intended to replace our Annual Meeting which will be held in October 2010 in Washington D.C., but provide additional opportunities for NOVA members to participate in networking while taking time to care for ourselves. Future regional meetings are planned for: Saturday March 20, 2010 at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Phoenix, Arizona; Saturday May 1, 2010 in St. Louis, Missouri, location to be determined and June 2010 in Boston MA date and location to be determined.

The NOVA Board held a meeting via teleconference on November 3, 2009; this was to discuss the budget and other areas of concern. Items were also added to the Agenda for the board meeting scheduled for January 14 and 15 in Washington, DC.
The NOVA Foundation announced the recipients of three scholarships awarded for the 2009-2010 Academic Year. Each of the selected recipients received a $1500.00 award. The first recipient Ms. Gerilyn Corpuz is the BCMA nurse coordinator in the Puget Sound Health Care System. Enrolled in the University of Washington, School of Nursing, she is pursuing a Master of Science in Clinical Informatics and Patient Centered Technologies. The next recipient, Ms. Carol Miller of the Dayton Ohio VA Medical Center is a nurse practitioner enrolled in the Nursing Program at Waynesburg College. Ms. Miller is pursuing a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree. The third recipient Ms. Michelle Moore is a staff nurse in the VA Northern Indiana Healthcare System and is pursuing an Advanced Practice Nursing Degree at the Ball State University School of Nursing.

Deborah Beck, NOVA’s Executive Director passed away unexpectedly on November 20, 2009. Deborah worked tirelessly to promote NOVA as the voice of VA nurses, and was a staunch advocate for VA nurses and veterans. She helped NOVA to grow as an organization, and NOVA was grateful not only for her leadership, but also for her friendship. A Memorial Service was held for Deborah on Friday, December 4 in Virginia. The family requested that in lieu of flowers, donations be made in Deborah's memory, to the NOVA Foundation. The Foundation has established a scholarship in memory of Deborah Beck.

On December 31, 2009 NOVA made the transition from WSBA Management Company to Dove and Associates. Susan Dove, former Deputy Director, is NOVA's new Executive Director; and Luba Litvinova, former Director of Administration, is NOVA's Director of Membership and Administration. This change required a change in NOVA's mailing address and telephone number, all email numbers remained the same.

NOVA accomplished a great deal through the year 2009 as a result of the work and planning of Officers and Board of directors. The year ended with membership reported as 3,187 active members.

The officers for 2009-2010 were:

President: Nancy Claflin (Phoenix HCS)
President-Elect: Joan Clifford (Boston HCS)
Vice President: Larry Lemos (Long Beach HCS)
Secretary: Sharon Johnson (Maryland HCS)
Membership Secretary: Cheryl Knowles (Bath VAMC)
Treasurer: Mary Seaman (Tampa VAMC)
Directors: Janet Minard (Lebanon VAMC)
Melissa Nixon (St. Louis VAMC)
Thelma Roach-Serry (Richmond VAMC)
Sharon Simpson (Southern Arizona HCS)
Kelly Skinner (Boston HCS)
Dolores Zander (Philadelphia VAMC)
Immediate Past President: Cecelia McVey (Boston HCS)
Executive Director: Susan Dove
Director of Membership: Luba Litvinova

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NOVA began 2010 under a new management contract with Dove Associates, with Susan Dove as the Executive Director of NOVA. A formal announcement was sent out to the membership via E-News from NOVA. NOVA’s new address is:
The NOVA Board of Directors met in Washington, DC on January 14, 2010. The following activities and actions took place:

- Established an ad hoc committee to review the NOVA bylaws and recommend revisions/updates
- Reviewed and updated the NOVA strategic plan
- Approved changing the organization’s fiscal year to January 1-December 31
- Approved conducting an annual audit at the end of the current fiscal year
- Approved revision/update to descriptions of and criteria for NOVA’s Annual Awards. The deadline for award nominations was set as June 1, 2010.
- Accepted the new Nurse Emeritus brochure
- Agreed to seek guidance from VACO/ONS regarding the feasibility of having NOVA Chapters assist with a service project from the American Medical ID company to distribute blood pressure tracking wallet cards to Veterans with hypertension.

The NOVA Board of Directors held its seventeenth Annual Legislative Roundtable on January 15, 2010 at the DAV National Headquarters in Washington, DC, providing an opportunity for key stakeholders in veterans’ issues to gather and share information. NOVA President Nancy Claflin welcomed everyone, and Legislative Co-Chair Sharon Johnson invited participants to discuss concerns and issues. Topics covered included:

- Passage of Senate Bill 1963 “Caregiver and Veterans Omnibus Health Services act of 2009”
- Equity pay for Nurse Executives at the Nurse V level
- Lifting the pay cap for Nurse Anesthetists
- Consistent implementation of the locality pay law
- Adequate funding to support veterans and staff members returning from war
- Increase the pay cap under the nurse locality pay system. This change would also favorably affect the Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNA)
- Information and training on Locality Pay Surveys to assist in applying the law to ensure VA nurses receive appropriate pay raises
- Reestablishment of the Health Professionals Scholarship Program for non-VA employees (VA Health Professionals Educational Assistance Program (38 U.S.C. 7601-7636)
- Revision of the legislation allowing the 36/40 hour work schedule so that tours can overlap from Saturday to Sunday
- Hybrid Title 38 status for nursing assistants
- Health care for part-time employees without significant financial penalty
- Revision of legislation governing employees’ travel pay to support the Nurse Travel Corps
- Programs to help decrease delays in hiring licensed staff
- Support for the VA Nurse Academy for all facilities
- Adequate funding for the Education Debt Reduction Program
- Adequate funding for the VA Nursing Outcomes Database (VANOD)
- Waiver of offset from pay for certain reemployed annuitants
- Support, resources, and funding for Supply, Processing, and Distribution (SPD) staff who have been realigned to the Nurse Executive
- Concerns regarding the centralization of Information Technology resulting in a loss of
local control and inability to access and use needed equipment and software
  • Support for the principles of Magnet
  • Continuing challenge of caring for war veterans
  • Caregiver issues
  • Timely access to rural health care
  • Concern that rural health issues aren’t resolved with major contracting out of VA services
    • Independent budget; sufficient, timely, and predictable funding for VA health care
    • Finalizing legislation from the last session
    • Needed improvements in the claims process to reduce delays
    • Strengthen and energize human resources management efforts to recruit and retain highly qualified VA personnel and redouble efforts to advance succession planning
    • Maintaining VA’s critical infrastructure
    • Seamless transition from DOD to VA including electronic medical records that travel from duty stations to wherever veterans receive VA health care
    • Positive transition from military service to civilian service depends on funding programs for education, employment, and training to provide meaningful careers
      • Improvement of benefits for adaptive automobile use
      • Concerns related to inappropriate third party billing
      • Staffing shortages
      • Support for women veterans’ issues including VA environment not welcoming to women veterans
      • Recognizing contributions of women veterans
      • Campaign to inform women veterans of their rights to care
      • Homelessness among veterans, particularly those with children
      • Mental health issues
      • Reintegration of veterans
      • Traumatic brain injury
      • Centers of excellence for mental health and TBI
      • Care for families, including assistance for caregivers and children
      • Concern that VA funds are being spent appropriately
      • New GI Bill issues
      • Vocational rehabilitation issues
      • Jobs for veterans and keeping veterans gainfully employed
      • Number of beds available for long term care
      • Adequate funding for VA research and VA research labs
      • Continued support for VA/DOD CRNA program
      • Revision of CRNA qualification standards
      • Major reform bill in progress for civil service affecting only Title 5 and need for similar bill for Title 38
        • Emergency response
        • Transformation of VA healthcare and healthcare reform including the patient centered medical home initiative
          • Role of nursing at the center of healthcare initiatives
          • Structured language for nursing
          • Nursing staffing methodology
• Registered Nurse residency pilot program
• Campaign to increase nursing certification
• Safe patient handling program.

Participants included: Cathy Rick, Chief Nursing Officer, Office of Nursing Services; Betty Moseley Brown, Center for Women Veterans; Kristy Park, Professional Staff Member for the House Subcommittee on Health; Preethi Raghavan, Legislative Assistant for the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs; Gary Ewart, Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research; David Polner, Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists; Joy Ilem, Disabled American Veterans; Steve Robertson, Barney Searle, and Jeff Steele, American Legion; Blake Ortner and Alethea Predeoux, Paralyzed Veterans of America; Teresa Morris, Veterans of Foreign Wars; and John Bradley, Consultant in Veterans Affairs, DAV.

Participants from the NOVA Board of Directors included: President, Nancy Claflin; President-Elect, Joan Clifford; Vice President, Larry Lemos; Treasurer, Mary Seaman; Secretary, Sharon Johnson; Immediate Past President, Cecilia McVey; Directors: Janet Minard, Melissa Nixon, Thelma Roach-Serry, Sharon Simpson, Kelly Skinner, and Dolores Zander; Past Board Members: Margaret Kruckemeyer, Dianne Nelson and Mary Raymer; and Executive Director Susan Dove.

The NOVA Board signed on a letter with other Nursing organizations, Medical organizations and Veteran organizations, urging the House and Senate Committees of Veterans Affairs to address issues in legislation passed, but not completed last year. The letter was delivered to committee leaders on January 15, 2010.

A Chapter Contact teleconference was held on February 17, 2010. Minutes from the previous call were reviewed; discussion on how to increase membership took place.

In February 2010, NOVA Announced its 30th anniversary celebration will occur at the Annual Meeting in 2010. It will be held from October 28-30, 2010 in Crystal City, Arlington, VA, right before the 35th Annual Marine Corps Marathon on October 31.

NOVA Calls for 2010 National Election Nominations with the following positions open for the next election: • Treasurer • Membership Secretary • Three Board of Director’s positions. The Every-Member-Get-A-Member campaign was extended to March 31, 2010.

On March 8, 2010 NOVA sent out a call for poster presentations along with the criteria for submitting a poster proposal. Selected posters will be presented at the NOVA Annual Meeting in October 2010.

In March 2010 the Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care Act (HR 3590) was signed into law. It authorized a new 50 million grant program from 2010-2014 to support the development of nurse-managed health clinics to provide primary care or wellness services to vulnerable populations, and was a major victory for nurse managed clinics, advanced practice nurses and the patients they serve.

A chapter Contacts conference call was held March 19, 2010. Minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed and the Blood Pressure Wallet Card project was discussed. There is no cost for the cards and the company, American Medical ID in partnership with Mended Hearts, a subsidiary of the American Heart Association has pledge to deliver one million cards free of charge to veterans.

On March 20, 2010, the regional meeting titled, “Holistic Healthcare and Innovations.” was held at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Phoenix, Arizona; Cynthia McCormack, PhD, RN, Associate Director, Patient Care Services, Phoenix VA Healthcare System presented the welcome, followed by “VA Nurse Emeritus & Soldiers’ Angels” Mary Raymer, PhD, RN,
Faculty, Capella University, Chairperson, VA Nurse Emeritus; “Healing, Connecting & Finding Our Strengths” Betty Merritt, CHTP, Founder & Director, Merritt Center; “Using Acupuncture to Treat Behavioral & Mental Health Conditions” Craig Amrine, L.Ac., Owner, Hidden Rhythm Acupuncture; “Technological Innovations” Gregg Gordon, MS, RN, Clinical Application Coordinator, Phoenix VA Health Care System; “The Benefits of Hot & Cold Stone Therapy” Mary D. Nelson, LMT, MLSTI, RM, Founder, LaStone Therapy, Inc.; “Chiropractic Practice: Dealing With Burn Out, Behavioral and Mental Health” Henning Handberg, DC, and “American Indian Traditional Philosophy & Its Application to Nursing Practice” Yvonne Garcia, BSN, RN, Retired VA Nurse, Standing Woman Consulting. The program was well received, evidenced by the participant’s evaluation of the speakers and over all program.

The NOVA Membership Committee Teleconference was held on April, 1, 2010. Previous minutes were reviewed, as were the updated Chapter Rosters, the new “Member-Get-A-Member” Campaign was discussed and payroll deduction will be encouraged. An update was given on the VA Nursing specialty certification, and on the Nurse Emeritus program. Information about service project- B/P card distribution was also discussed.

Due to the success of the previous campaign, NOVA announces a new “Member-Get-A-Member” campaign to run from April1-October 1, 2010. The previous campaign welcomed 155 new members.

The NOVA Board met on April 23, 2010 via conference call. The following activities took place:

- Previous Board meeting minutes were approved
- The strategic plan was reviewed and updated
- Committee reports were accepted
- The 2010 Annual meeting was discussed
- The Blood Pressure Card Project was discussed

On April 12, 2010, the NOVA board agreed to sign with other nursing organizations in support of the FY 2011 Title VIII appropriations.

On April 15, 2010 a call for NOVA awards nominations went out to the membership. The website to access criteria and forms and information was also sent. The deadline for submission is June 1, 2010. The awards will be presented at the 2010 Annual meeting In Arlington, VA in October.

On April 22, 2010 the congressional passage of S 1963, the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act passed by unanimous voice vote. The bill was authored by U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka, Chairman of the Veteran’s Affairs Committee and was strongly supported by NOVA. It established permanent programs to support the caregivers of wounded warriors improve health care for veterans in rural areas, help VA adapt to the needs of women veterans, and expand supportive services for homeless veterans. A shining moment in that history is the passage of Public Law 111-163, of Public Law 111-163, the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010. Members of the NOVA Board of Directors have been working continuously with Congressional representatives, staff from the Office of Nursing Services, NOVA members, and others to identify issues that needed to be addressed by Congress. NOVA’s legislative chair and co-chair, Cecilia McVey and Sharon Johnson, made many trips to Capitol Hill to discuss these issues, along with the regular Hill visits made several times a year by members of the NOVA Board of Directors. This law includes many of those issues that NOVA has been working on most notably the inclusion of nursing assistants as hybrid Title 38 employees which will greatly simplify the hiring process. This alone is an outstanding

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achievement, and there are many others in this bill.

On April 25, 2010, a special program was held at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC in a celebration of the commitment of nurses throughout the world to bring health to their communities, locally and worldwide by 2020. The Nurses Organization of Veteran Affairs (NOVA) was acknowledged as a Bronze Sponsor for the program; Janet Minard, NOVA Board of Director and Susan Dove, NOVA Executive Director represented NOVA at the program. Kathy Rick, Chief Nurse for Veterans Affairs was also present. The International Year of the Nurse (IYNurse) was a collaborative, grassroots, global initiative honoring nurses’ voices, values, and wisdom to act as catalysts for achieving a healthy world and was established by Sigma Theta Tau International, Nightingale Initiative for Global Health and the Florence Nightingale Museum in honor of the centennial year of the death of the founder of modern nursing - Florence Nightingale (1820-1910).

On May 1, 2010 the NOVA regional meeting, "VA Nurses: Caring for Our Heroes by Caring for Ourselves" was held in St. Louis, Missouri. Nurses from near and far were welcomed by Richard Holt, the Nurse Executive for the St. Louis VAMC. The meeting was held in the Embassy Suites hotel in St. Charles, Missouri. The conference included information on conflict resolution, shared governance and the magnet journey, nursing informatics and stress management by a panel of lively and entertaining local St. Louis VAMC speakers. The advanced practice nurses received pharmacology credit for the topic, "The Pharmacology of Weight Loss." One of the conference highlights was the guest speaker Alan Bernstein, the Director of Career Development and Workforce Management for the Office of Nursing Services, VA Central Office, who spoke on succession and career planning. The attendees were very eager to absorb this session. The evaluations indicated it was well received. The programs success can be contributed to the planning, organization and work of Melissa Nixon, Joe Mazzola and Susan Dove.

On May 5, 2010 S. 1963, the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act was signed into law by President Barack Obama. The bill established permanent programs to support the caregivers of wounded warriors improve health care for veterans in rural areas, enhanced mental health care, removed barriers to care for catastrophically disabled veterans, help VA adapt to the needs of women veterans, and expand supportive services for homeless veterans, enhanced VA medical services, strengthens the VA workforce and expands supportive services for homeless veterans.

On August 20, 2010, President Obama submitted to Congress a series of amendments to the FY2011 budget for the Department of Health and Human Services, including a $250 million increase to HRSA for the Health Professions program, specifying $280,000 to Title VII and Title VIII.

NOVA called for submission of Poster Presentations for the NOVA Annual Meeting to be held October 28-30, 2010.

The NOVA Board of Directors met in Washington, DC on July 16, 2010. The following topic discussion and activities took place: Professional practice, membership, communications, legislation, education, operations and NOVA Foundation support. The 2010 legislative agenda prepared by Cecilia McVey and Sharon Johnson and Hill visits were also discussed. The legislative agenda included issues related to the budget, recruitment and retention, information technology and supply and distribution now assigned to the Nurse Executives. The Board made the difficult decision to discontinue the VA nursing certification program due to the nearly $100,000 initial cost of establishing the program. The core competencies will continue to be
developed for use in future.

The issue of extending membership to LPN’s was discussed and the decision was made that NOVA would not be doing that at this time, but NOVA would support the development of an LPN organization within the VA.

On Friday, June 4, 2010 the NOVA regional meeting: “VA Nurses: Caring for Our Heroes by Caring for Ourselves” was held at the Royal Sonesta Hotel in Cambridge, MA. Program topics included promoting health and wellness with therapeutic music, natural healing for the mind, body and spirit, managing anxiety and pain through cognitive behavioral therapy, diet pearls of wisdom, and compassion fatigue. Creating a healthier you through proficiency writing, the healing art of reiki and meditation were also covered. The featured speakers: Joan Clifford, Cynthia Price-Glynn, Janet Mercier, John D. Otis, Rosemary McGovern, RLD, Brandon Erdos, MD, Rosemarie Bass, Connie Perry-Simon, MSN, BC, and Ajahn David Chutiko delivered informative and interesting presentations which kept the audience engaged. This regional meeting was an outstanding success due to the team effort by the Program Planning Committee members: Carmen Concepcion, Donna DeMartino, Susan Dove, Diane McCrackin, Donna Simono and Kelly Skinner.

On 9/21/10 the NOVA Board of Directors reviewed the bylaws in order to determine if updates were needed since they last were amended in 1997. There are some changes needed to correspond with previous Board actions and current tax requirements. The changes include:

1. Changing the name of Associate Members to Emeritus Member (for retired members).
2. Adding the Immediate Past President to the Executive Committee so it includes all officers.
3. Updating the committees to reflect current committees.
4. Providing for an election ballot by electronic voting, email, or mail.
5. Revising the requirements to begin a chapter so there do not have to be 10 members to get started.
6. Revising concurrent membership on the NOVA Board and NOVA Foundation Board to ensure that the NOVA Board (a 501c6 organization under the tax code) does not unduly influence the NOVA Foundation Board (a 501c3 organization under the tax code) so that both boards/organizations are in compliance with recent tax law changes.

The bylaws will be voted on during the Annual Business Meeting at the NOVA Annual Meeting in Arlington, Virginia, October 28-30.

Elections for the NOVA National Board for 2010-2012 were held and the names of the new officers were announced at the NOVA Annual Meeting in October, 2010.

The NOVA Board met in Arlington, Virginia on October 27, 2010 prior to the National meeting and reviewed and updated the Strategic plan for 2011, and the 2011 legislative agenda.

The NOVA Foundation sponsored the 3rd Annual Charity Event on Thursday, October 28th featuring the best comedy show in town in addition to a dinner extraordinaire, silent auction and reception with former Secretary of Veteran Affairs, Mr. Anthony Principi awarding the first Noble Nightingale Award. This new award honors a nurse who has made a significant contribution to the Veterans Health Administration through the advancement and promotion of nursing education and care for America’s veterans. There were 150 Charity Event attendees.

On Saturday evening October 30, 2010, a special reception was held for the NOVA Foundation Team Members Participating in the Marine Corp Marathon, MCM10K and volunteers.

The NOVA Annual Meeting was held in Washington, DC, October 28-30, 2010, chaired
by Thelma Roach-Serry. Attendees earned 13.75 CEUs. After the Presenting of Colors and the singing of the National Anthem, a moment of silence was observed for lost friends. The keynote speaker was Barbara Bancroft, a dynamic and highly entertaining speaker who spoke about men’s and women’s health issues. Key Issues in Nursing, was presented by Marla J. Weston, PhD, RN; Kim Lipsky, Deputy Staff Director of the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, U.S. Senate and Cathleen C. Wiblemo, Director of the Sub committee on Health, House Veterans’ Affairs Committee were present as part of the Senate & House VA Committee Panel. A special presentation from the National Active & Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE) was given by Sarah Holstine, Legislative Specialist, NARFE. An orientation for Hill visits was presented by Cecilia McVey and Sharon Johnson, followed by Senate and House visits and a tour of the Capitol. The NOVA Foundation Charity event was held the evening of October 28th and included a reception, silent auction, dinner, entertainment and the presentation of the NOVA Foundation Nightingale Award. A presentation on, Women Veterans Health Issues was presented by Laura Herrera, MD, MPH, Director, Comprehensive Women’s Health, Women Veterans Strategic Health Care Group, Department of Veterans Affairs. Mary Seaman, MS, RN, NEA-BC presented the program, National Initiative for Certification. Christa Hojlo, PhD, RN, did a presentation on Cultural Transformation Initiative in VHA Community Living Centers (CLCs). Dr. Betty Moseley Brown, Associate Director of the Center for Women Veterans, discussed women veterans across the eras. A poster session brought new ideas and initiatives to be discussed and shared. The Annual Business Meeting and Awards luncheon honored NOVA members and others who have made significant contributions and was moderated by NOVA President Nancy Claflin, RN, PhD, CCRN, CPOHQ, FNAHQ. The bylaw changes were voted on and passed. There were no continuing resolutions presented for discussion. The following awards were presented:

- Barbara Chambers Award-Mary Raymer, PhD, RN
- Professional Nurse Award for Clinical Excellence- Vivian Jones, RN
- Professional Nurse Award for Leadership- Gilda Cain, RN
- Silver Star Chapter Award-Chapter 420, Richmond, Virginia
- Veterans Award- Margaret Kruckemeyer, MSN, MHS, BS, RN, CNP-CA

A VHA Panel with representatives from the Office of Nursing Services, including Alan Bernstein, MS, RN; Karen Ott, MSN, RN; Cheryl Beversdorf, MHS, MA, RN responded to questions from the floor, with Chief Nursing Officer Cathy Rick, RN, FAAN, FACHE acting as moderator. After the panel discussion a Town Hall Meeting was held with Cathy Rick responding to questions from the floor. On Saturday, Patricia Quigley PhD, MPH, ARNP, CRRN, FAAN presented “Creating the Pathway for Evidence-Based Practice.” An OIF/OEF Veteran Panel was present to discuss veteran related issues. Mary Seaman provided a special closing session. There were approximately 115 attendees at the NOVA Annual Meeting.

On October 31, 2010 the NOVA Foundation participated in the Marine Corps Marathon (MCM) run and 10K walk/run. This is the 5th year that NOVA has participated, and is still the one and only nursing charity partner for this event. Participants proudly wore red NOVA t-shirts and NOVA visors. The NOVA shirts had the message “VA Nurses Care for America’s Heroes” on the back, and that message was acknowledged by people along the route. Participating in this event not only helped VA nurses by providing scholarships for VA nurses and VA research, but it also helped the participants themselves to have while getting some exercise. NOVA members, who did not walk or run volunteered at the MCM medical aid station or the NOVA water station.
There were ten MCM, thirty-six 10K participants and approximately 20 volunteers. The NOVA hospitality tent provided food, refreshments and a meeting place for volunteers and participants to gather after completing their event or volunteer services.

On November 16, 2010 the updated NOVA strategic plan was sent out to board members. Nancy Claflin suggested that since the time to the next conference is so short, everybody’s terms should be extended, so the next election would be for June 2012. This will be voted on in the January 2011 business meeting to take place January 14 and 15, 2011 in Washington, DC.

On November 17, 2010 NOVA announced that NOVA was now on Facebook at http://www.facebook.com/?sk=2361831622#!/group.php?gid=76597218404 and the Facebook page could be accessed by a link on the NOVA website www.vanurse.org

NOVA ended the year with 2,234 members.

The officers for 2010-2011 were:

President: Joan Clifford (Boston HCS)
Vice President: Larry Lemos (Long Beach HCS)
Secretary: Sharon Johnson (Maryland HCS)
Membership Secretary: Dolores Zander (Philadelphia VAMC)
Treasurer: Mary Seaman (Tampa VAMC)
Directors: Mary Ann Church (Manchester VAMC)
           Janet Minard (Lebanon VAMC)
           Melissa Nixon (St. Louis VAMC)
           Thelma Roach-Serry (Richmond VAMC)
           Sharon Simpson (Southern Arizona HCS)
           Kelly Skinner (Boston HCS)
Immediate Past President: Nancy Claflin (Phoenix HCS)
Executive Director: Susan Dove
Director of Membership: Luba Litvinova

2011

January 3, 2011 NOVA sent members an e-mail reminding them to “save the date” for the 2011 Annual Meeting scheduled for June 29-July 1 at the Venetian Resort in Las Vegas Nevada. This is NOVA’s 31st annual Meeting with a special optional event on Saturday, July 2nd. NOVA secured rooms at the beautiful Venetian Resort for the great rate of one-hundred-forty-nine dollars.

January 4, 2011 NOVA announced the new “Member-Get-A Member” campaign that began January 1 and will run through May 1, 2011. The campaign gave members an opportunity to win prizes, including a complimentary 2011 NOVA membership and free registration for the 31st Annual Meeting in Las Vegas.

January 6, 2011 NOVA announced the NOVA Regional Meeting, “VA Nurses: Caring For Our Heroes By Caring For Ourselves”, scheduled for Friday, February 24, 2011 from 8:00am-4:30 pm at the Tampa Palms Golf & Country Club Tampa, Florida. Members are encouraged to stay for the Annual Red Dress/Red Tie event sponsored by the NOVA Tampa chapter immediately following the Regional Meeting.

The NOVA Board of Directors held a meeting in Washington, DC on Thursday, January 13, 2011. The following actions were taken:

• Updated NOVA’s strategic plan
• Approved NOVA’s October 31 financial statement
• Approved NOVA’s proposed 2011 budget
• Approved NOVA’s affiliate membership in the American Nurses Association
• Approved three designs for a new NOVA logo to be sent to members for their vote
• Approved new design for NOVA’s electronic newsletter
• Approved moving to an electronic version of the NOVA Membership Directory/Annual Report
• Approved moving NOVA’s Annual Legislative Roundtable from mid-January to mid-February
• Approved moving the NOVA Annual Meeting to June each year
• Requested NOVA staff investigate Nashville, Charleston, and New Orleans as potential sites for the 2012 and 2013 Annual Meetings
• Requested the Legislative Committee be expanded to involve more NOVA members
• Approved Membership Campaign, “11% by 11/11/11,” with a goal of 356 new members by Veterans Day

January 14, 2011 the NOVA Board met in Washington DC and hosted an informative Legislative Roundtable with Senate and House Affairs Committee staff members, Veteran Service Organization representatives, and members of other professional organizations joined with NOVA to share their legislative agendas for 2011. This was an opportunity for NOVA to chart our course in these exciting times in health care. Our Annual Legislative Roundtable was one of the most interactive sessions in recent memory. The voice of the VA nurse shapes and influences health care within the context of the workplace and beyond. Building and maintaining working relationships with our Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), VA Program Offices, Congressional Staff and the Office of Nursing Services is an essential component in keeping NOVA as a trusted source to ensure the quality our veterans deserve.

January 15, 2011 the revised strategic plan resulting from the January 13th board meeting was sent via email to the NOVA Board members.

January 18, 2011 NOVA sent out a call for poster presentations for the NOVA Annual Meeting planned for June 29-July, 1, 2011 at the Venetian Resort in Las Vegas, Nevada. The posters are to be presented during the annual meeting on Friday, July 1, 2011. All nurses, nursing students and other health care professional were invited to participate by sharing creative nursing approaches, research findings, clinical innovations or student projects. An invitation to submit a poster proposal on any aspect of practice, research or student activity was offered and details on what a poster is, how to submit the proposal, the poster policy and the selection criteria were provided.

January 21, 2011 NOVA announced the plan to create a fresh, modern look for its publications, website and other communications by creating a new logo. The membership was offered the opportunity to participate in the selection of the new logo. Three logo designs were attached to the email and the members were instructed to send a return email noting their selection. The membership had to respond by Friday, January 28, 2011.

January 24, 2011 registration information and program details for registering for the NOVA Regional Meeting, “VA Nurses: Caring For Our Heroes By Caring For Ourselves” scheduled for Friday, February 25, 2011 at the Tampa Palms Golf and Country Club in Tampa, Florida were sent to the membership with a reminder to make plans to stay for the 7th Annual Red Dress/Red Tie Night, sponsored by the Tampa NOVA chapter immediately following the regional meeting.

January 31, 2011 NOVA announced that nearly 200 NOVA members responded to help
February 9, 2011 NOVA announces the recent partnering with American Medical ID, a leading manufacturer of personalized medical alert jewelry, and Mended Hearts, Inc., a cardiac support group, to set up a program for NOVA Chapters to receive blood pressure tracking cards to be given out to patients. The cards are a convenient wallet sized card that includes the Veteran’s healthcare provider’s name, blood pressure medicine being taken, a chart to record their blood pressure, special instructions and valuable tips to help keep one’s blood pressure under control. NOVA Chapters in 42 facilities received a total of 364,000 cards of the 1 million donated by the American Medical ID. By completing a form NOVA Chapters are able to reorder cards, and chapters ordering the cards for the first time can use the same form. It was reported in the American Heart Association medical journal, Circulation, and through WebMD, that the use of wallet tracking cards can lead to a 4.2% reduction in blood pressure, showing how a simple device can make a significant difference. NOVA is proud to partner in this important effort.

The NOVA Regional Meeting, “VA Nurses: Caring For Our Heroes By Caring For Ourselves” was held Friday, February 25, 2011 at the Tampa Palms Golf and Country Club in Tampa, Florida with over forty-five VA staff attending. Highlights included a warm welcome from the newly appointed Associate Director, Patient Care/Nursing Services, Laureen Doloresco. The continuing education program entitled, “VA Nurses: Caring for Our Heroes by Caring for Ourselves”, inspired everyone. The attendees also enjoyed a delightful luncheon on the veranda with views of the renowned golf course and scenic area. CEUs were awarded, and the winners of the silent auction were: Lucille Raia, Associate Chief/Education (Tampa) and Joan Clifford, NOVA President (Boston). Immediately following the Tampa Regional Meeting on February 25, 2011, the 7th Annual Red Dress/Red Tie Gala was held in the Grand Ballroom. Over 175 guests attended the annual fundraiser including the national NOVA President, Joan Clifford and the Executive Director, Susan Dove. The event began with a cocktail hour and silent auction followed by a three course dinner and fabulous entertainment. This year’s event featured “The Comedy a Cappella of Ron Feingold.” His one man vocal band has travelled thousands of miles and crossed countless stages and is a regular performer in the cruise industry.

March 18, 2011 NOVA announces a new member benefit. As a member of the Nurses Organization of Veteran Affairs the opportunity to apply for Voluntary Term Life Insurance, underwritten by MetLife, and available through Federal First was offered to help ensure members and their families are protected. Members may apply for up to $100,000 in coverage or two times their salary whichever is less without answering health questions if they applied by May 31st 2011. Members also benefit from competitive member only rates, convenient payroll deduction and tax free proceeds paid to the beneficiary.

March 25, 2011 registration information and program details were sent out to NOVA members encouraging them to join their colleagues at NOVA’s 31st Annual Meeting, scheduled for June 29-July 1, 2011 at the Venetian Hotel and Resort in Las Vegas, Nevada. An optional early event to attend the “Jersey Boys” show on Wednesday, June 28th was included in the information, as were details for the special optional event “Red Canyon Tour and Western BBQ” to occur after the annual meeting on Saturday, July 2nd.

March 30, 2011 NOVA e-mailed the first electronic issue of NOVA News with a request for members to let the NOVA Board know what they think about the new look.
number 1, (Winter edition) was colorful and full of great information. The issue included: A message from the President, Joan Clifford BSN, MSM, RN, FACHE; a message from the Executive Director, Susan Dove; a message from the Annual Meeting Program Chair, Dolores Zanders MSN, RN-BC; Chapter News; NOVA Foundation News; information on winners of the 2010 NOVA Awards, Board Briefs and also announced to the members it has become an Affiliate Member of the American Nurses Association and a member of the Nursing Organizations Alliance, a coalition of nursing organizations united to create a strong voice for nurses. The issue also included an article by Karen M. Ott, RN, MSN Clinical Executive, Office of Nursing Services Veterans Health Administration. Her article discussed several recent events that prompted the Office of Nursing Services (ONS) to take a bold step related to the passing of ground-breaking legislation, the Affordable Health Care for America Act of 2009 (PL 111-163). It also included other interesting tidbits complete with color photos.

The NOVA Board had a conference call on Monday, April 4, 2011 to review the strategic plan, hear board reports and ensure NOVA business is moving forward as planned. The following items were addressed:

- Reviewed and Updated NOVA’s strategic plan
- Approved NOVA’s financial statement
- Approved NOVA’s board members reports
- Discussed adjusting NOVA dues paid by payroll deduction to $4.04 per paycheck

On April 6, 2011 a message was sent to NOVA members about paying dues via payroll deduction and an accounting miscalculation resulting in the payroll deduction for NOVA dues being adjusted down to $4.04 per paycheck. NOVA apologized for the miscalculation and any inconvenience it may have caused.

April 7, 2011 NOVA announced the 2011-2012 NOVA Foundation scholarship opportunity. The scholarships included $1500 awards for VA employees enrolled or accepted in a baccalaureate, masters, post masters or doctoral degree program, and the Jesse Brown Memorial Scholarship of $3000 for a VA employee enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a baccalaureate in nursing program. The announcement includes application instructions and eligibility criteria with a deadline of May 31, 2011.

April 19, 2011 NOVA National Office is in the process of updating chapter files and records and requested chapters to update the National Office with a current board list and a current set of chapter bylaws.

April 25, 2011 NOVA sent an electronic copy of the 2010-2011 Annual Report & Membership Directory to all members. The directory had a new look with the new NOVA logo.

June 7, 2011 NOVA sent a message to NOVA chapters calling for donations for the 2011 NOVA Foundation Reception/Silent Auction to be held on Thursday, June 30, from 5:30-7:00pm during the Annual Meeting at the Venetian Hotel and Resort in Las Vegas. The events offer attendees an opportunity to network with colleagues from around the country and bid on fantastic items donated by individuals and NOVA chapters. It is also a great opportunity for chapters to support the NOVA Foundation by donating an item(s) for the auction. The donations are tax deductible and the proceeds fund the Foundation Scholarship program.

June 8, 2011 NOVA was invited to sign on a letter related to the Title VIII Funding letter circulating in the Senate. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) was circulating the letter seeking support from her fellow Senators to fund the Title VIII-Nursing Workforce Development Programs at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) at a level of $313 million for FY2012. The programs have been a proven solution to past nursing shortages.
June 9, 2011 NOVA announces that the NOVA Foundation 2011 application cycle is extended to June 22, 2011 due to technical problems resulting in the site not being available to submit applications. An announcement will be posted when the site becomes available. NOVA thanked applicants for their patience and apologized for the inconvenience.

June 22, 2011 NOVA announces the plans for the NOVA Foundation “Heart & Hands” Cookbook as a fundraising project in support of VA Nursing Scholarships. Members are requested to submit a recipe to be included in the cookbook. Instructions for how to submit a recipe were included in the announcement. Linda Howe from the National NOVA office is overseeing this important project.

July 27, 2011 NOVA announced the 1st Annual NOVA Foundation Golf Tournament to be held Thursday, November 10 at The Courses at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland. Members were encouraged to participate by playing golf, being a sponsor or donating an item for the silent auction. Registration and details were included in the announcement.

On Wednesday, June 29, 2011 the NOVA Board of Directors held a meeting in Las Vegas, NV. The following actions were taken:
- Approved holding quarterly meetings of the Finance Committee
- Suggested the Finance Committee investigate ways to increase interest on reserve fund
- Discussed mechanisms for sharing ANA information with NOVA members
- Approved holding the NOVA 2012 Annual Meeting in June at the Gaylord Texan near Dallas
- Suggested NOVA staff investigate San Jose and New Orleans as possible location for the 2013 Annual meeting
- Approved Board Member Thelma Roach-Serry’s attendance at the Nursing Organizations Alliance Fall Summit
- Approved NOVA White Paper on VA Nursing Academy Funding
- Approved securing proposals to redesign and update NOVA’s website

June 29-July 1, 2011- NOVA’s Annual Meeting 2011 “Hit the Jackpot: Empowering VA Nurses & Improving VA Care” with Dolores Zander, MSN, RN-BC as Program Chair took in Las Vegas, Nevada at the beautiful Venetian Hotel. The theme for the 2-day event is “Hit the Jackpot: Empowering VA Nurses & Improving VA Care” was not only appropriate for the location of our meeting, but with the content. Our own Mary Seaman got us off to a robust start with a special presentation on “What Happens in Vegas Stays in Vegas” – plenty of fun instructions for the newbie as well as the experienced Vegas visitor. Leah Curtin, a nationally renowned nurse leader, opened the meeting as Keynote Speaker and presented “Quantum Nursing” identifying how our mental energy can be the catalyst of healing for our patients. Deborah Grassman, Bay Pines VAMC, shared her personal and touching career experience with our veterans in “Palliative Care/End of Life.” Robert Kerns, National Program Director for Pain Management at VHA, provided an update and review of current trends in “Innovations in Pain Management.” Concurrent Sessions included “Proficiency Writing--Part I,” “Chapter Development,” and the Nurse Emeritus Program which covered “Advocating for Federal employee Benefits” and “Spirituality & Aging” and “Partnering with Soldiers Angels.” Cathy Rick, Chief Nursing Officer, ONS, brought day one to a close with “Linking the IOM Report to Nursing Strategic Initiatives” a very informative presentation. On the evening of the first day, the NOVA Foundation Reception and Silent Auction were held. We had a great time networking and participating in this very worthy cause to help raise funds for NOVA Foundation.
The second day started out with “Proficiency Writing--Part II” where attendees continued to work on proficiency issues, and participated in a mock Nurse Professional Standards Board to gain a better understanding of this process that is integral to nursing promotion and recognition. “Retirement Planning--Don’t Gamble on Your Future” followed and provided very timely information. Twenty-eight posters were included in the annual Poster Presentations Session – the highest number ever. There was a wonderful array of posters demonstrating a wide range of nursing activities within our medical centers. During the Awards Luncheon and Annual Business Meeting, several NOVA members were recognized for their successful membership recruitment efforts.

Diane Sparks, from the Philadelphia VAMC, recruited twenty-five or more nurses, and was awarded the top membership campaign prize, a full registration for the meeting, as well as two complimentary nights at the Venetian. Way to go, Diane!! After lunch, we got back to work and participated in a Legislative Roundtable where we increased our overall knowledge of our role in, and the impact of, the legislative process. The day ended with our traditional “Town Hall” with Cathy Rick, Chief Nursing Officer at ONS – a favorite for many years! The Annual Meeting concluded with the “passing of the torch” to next year’s Annual Meeting Program Chair, Sharon Johnson. We will be meeting in Dallas, Texas, at the fantastic Gaylord Texan Resort, which promises to be a really exciting venue! Some attendees added a bit of extra fun to their trip to Las Vegas! Several folks attended a performance of the blockbuster Broadway smash-hit “Jersey Boys” and the reviews were very favorable. On Saturday, thirty-two attendees went on the Red Rock Canyon Tour and Western BBQ to finish off their overall experience. As evidenced by the evaluations, Annual Meeting attendees had time for learning, networking, and of course, fun! Everyone left empowered and re-energized as a VA nurse and NOVA member -- to return home with a renewed sense of their role in this worthy cause -- caring for our nation’s Veterans!

August 11, 2011 NOVA announced and requested members to register for the NOVA Regional Meeting, “VA Nurses: Healthy From The Inside Out” scheduled for Friday, October 28, 2011 at the Sheraton Philadelphia University City Hotel, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

August 31, 2011 NOVA sent an announcement for members to hold the date for the 2012 NOVA Annual Meeting to be held June 6-8, 2012 at the Gaylord Texan Resort, Grapevine, Texas. The luxurious resort is near Dallas and boasts winding waterways, a river walk, beautiful indoor gardens and a sprawling 10-acre outdoor pool complex. Registration and program details will be sent at a later date.

September 20, 2011 NOVA sent an electronic American Nurse Today News letter to the NOVA Membership. The newsletter is received by NOVA as an organizational member of the ANA and is shared with NOVA members.

September 26, 2011 NOVA sent a message to members encouraging them to comment on the Principles for Nursing Staffing document from the American Nurses Association.

September 29, 2011 Suzanne Miyamoto of the Nursing Community informed NOVA that the Senate Appropriations Committee narrowly approved the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Fiscal year (FY) 2012 bill by a vote of 16-14. NOVA was in support of this bill.

The Paralyzed Veterans of America’s Summit 2011 and Expo, “Delivering Excellence, Achieving State-of-the-Art Health Care” was held in Orlando, Florida in September, 2011. Two NOVA Board Members, Thelma Roach-Serry and Kelly Skinner, attended the program. The
mission of the Paralyzed Veterans of America is to ensure quality health care for veterans with spinal cord injuries and dysfunction (SCI/D) such as multiple sclerosis (MS). The Paralyzed Veterans of America created this three-day program to advance the field of spinal cord medicine and health care. The PVA Summit was well attended. The program lineup commenced with opening remarks by Bill Lawson, National President of the PVA, followed by the keynote speaker, Robert Jesse, MD, PhD, Principal Undersecretary for Health, DVA. Other presenters included Jonathan Perlin, MD, PhD, MSHA, Chief Medical Officer and Senior Vice President for Quality, Hospital Corporation of America, who discussed health care reform, and Dennis Bourdette, MD, Chair of the Department of Neurology and the Roy and Eulalia Swank Family Research Professor at Oregon Health & Science University, who spoke on the advances in multiple sclerosis. There were numerous plenary sessions on innovations in the treatment and management of spinal cord injury and multiple sclerosis. The electronic poster presentations contained a vast amount of information related to best practices and evidence-based medicine and were displayed on large monitors for viewing. Vendors from across the country and some from abroad displayed numerous products such as functional electrical stimulation technology, wheelchairs, lifts, etc. Attendees also had opportunities to participate in activities which included live music and dancing, Sea World and more. What a wonderful opportunity for both Thelma and Kelly to attend this educational program and represent NOVA.

September 29, 2011 the bulletin board on the NOVA website (www.vanurse.org) was set up as a way for members to network by posting a message and reading responses. The bulletin board has been removed as NOVA is now on Facebook www.facebook.com. Since Facebook has become a common way for individuals to keep up-to-date with friends and interests, the NOVA Board decided this was a great way to communicate. Membership to Facebook is free and it is easy to set up a profile page. Once you set up a page, or if you are already a member, enter Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs in the search box at the top of the page and you will find our group page. Send a group member request and we will add you. NOVA Foundation has a group you can join too! Here is the link to NOVA’s Facebook page: http://www.facebook.com/?sk=2361831622#!/group.php?gid=76597218404. NOVA’s Facebook Group is now a Facebook page- http://www.facebook.com/VAnurse.org go to the page and select like for updates to show up on your Facebook page.

NOVA also has a new improved website. Members are encouraged to visit the website and sign up for E-News from NOVA and encourage all NOVA members at your facility to do the same. Log on to www.vanurse.org to sign up. E-News from NOVA is NOVA’s email news service highlighting the latest in health care and health care policies. NOVA uses E-News from NOVA to keep NOVA nurses updated on important legislative and other nursing issues. NOVA requests a current email address so members can receive electronic information and updates.

October 5, 2011 NOVA sends a message to members with information related to the American Nurses Associations (ANA) position Statement, “Nursing Care and Do Not Resuscitate Decisions and Reduction of Patient Restraint and Seclusion.” The statements were drafted by the Center for Ethics and Human Rights. The ANA request nurses and stakeholders to review and make comments on the documents.

October 28, 2011 the NOVA Regional Meeting, “VA Nurses: Healthy From The Inside Out” was held at the Sheraton Philadelphia University City Hotel, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania with over 50 attendees. The program had an informative opening from the Philadelphia VA Associate Director for Patient/Nursing Services, Cynthia Heidt, MSN, RN. All of the speakers were excellent and knowledgeable in their field. Topics included Doctor-Nurse Collaboration,
Bullying in Nursing, Breast Cancer, Home and Work Health, Proficiency Writing, and Financial Health. Participants enjoyed a nice lunch and raffles for donated basket. NOVA Regional Meetings have been a successful educational platform for our nurses.

November 7, 2011 Dianne Nelson, the NOVA Foundation Chair, sent a request for members of NOVA to consider being a member of the Board of Directors for the NOVA Foundation. Information related to the responsibility and expectations of the position were also included in the message.

NOVA held the 1st Annual NOVA Foundation Golf Tournament on Thursday, November 10 at The Courses at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland which was successful thanks to multiple sponsors and participants. It was an exciting day for our sponsors and participants and it was a very fitting prelude to Veterans Day! The Golf Tournament Committee worked extremely hard to make this event a success: Mary Seaman, Chair, John DiMaggio, Velma Hart, Teresa Morris, Phyllis West, and Susan Dove. Other members of the Development Committee assisted as well: Cecilia McVey, Audrey Drake, and Dianne Nelson. Many gifts for golf prizes, raffle items and the silent auction were donated. In addition, companies and individuals donated refreshments and other amenities to make the day most enjoyable. All of our sponsors and supporters were recognized during the event and in the printed program.

November 18, 2011- the NOVA Board met via conference call for continued planning and the following items were discussed:
- June 30, 2011 Financial Statement
- Review and update the strategic plan
- October 2011 Bank Statements
- Transfer of Monies to Reserve Account
- Report on ANA Organizational Affiliates Meeting
- 2012 Nurse in Washington Internship
- APN Conference Update
- Review of Website Needs/Changes & Links
- Appointment of New Board Member
- Nursing Section of 2012 Independent Budget
- Discuss plans for 2012 Legislative Roundtable

November 30, 2011 NOVA announced the winners of the 11% by 11.11.2011-Membership Drive. Although the goal of 11% membership increase was not met, the campaign resulted in the recruitment of 76 new members. NOVA currently has 3,234 members. Lisa Wiederrich, Black Hills VA HCS was the grand prize winner and was chosen through a random drawing. She received a check for $250, plus a $100 donation in her name to the NOVA Foundation. The winner was also announced in the NOVA News. The next membership drive will be tied to the 2012 NOVA Annual Meeting, June 6-8 at the Gaylord Texan Resort, Grapevine, Texas.

NOVA Scholarships winners for 2011 were announced in the Fall NOVA News. The NOVA Foundation announced they awarded one Jesse Brown Scholarship for $3,000 and eleven NOVA Foundation Scholarships for $1,500 each. Tammy Damron of the Chillicothe VA is the recipient of the Jesse Brown Scholarship. The NOVA Foundation Scholarship recipients are: Rebecca Meyer (Tuscaloosa), Catherine Barbieri (Boston-West Roxbury), Lanita Fortenberry (Tampa), Jennifer Brown (Canandaigua), Janet Smart (Fresno), Myra 8Couch (Pittsburgh), Valecia Suide (Milwaukee), Jasper Lim (Hines), Mynguyet Ho (Livermore), Vanessa Coronel
(Boston-West Roxbury), and Randall Machalk (Minneapolis).

The officers for 2011-2012 were:

President: Joan Clifford (Boston HCS)
Vice President: Larry Lemos (Long Beach HCS)
Secretary: Sharon Johnson (Maryland HCS)
Membership Secretary: Dolores Zander (Philadelphia VAMC)
Treasurer: Mary Seaman (Tampa VAMC)
Directors: Mary Ann Church (Manchester VAMC)
           Janet Minard (Lebanon VAMC)
           Melissa Nixon (St. Louis VAMC)
           Thelma Roach-Serry (Richmond VAMC)
           Kelly Skinner (Boston HCS)
Immediate Past President: Nancy Claflin (Phoenix HCS)
Executive Director: Susan Dove
Director of Membership: Luba Litvinova

2012

NOVA began 2012 with a message reminding members about the Member-Get-A-
Member Campaign”, beginning January 15, and ending May 15, 2012. Members are encouraged
to recruit new members and win prizes. The prizes are:

- Recruit 5 new members and get a free 2013 NOVA membership
- Recruit 15 new members and get a free registration at the 2012 Annual Meeting,
  June 6-8, at the Gaylord Texan Resort, Grapevine, Texas
- Recruit 25 new members and get a free 2012 Annual Meeting registration and a
  complimentary 2-night stay at the Gaylord Texan Resort

On Thursday, February 16, 2012, the NOVA Board of Directors secured a tour of the
White House through the offices of Senator Scott Brown from Massachusetts. Much to the
board’s surprise, First Lady, Michelle Obama, was greeting White House visitors that morning,
and the NOVA Board had the unique pleasure of meeting Mrs. Obama and dog Bo personally.
Mrs. Obama does this only once a year, and the occasion was originally set for an earlier date,
but was rescheduled for February 16th, the very day the NOVA Board was visiting. The First
Lady was gracious and very appreciative of NOVA members who care for the nation’s military
heroes. The visit was videotaped by the White House and, the NOVA portion of this exciting
morning can be downloaded. The portion of the video with the NOVA Board was posted on
FaceBook and YouTube at the following links:
http://www.facebook.com/VAnurse.org?ref=tn_tnmn#!/VAnurse.org
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qnToipNXvAA

The NOVA Foundation Board of Directors met in Washington, DC, on Thursday,
February 16th to review and update the strategic plan, and to discuss activities for the year. One
of the items discussed was the NOVA Foundation Nightingale Award Nomination and the
deadline was set for May 1, 2012. The NOVA Foundation is pleased to offer the Nightingale
Award which will honor an outstanding individual who has made significant contributions and
achievements in advancing nursing education within the Department of Veterans Affairs.
On Friday, February 17, 2012, NOVA hosted the 19th Annual Legislative Roundtable at the DAV National Headquarters in Washington, DC. The event, in which NOVA provides a leadership role advocating for VA nurses and veterans, shared the legislative agenda and participated in discussions with veteran service organizations, legislative liaisons, and other health care professionals. The event gives NOVA the opportunity to meet the mission of shaping and influencing healthcare in the Department of Veterans Affairs, and to share information. The Legislative Agenda includes support for an adequate VHA budget, appropriate technology support and sound retention and recruitment strategies, which include the recommendations of The Institute of Medicine Report, “The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health”. NOVA President, Joan Clifford, welcomed everyone.

Participants included: Ryan Pettit, Senior Legislative Assistant, Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs; Cathy Wiblemo, Director, Subcommittee on Health, House Committee on Veterans Affairs; Joe Millado, Legislative Assistant, Congressman Cliff Stearn’s office; Justin Stoll, Legislative Assistant, Congressman Dan Benishek’s office; Karen Ott, Clinical Executive, Office of Nursing Services; Irene Trowell-Harris, Director, Center for Women Veterans; Andrew David, Health Systems Specialist, Office of Nursing Services; Alyssa Nelson, Health Systems Specialist, Office of Nursing Services; Amy Garcia, Chief Nursing Officer, American Nurses Association; David Polner, President, Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists; Sherry Swearingen, President-Elect, Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists; Garrett Peterson, Director, Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists; Angela Murakami, Program Director, National Association of Veterans’ Research and Education Foundations; Joy Ilem, Deputy National Legislative Director, Disabled American Veterans; John Bradley, Senior Advisor, Disabled American Veterans; Alethea Predeoux, Associate Director, Health Analysis, Paralyzed Veterans of America; Teresa Morris, Manager, Grassroots Advocacy, National Legislative Service, Veterans of Foreign Wars; and Bernie Edelman, Deputy Director for Policy and Government Affairs, Vietnam Veterans of America. Participants from the NOVA Board of Directors included: President, Joan Clifford, Vice President, Larry Lemos, Treasurer, Mary Seaman, Secretary, Sharon Johnson, Membership Secretary, Dolores Zander, Immediate Past President Nancy Claflin, and Directors: Mary Ann Church, Janet Minard, Melissa Nixon, Kelly Skinner, Taryn-Janae Wilcox-Olson, Manager, Education and Special Projects, Linda Howe, and Executive Director, Susan Dove.

Legislative Co-Chair, Sharon Johnson, shared NOVA’s legislative agenda which included:

- Budget-adequate funds to support veterans and staff members, especially those returning from Iraq an Afghanistan, adequate discretionary funding for the aging infrastructure, and recurring funding for special initiatives such as Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACT), Clinical Nurse Leader, VA Nursing Academy, and others
- VA Central Office organizational realignment-impact on nursing
- Retention and recruitment - adequate training for human resource departments, avoiding hiring slow-downs and freezes due to inadequate budgets, programs to decrease delays in hiring and streamline hiring, follow impact of federal pay freeze and proposed retirement changes, and support for registered nurse (RN) residency transition to practice program
- Support Institute of Medicine Report, “The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health,” including four key messages:
  1. Nurses practice at full extent of education and training.
2. Nurses achieve higher levels of education and training through improved education system.
3. Nurses as full partners with physicians and other health care professionals.
4. Effective workforce planning and policy.

Sharon Johnson then invited participants to discuss concerns and issues. Topics covered included:

- Full implementation of Caregiver Services Act, including decreasing barriers for women veterans, training mental health staff, and counseling
- Tri-Care pilots for all women veterans initiated in Buffalo, Northport, and Puget Sound
- Including OEF/OIF/OND veterans on women’s advisory committees
- Independent Budget just released; impact of advanced appropriations
- Monitor and protect the VA Health Care System
- Insist Congress provide sufficient funding to the VA so it continues providing the highest quality care to wounded, ill, and injured veterans
- Ensure Congress provides sufficient funding for VA research into PTSD, TBI, and other conditions, including alternative treatments
- Urge Congress to keep women’s issues at the forefront of legislation to continually improve availability and access to programs
- Oppose all efforts to eliminate or reduce presumptive service-connected conditions for wounded, ill and injured veterans
- Provide adequate funding to maintain current building structures and reduce backlog of critical infrastructure gaps
- Ensure Congress properly funds DoD and VA suicide awareness programs
- Ensure available permanent housing solutions for all homeless veterans, especially female veterans with children
- Call on Congress to require VA to install an IT infrastructure that will help transform VA into a 21st Century agency
- Creation of one integrated electronic medical and service record
- Improve transition assistance programs to help new veterans successfully transition into civilian life
- Urge Congress to address high unemployment rates among veterans
- Implementation of PACT and how other staffing is affected
- Funding, clinics, and staffing to provide care to women veterans
- Encourage legislative agenda that aligns with the Independent Budget
- Concern for sequestration of funds leading to funding shortfalls
- Concern with SCIP process and adequate funds for construction, repair, maintenance, continued and starting projects
- Mental and behavioral health issues and transition issues, especially for National Guard and reserve soldiers
- How Travel Nurse Corps is functioning
- Concerns with VA management efficiencies and adjustments to projection model for workload
- Timely activation of new facilities
• Scope of practice for advance practice registered nurses with provider neutral language
  • Reaching out to every nurse for recognition of TBI, PTSD, and post-combat depression as 50% of soldiers don’t seek care in VA facilities
  • Issue of pending legislation in California related to who controls nursing
  • Continued priority focus on mental health
  • DoD/VA transition for veterans getting ready to separate
  • Efficiency in VA operations due to difficult budget climate
  • VA staffing realignment and VISN structure
  • Traumatic brain injury care
  • More funding for VA/DoD Nurse Anesthesia Program
  • Human resources support for interpretation of CRNA qualifications standards
  • Encourage accountability and transparency in VA
  • Focus on outreach to veterans regarding benefits and health concerns
  • Concerns with for-profit schools taking money from OEF/OIF veterans and leaving them with worthless degrees and huge debts
  • Lingering effects of toxic exposures
  • Research into effects of Agent Orange on children and grandchildren of Vietnam Veterans
  • Concern with funding for VA research laboratory construction
  • Concern with outside for-profit groups taking over care for veterans
  • Concern with contracting issues delaying care
  • Revised VHA Handbook designation of independent practitioners for Nurse Practitioners in the VA regardless of state license, based on federal supremacy, removes scope of practice barriers
    • RN residency transition to practice program
    • VA Nursing Academy pilot finished
    • Formalized mentoring programs for executives
    • Revision of nurse qualifications standards
    • Effects of opening combat roles to women
    • Issues with centralization of information technology; wireless networks in VA facilities
    • Programs to assist returning veterans to obtain health care careers.

Distinguished Service Award—Earlier in 2011, the NOVA Board approved honoring Kim Lipsky with the NOVA Distinguished Service Award. Unfortunately, Kim was unable to attend the NOVA Legislative Roundtable on February 17, 2012. Therefore, NOVA’s President, Joan Clifford, presented the award to Ryan C. Pettit, Senior Legislative Assistant from the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs who accepted it on Kim’s behalf. The plaque read: “In recognition of outstanding support of the nursing profession and America’s veterans Presented To Kim Lipsky February 2012 Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs”.

The NOVA Board of Directors met in Washington, DC, Friday, February 17th at the DAV Headquarters following the Legislative Round table. The following was discussed:
• NOVA’s Strategic Plan and legislative agenda for 2012 Board Action list.
• Sponsorship of the Nurses float in the Tournament of Roses parade
• 2012 nurse in Washington internship
• Requirements to establish new NOVA website
NOVA sent out a call for nominations to encourage NOVA members to nominate a colleague for one of the NOVA awards. The deadline for submission is May 1, 2012. NOVA awards honor individuals or groups who have made significant contributions to the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs, the nursing profession, the health care of veterans, or in service to our country. An attachment with instructions and criteria for were included in the message. Nomination letters must be no more than 3 pages. NOVA will announce the winners at the 2012 Annual Meeting at the Gaylord Texan Resort, in Grapevine, (Ft. Worth/Dallas Area) Texas, on June 6-8, 2012.

The various awards are:

Veteran Award: The award is presented to an individual veteran, group of veterans, or an organization in recognition of dedication to improving the health care of Veterans through the demonstration of one or more of the following:
- Active participation with legislative issues through writing campaigns, speaking engagements, and/or publication of literature which positively influence change
- Personal sacrifice through volunteerism with underserved groups of veterans
- Active involvement with special interest groups who seek to improve the quality of health care for veterans. The nominee does not need to be a member of NOVA, but must be nominated by a NOVA member or chapter.

Professional Nurse Award for Clinical Excellence: This award is presented to a registered nurse who has made an outstanding contribution to the nursing care of veterans through excellence in clinical practice. Examples of each area must be addressed:
- Serving as a role model or mentor for other VA nurses
- Improving nursing care of the veteran through implementing best practices or evidence-based practice
- Serving as an advocate for veterans’ health care by advancing patient care, legislative action, or participating in local/VISN/national nursing activities. The nominee must be a NOVA member and be nominated by a NOVA member or chapter.

Professional Nurse Award for Leadership: This award is presented to a registered nurse who has made an outstanding contribution to nursing within the VA system through their leadership abilities. Examples of each area must be addressed:
- Advocating or advancing the use of registered nurse within their medical center/VISN/system
- Promoting advanced education and/or certification for VA nurses
- Advancing evidence-based practice and/or nursing research with an emphasis on improving the nursing care to veterans. The nominee must be a NOVA member but does not have to be in a managerial position. The nominee must be nominated by a NOVA member or chapter.

Barbara Chambers Award: This award is presented to an individual NOVA member or NOVA chapter for outstanding contributions to NOVA through the following:
- Active leadership roles within NOVA at national or local level
- Significant contributions which advance the mission/ vision/strategic plan of NOVA. The nominee must be a current or former member of NOVA and must be nominated by a NOVA member or chapter.
Silver Star Chapter Award: This award is presented to an outstanding local NOVA chapter. NOVA chapters are the backbone of the organization. Members meet, share ideas, learn from educational speakers, share nursing stories and innovative ideas, plan legislative activities and carry on the work of NOVA. This award recognizes “grass roots” efforts by chapters. The chapter needs to be recognized by the NOVA National Office as an active chapter. For this award, the chapter needs to fill out the application which is available on NOVA’s web site and send it to the National Office, 47595 Watkins Island Square, Sterling, VA 20165, by May 1, 2012.

Dianne Nelson, BSN, RN Chair, NOVA Foundation Board announced the addition of two new Board Members: Catherine Bailey, RN, BSN, NE-BC, and Donna DeMartino, RN, BSN, MHA, both of whom have been involved with NOVA for many years. Catherine Bailey recently retired from the Maryland VA Health Care System where she served as the charge nurse in the Medical Specialty Clinics. She worked for the VA for 43 years. She is also retired from the USAF Nurse Corps in 2003 with the rank of Major. Catherine served as President of the Baltimore, MD, NOVA Chapter for four years, and served on the NOVA Board of Directors for three years. Ms. Bailey has been recognized both within and outside the VA for performance and achievement in the profession of nursing. Donna DeMartino is the Evening Nurse Coordinator in the Boston VA Health Care System, West Roxbury campus. She is responsible for the evening tour of duty related to staff allocation, patient care, and patient bed assignment based on acuity and resources. Donna has served as the NOVA Boston Chapter President twice, as well as Membership Secretary and President Elect. She has a Master’s Degree in Health Care Administration. Throughout her nursing career, Donna has held many nursing administration roles. She is committed to supporting the advancement of nursing education in the VA system.

Several Board Members’ terms expired at the end of December, 2011: Larry Lemos, Mary Seaman, Mary Raymer, Velma Hart, and Phyllis West. Thank you all for your dedicated service to the Foundation! Also in December the Board said farewell to Teresa Morris (VFW) who resigned from the Board due to her evolving role at VFW. Teresa served on the Golf Tournament Committee and she was instrumental in making that event so successful.

NOVA announced the NOVA Foundation Heart and Hands Cookbook will be published soon. NOVA members submitted wonderful recipes. Chef John Besh is writing the dedication of the cookbook. Chef Besh is the owner of eight renowned restaurants, seven of which are located in his native New Orleans. He is a recipient of the James Beard Award for Best Chef of the Southeast in 2006, and has appeared on the Food Network, PBS, and Sundance Channel. His American Sector Restaurant is located in the National World War II Museum. Chef John Besh is a former Marine and veteran of the Gulf War. We are thrilled to have such a celebrity endorse our cookbook. This cookbook is a great gift for members, family members and fellow nurses, especially during Nurses Week. They were available to order in advance on the NOVA Foundation webpage.

Call for Poster Presentations for the NOVA Annual Meeting June 6 - June 8, 2012 Gaylord Texan Resort-Grapevine, TX. All nurses, nursing students and other health care professionals are invited to share creative nursing care approaches, research finds, clinical innovations or student projects with colleagues by submitting a poster proposal on any aspect of practice, research, or student activities. The poster should be a summarization of a creative activity and should fit on a poster board measuring 30” width x 36” height, and fit easily on a easel or be a tri-fold poster board that can stand on a table. A poster should reflect an innovative aspect of nursing practice, education, or research. It may be supplemented by handouts.
The poster’s presenter must be available for the open poster session to address questions. The poster submission form available from NOVA National Office must be emailed no later than Friday, April 27, 2012 to Susan Dove at sdove@vanurse.org. Submitters will be notified by May 4, 2012, if the poster is accepted. You do not have to be a NOVA member to submit a poster, but you must be present at the Annual Meeting Poster Session on Friday, June 8, 2012.

Selection Criteria - Each poster submission will be reviewed for the following elements:

- Quality
- Broad appeal to the nursing community
- Creativity
- Timeliness
- Uniqueness

March 16, 2012, NOVA held a regional meeting, “VA Nurses: Heroes Caring for Heroes”, at the Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa at Short Pump, Richmond, VA. Gallagher Benefit Services and Government Personnel Mutual Insurance Company sponsored the event. Nearly 60 people attended the program, and attendees received 7 CEU’s. The program was well received as indicated by the glowing evaluations. Presentations included:

- “The Secrets to Positive Mental Health”, Charlotte Watts, PhD, LCP, Hunter Holmes McGuire VAMC
- “Maintaining Your Nutritional Health”, Michelle Bedwell, MS, RD, CDE, Clinical Dietitian & Diabetes Educator Hunter Holmes McGuire VAMC
- “Putting Safety In Patient Handling”, Regina S. Wallace, RN, Nurse Manager, Emergency Department, Hunter Holmes McGuire VAMC
- “Health Coach For Me – And You”, Lynne J. Bouffard, DNP, FNP, MSN, Care Management Liaison, GlaxoSmithKline
- “The Ethical Use of Social Networking”, Jay P. Douglas, RN, MSM, CSAC, Executive Director, Virginia Board of Nursing
- “Healthy Financial & Retirement Planning”, “Managing Stress Through Exercise & Yoga”, Maria Beall Health Fitness Specialist, ACSM Certified-Owner, Bringing Fitness 2 U

April 12, 2012, NOVA officers and directors were among nurse leaders at the “Joining Forces”, anniversary event held at the University of Pennsylvania. First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden marked the first anniversary of the Joining Forces campaign with several events during April 11-12, 2012, at the White House, Washington, DC, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Shreveport, Louisiana, and Jacksonville, Florida. After a kick-off at the White House on April 11, Mrs. Obama and Dr. Biden travelled to the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia where a group of nurse leaders, nursing students, military service members, and others waited to greet them in the Irvine Auditorium. NOVA was represented by Treasurer and US Army Veteran, Mary Seaman, MS, RN, NEA-BC, Membership Secretary, Dee Zander, MSN, RN-BC, and Directors, Thelma Roach-Serry, RN, BSN-NE, and Kelly Skinner, MSN, RN, CRRN, WCC, APRN, BC, GNP-BC. The Joining Forces Initiative was inaugurated on April 12, 2011, and since that time tremendous progress has been made to gain America’s full support with recognizing, honoring and taking action to serve military service members, veterans, and military families. This initiative centers around three key priority areas: employment, education, and wellness. The eminent mission of the initiative focuses on increasing awareness of the
service, sacrifice, and needs of America’s citizens who are serving and/or have served in Iraq and Afghanistan and the needs of their families.

The venue for the meeting, the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing, is a nationally recognized leader in nursing education and was the perfect academic setting for Mrs. Obama and Dr. Biden to announce a major initiative involving more than 150 of America’s leading nursing organizations and more than 450 nursing schools in 50 states and territories to ensure our nation’s nurses are prepared to meet the unique health needs of service members, veterans, and their families. They thanked the organizations and nursing schools accepting the pledge to support those who have served and protected our freedom by providing the best care possible. Among those organizations accepting the pledge were the American Nurses Association, the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Nursing Services, and the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs. Over three million nurses in every health care setting across America and its territories will be affected by this initiative. Nursing leaders have committed to train practicing and future nurses on how to recognize and care for those suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, post deployment depression and other combat related issues including wounds of war that are not physical. Dr. Biden, who is the mother of a military service member, declared that “Military families deserve the best that we have to offer.” Mrs. Obama charged everyone present to realize that since 2000 more than 44,000 troops have suffered moderate brain injuries. She also reported that one in six soldiers has had PTSD and similar numbers of soldiers report depression after returning home. She said, “These emotional problems are natural, normal human responses to the violence of war.” She assured those soldiers present, “No matter what you’re going through, America will be there for you and your families. That’s what this is about.”

Following the forty-five minute program to announce the Joining Forces initiative for nursing, the “2012 Leadership Summit–Joining Forces, Nurses Uniting & Joining Forces to Support Our Military Service Members, Veterans, and their Families” commenced. After a brisk walk across the historic University of Pennsylvania Campus to the School of Nursing in Claire M. Fagin Hall, nurse leaders were directed to assigned tables for participation in Table Top Discussions. Amy Garcia, Chief Program Officer, American Nurses Association, Dr. Afaf Meleis, Dean of School of Nursing, University of Pennsylvania, and Cathy Rick, Chief Nursing Service Officer, VHA, led the summit by articulating the collaborative commitment of so many nursing organizations to the Joining Forces Initiative. According to Cathy Rick, the Chief Nursing Officer, DVA, “VHA nursing is taking on a key role in following this White House initiative.” Each table of nursing leaders was led by a nursing doctoral student who facilitated discussions focusing on the following: past and present initiatives that the organizations have implemented to prepare nurses to care for veterans with invisible wounds (PTSD, TBI, Depression), initiatives in the planning stages at each organization, new initiatives organizations may take to promote the Joining Forces agenda, and identification of assistance or resources that may be required from national nursing groups or other agencies to implement the ideas generated. The summit concluded with a representative from each table reporting on the ideas and new collaborations. It was such an awesome experience for NOVA to be present and demonstrate our organization’s commitment to the Joining Forces Initiative!

NOVA President Joan Clifford honors VA nurses on Nurses Week May 6-12, 2012 with the following message: “Happy Nurses Week to all my VA Nurse Colleagues! Over the years, I have always been proud to be a nurse, but especially proud to be a VA nurse. VA nurses have always been a proud bunch because it takes a special kind of nurse to recognize, and care for, the
visible and invisible wounds of war in addition to the general health care needs of patients. With
the Joining Forces Initiative, we have an opportunity to share those special skills even further
than we have so far. This will be an exciting time for us and our veterans moving forward,
touching more veterans than we ever could alone. Stay proud and join us in sharing the gift of
VA nursing with others. Celebrate being a VA Nurse!“

On June 6, 2012 the NOVA Foundation Board met in Grapevine, Texas, in conjunction
with the NOVA Annual Meeting with a full agenda focused on the development side. The Board
is committed to raising the necessary funds to enhance the education and research efforts of VA
nurses. The Silent Auction helped raised over $3,000. The Board decided to hold a 2nd Annual
Golf Tournament, this time at the Ft. Belvoir Golf Club on Friday, November 9, 2012, in
Virginia. The “NOVA Foundation Hearts and Hands”, Cookbook was published just in time for
Nurses Week. Chef John Besh wrote the dedication of our cookbook. Chef Besh is the owner of
eight renowned restaurants, seven of which are located in his native New Orleans. He is a
recipient of the James Beard Award for Best Chef of the Southeast in 2006, and has appeared on
the Food Network, BPS, and Sundance Channel. His American Sector Restaurant is located in
the National World War II Museum. Chef John Besh is a former Marine and veteran of the Gulf
War. More than 250 copies of the book have already been sold. Over the years, the NOVA
Foundation has evolved as a dedicated emissary for VA Nurses and the Veterans in their care. A
Legacy has been created and a new Legacy Brochure is available on webpage for additional
information.

The deadline for applying for one of the NOVA Foundation Scholarships was June 1,
2012. The scholar ship committee, chaired by Nancy Claflin, is reviewing the 92 applications.
Recipients will be notified in August. This year NOVA did not receive any applications for the
NOVA Foundation Nightingale Award. Advanced education for VA nurses is more important
now than ever before and the NOVA Foundation understands this crusade as much as any
organization. That is why the NOVA Foundation offers the Nightingale Award—to honor an
outstanding individual who has made significant contributions and achievements in advancing
nursing education within the Department of Veterans Affairs.

June 7-8, 2012 NOVA held the 32nd Annual Meeting, “VA Nurses: Proud to Care for
Our Patriots,” was held June 6-8, 2012, in Grapevine, Texas at the Gaylord Texan Resort.
Coming together to network and share was the many ways nurses renewed and refreshed their
commitment to our Veterans. The other goal of the Annual Meeting was to remind all who
attended how special VA nurses are and to provide information to enhance their careers. The
conference speakers were very knowledgeable, well-spoken and interactive. The Keynote
Speaker on Day 1 was LeAnn Theiman, the author of “Chicken Soup for the Caregiver’s Soul.”
Thelma Roach-Serry discussed choosing civility in the workplace. Deborah Grassman spoke
about the sensitive issues of caring for the dying patient. We also delved into advancing our
professional practice through certification with Mary Seaman. Joan Clifford and Sharon Johnson
presented “Proficiency Writing and Mock Boards.” M. Eric Rodgers reviewed the Evidenced
Based Practice Clinical Guidelines with attendees. “How Healthy is Your Retirement Plan?”,
the “Role of the RN in Caring for the Elderly” and “Putting research into Practice” were also
outstanding presentations by Deborah L. Hatch, Dolores Zander, Connie Perry-Simon, and
Beverly B. Owens.

On Thursday evening, the NOVA Foundation held a reception and silent auction. It was a
fun-filled evening and many terrific items were donated in support of VA nursing scholarships.
At the Poster Presentation Session, seeds were planted and ideas shared. It was wonderful to see
the innovative initiatives of our colleagues across the country. The Awards Luncheon and the Annual Business Meeting preceded the Town Hall Meeting monitored by the Deputy Chief Nursing Officer, James L. Harris. The conference concluded with Mary Seaman who sent us home smiling with her presentation “It’s Not Where You’ve Been But Where You Are Going To.” The special optional event, the Wine Tour and Luncheon on Saturday, topped off the meeting. When the evaluations were tabulated, the meeting received some of the highest scores ever. The following sponsors participated in the 32nd Annual Meeting: Dove Associates LLC-Federal First/Gallagher Benefit Services Fitzgerald Health Education Associates.

On Friday, June 8 at the 2012 NOVA Annual Meeting the following posters were displayed:

1. “Decreasing Assaults on a Locked Mental Health Unit through the Creation of a Sensory Modulation Room” By Lynda Brettschneider, RN, MSN
2. “Promoting Health and Wellness for Patients Living with Cancer through Collaborative Nursing Quality Improvement Strategies at the Point of Care” By Myra L. Couch, MSN, RN-BC
3. “Incivility in Nursing Education” By Nancy Elliott, BSN, RN-BC
4. “Take a Look Babee” By Lucille D. Kemp, BSN, RN-BC
5. “Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer (NSCLC): Genetic Mutations – It’s Not All Smoke” By Elisabeth Konti, FNP-C, DNP
6. “Veteran-Centered Care from the Bottom Up: Bedford VAMC’s Routine Foot Care Nursing Intervention” By Amanda M. Laorenza, RN, BSN, CHPN
7. “How Sweet It Is: Group Diabetic Instruction for Female Veterans” By Linda Sims, BSN, RN
8. “Mentors and Preceptors: Expanding Roles in Professional Development” By Linda Thornbrugh, BSN, RN & Anne Burnett, MSN, RN-BC
9. “NOVA - Mission, Vision and Objectives” By Jenny Urban, MSN, RN, BC, RAC-CT
10. “VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guidelines” By M. Eric Rodgers, FNP, PhD, BC
11. “MICU-CCU Moving forward to Culture of Shared Governance” By Milagros Cruz, RN, BSN, CCRN and Maria Christabelle Castro, RN, BSN, CCRN, MHA, NE-BC
12. “The ABS’s of EBP: Building Blocks of Evidence-Based Practice” By Anne Burnett, RN-BC, MSN, CRRN
13. “Bytes and Bundles: Using Technology and Evidence Based Practice (EBP) Bundles to Prevent Hospital Acquired Infections” By Christina Williamson, MSN, RN-BC & Linda Thornbrugh, BSN, RN

NOVA awards were presented at the 2012 Annual Business Meeting held on Friday, June 8, 2012. The call for nominees for the 2012 NOVA Awards was met with some outstanding entries. VA nurses are some of the most distinguished in our profession at all levels. The NOVA Professional Nurse Award for Leadership was presented to Christa Hojlo, PhD, RN, NHA, Director, VA Community Living Centers (CLC), Department of Veterans Affairs. This award is presented to a Registered Nurse who has made an outstanding contribution to nursing within the VA system through their leadership abilities. The nominee must be a NOVA member and be nominated by a NOVA member or chapter.
The NOVA Professional Nurse Award for Clinical Excellence was awarded to Linda R. Droste, RN, MSN, CWOCN, CBIS Wound, Ostomy, Continence Nurse, Spinal Cord Injury and Polytrauma Unit, Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center. This award is presented to a Registered Nurse who has made an outstanding contribution to the nursing care of veterans through excellence in clinical practice. The nominee must be a NOVA member and be nominated by a NOVA member or chapter.

Awards and Recognition for Membership Recruitment Efforts
NOVA Chapter #420, Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center, was recognized for the Most New Members in the Large Chapter Category.
NOVA Chapter #224, Edith Nourse Rogers VA Medical Center was recognized for the Most New Members in the Medium Chapter Category.
NOVA Chapter #410, Central Texas VA Health Care System, was recognized for the Most New Members in the Small Chapter Category.

The Member-Get-A-Member Campaign which lasted from January 15 through May 15, 2012, resulted in over 100 new members. The winners were recognized during the annual meeting. The campaign winners were:
Patricia Watson, Edith Nourse Rogers VAMC, NOVA Chapter #224, recruited 25 new members and was awarded a complimentary 2012 Annual Meeting registration and 2-night stay at the Gaylord Texan Resort in Grapevine, Texas.
Nancy Claflin, Phoenix VA Health Care System, NOVA Chapter #110
Donna DeMartino, Boston VA Health Care System, NOVA Chapter #226
Melissa Nixon, St. Louis VA Medical Center, NOVA Chapter #260
All were awarded a 2013 Complimentary NOVA Membership for recruiting at least five new members.

Congratulations to Newly elected Officers and Board of Directors:
President-Elect Larry Lemos
Vice President-Mary Seaman
Treasurer-Sharon Johnson
Director-Janet Minard
Director-Melissa Nixon
Director-TJ Wilcox-Olson

June 2012, NOVA was honored to receive an invitation from the White House and the Department of Health and Human Services to join senior Obama Administration officials and fellow nurse leaders for a discussion on improving care quality and patient health. Joan Clifford NOVA president, along with NOVA’s President-Elect, Larry Lemos, attended this event the week after the Annual Meeting. The event was an open dialogue to address the status of health care in America in light of the Affordable Care Act. Many fellow nurse leaders from varied areas discussed some of the innovative changes taking place as well as some continued challenges in meeting the needs of all Americans. There was a clear message from the administration that nurses are the ones that have the stories that paint the picture of the status of health care reform and they wanted to hear those stories.

June 2012, Joan Clifford and Larry Lemos attended the American Nurses Association (ANA) Organizational Affiliates Meeting, where the conversation on nursing’s role in transforming health care continued. The NOVA Board voted last year to become an
Organizational Affiliate of ANA, which allows NOVA to collaborate with other affiliates and the ANA, strengthening the united voice of nursing.

June 2012, NOVA president Joan Clifford attended the ANA House of Delegates as the NOVA delegate. This was a historic session of the House of Delegates, as it was the final meeting of the House. Transformational changes in the organization were approved with significant changes in the governance structure. This included a vote to retire the House of Delegates, Congress on Nursing Practice and Economics, and the Constituent Assembly and replace them with a Membership Assembly and Professional Issues Panels. The change from a federated model membership structure, in which organizations such as state nurses associations, are ANA’s “members,” to a structure where individual nurses are the members, was not approved but may be revisited with the new assembly. This was a significant gathering of nursing professionals and NOVA is recognized as a significant participant in discussions about the nursing profession and the challenges of health care.

To assist with certification renewals, courses are now available in the TMS to help address the pharmacotherapeutic contact hour requirements for all advanced practice nurses and clinical nurse specialists. Contact hours for these courses are being offered by SWANK. To access the course enter the course title in the TMS Catalog search engine and add the course to your “To Do List”.

September 21, 2012, AOL contacted NOVA to conduct an interview for an article about VA nursing. It was suggested that instead of interviewing the NOVA President or Executive Director, it would be wonderful if the article was written from a “front line nurse” perspective, TJ Wilcox-Olson, with the VA Black Hills Health Care System, and a member of the NOVA Board, was contacted by AOL. TJ represented VA nursing and NOVA very well! Click on the link below to view the resulting article:
http://jobs.aol.com/articles/2012/09/12/confessions-of-a-va-nurse-tending-more-to-broken-spirits-than-b/

On September 26, 2012 the NOVA Board of Directors met and the following actions were taken:

• Approved the development of a new NOVA membership promotion DVD
• Approved the re-design of the NOVA website to be completed and launched by the end of 2012
• Approved bringing day-to-day website maintenance in-house rather than sub-contracting to an outside vendor
• Approved processing and distributing NOVA membership renewal notices and cards electronically, effective January 1, 2013
• Approved the purchase of software to upgrade NOVA’s existing database information and functionality
• Reviewed results of the recent Membership Survey
• Supported inviting First Lady Michelle Obama as Keynote Speaker at 2013 Annual Meeting, “VA Nurses: Joining Forces With The Community In Caring For America’s Heroes”
• Approved holding NOVA’s 35th Anniversary Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., in 2015
• Established a five-person task force to research the possibility of LPN membership in NOVA and present findings for consideration at the Board’s February 2013 meeting. They also reviewed the NOVA Membership results.
On Wednesday, October 03, 2012, Karen Kirby offered NOVA the opportunity to sponsor the upcoming film, “Nurses...If Florence Could See Us NOW,” depicting a historical portrayal of the many roles and contributions of nursing at this point in history. NOVA made a contribution to this project. The link to the official trailer for the film is below: http://www.nursethemovie.com

Thursday, October 11, 2012- The new “Member-Get-A-Member” campaign, dates were announced, the dates are October 15, 2012-May 15, 2013.

October 12, 2012-NOVA joined the Nursing Community in Alerting Congress of Sequestration Impact AMERICANS FOR NURSING SHORTAGE RELIEF. See document below:

Dear Member of Congress:

The undersigned organizations of the Americans for Nursing Shortage Relief (ANSR) Alliance are writing to alert you to the impact the sequestration cuts to discretionary spending will have on ensuring that the nation has an adequate and well trained nursing workforce. The ANSR Alliance represents a diverse cross-section of health care and other related organizations, health care providers, and supporters of nursing issues that have united to address the national nursing shortage. According to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) sequestration report issued on September 14, the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Education Programs at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) will be subject to an 8.2 percent cut. This cut will result in:

• 127 fewer faculty members educating future generations of nurses through the Title VIII Nurse Faculty Loan Program at a time when faculty vacancies severely limit nursing school enrollment;
• 645 fewer training opportunities for advanced practice registered nurses through the Title VIII Advanced Nursing Education Program at a time when the public’s demand for nursing services continues to grow;
• 872 fewer underrepresented minority and disadvantaged students supported through the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Diversity Program at a time when our population is becoming more diverse;
• 487 fewer underrepresented K-12 students recruited to the nursing profession through the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Diversity Program; and
• 4,129 nurses and nursing students adversely affected by limited funding for scholarships and/or training opportunities through Title VIII Nursing Education programs.

Without a balanced approach to sequestration, funding cuts to these programs that are advancing the front line health care workforce will exacerbate the health challenges our nation faces. The Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development programs provide the main federal funding for nursing education, practice, and retention, aimed at maintaining an adequate supply of nurses to attain the nation’s goal of ensuring access to affordable, high-quality health care, particularly for the country’s vulnerable populations. Further cuts to these modest programs will prevent the nation from having a sufficient nursing workforce to meet the demands of a highly diverse and aging population.

HRSA’s Title VIII Nursing Workforce Education Programs and other non-defense discretionary programs have already contributed their fair share to deficit reduction. The ANSR Alliance urges you to work together with your Congressional
colleagues to find a balanced approach to deficit reduction that does not further diminish investments in the Title VIII programs and other non-defense discretionary programs. The Nursing Community includes many nursing organizations.

A save the date message was sent out about the NOVA 2013 ANNUAL MEETING “VA Nurses: Joining Forces with the Community in Caring for America’s Heroes” June 19-21, 2013 Sir Francis Drake Hotel San Francisco, California. Attendees enjoyed the elegance of this grand boutique hotel in the heart of the City by the Bay – for only $155 per night!

The NOVA Foundation granted nine scholarships this year. There were a total of 91 applications. The board awarded eight $1,500 scholarships and one $3,000 Jesse Brown Scholarship. The lucky recipients are:

Kathleen M. Beals, who works at the West Roxbury, VA; Boston Health Care System, and is pursuing a BSN.
Erika Lee Coates, Clement Zablocki VAMC, Milwaukee, is pursuing a BSN.
Erin N. Mueller, Marion VAMC, Illinois, is pursuing a MSN-FNP.
Uchenna C. Nworah, Michael E. DeBakey VAMC, Houston, is pursuing a PhD in Nursing.
Tammy P. Outly, Pittsburgh VAHCS, is pursuing a Doctorate in Public Health Epidemiology.
Lori Rizzo, Pittsburgh VAHCS, is pursuing a PhD. Miriam O. Russell, Battle Creek VAMC, is pursuing a MSN.
Jessica A. Thompson, at the VA Pacific Islands HCS, is pursuing a MSN, APRN. Michael J. Curtis of the Palo Alto VAHCS is the 2012 recipient of the Jesse Brown Scholarship; he is pursuing a BSN. The Jesse Brown Scholarship was funded by the VA Nurse Emeritus group through the sale of “cool scarves” for our active duty military personnel. You can learn more about this project and the Emeritus group on the NOVA webpage.

The Scholarship Review Committee included: Nancy Claflin, Chair, Donna DeMartino, Leora Jacober, Sharon Johnson, Dianne Nelson, and Thelma Roach-Serry. Cara Goff and Ila Flanagan in the Office of Nursing Services collected and collated all of the scholarship applications.

The new NOVA membership pin became available and can be purchased on the NOVA website - Price: $20.00.

The draft of the Nursing Section for the Independent Budget was forwarded to the NOVA Board for a final review. Edits, comments, etc. were due by Monday, October 22.

On Nov 26, 2012, Susan Dove, Executive Director updated the Board on the status of the new NOVA website:

- The basic re-design is complete and about 95% of the items/text has been loaded onto the new site. A couple of items are being rewritten (such as the NOVA Legislative Guide which was terribly outdated. Legislative Co-Chair Cecilia McVey has provided input on this rewrite.)
- The website’s home page contains a moving slide show.
- All of the paperwork has been completed and provided to Elavon, the company through which NOVA can process credit cards on-line. Elavon needs to review the new website and sign off on such items as shipping and
billing policies which we have added to the site. NOVA should receive word this week that this has been approved and activated.

- The “Members Only” tab has been added. Luba is adding the appropriate items for this section and has a call with Media Mechanic to go through the process by which members can access and how we can eliminate or put a member in “hold” if they drop their membership.
- Currently proofreading every page/document on the new website and giving Luba any changes/updates with the goal of completing this entire process by week’s end.

Once the above is completed, a few internal trials tied to accessing the Members Only tab, paying dues on-line, going to the “Online Store,” purchasing items and using a credit card, etc. will be needed. The goal is to launch the new site on January 1.

Thursday, November 29, 2012, NOVA was invited to attend the screening of the film “Nurses: If Florence Could See Us Now!” on Thursday, 12/13/12, from 2:30 -4:30 pm in Silver Springs, MD.

Monday, December 10, 2012, the NOVA membership was notified of the passing of Vernice Ferguson, RN, MA, FAAN, FRCN, one of the most highly respected leaders of the nursing community and one of NOVA’s strongest supporters. Ms. Ferguson served as the VA’s Deputy Assistant Chief Medical Director for Nursing Programs (1980-1992); and gave the Keynote Address at the 2nd NOVA Annual Meeting, asking each participant to take back the message that all VA nurses must be part of the decision making process in the VA nursing service at each station. Prior to her position at the Department of Veterans Affairs, Ms. Ferguson served for seven years as Chief of the Nursing Department at the Clinical Center, at the National Institutes of Health. She was an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Nursing of the United Kingdom, the second American nurse so honored. Over the years, she received eight Honorary Doctorates and two Fellowships. In 2008, Ms. Ferguson was awarded the prestigious FREDDIE Lifetime Achievement Award, the first time in the award's 34-year history that it was given to a nurse. VA’s Chief Nursing Officer, Cathy Rick, once said “Vernice Ferguson is a transformational leader whose distinguished career has inspired a generation of professionals to pursue academic success. She shaped nursing practice in the largest healthcare delivery system in the world.” Her passing is a great loss to NOVA and the nursing community.

Monday, December 10, 2012, Kate Fry, Associate Director, Political Affairs for American Association of Nurse Anesthetists offered NOVA an opportunity to take part, as a sponsor for the January 21 Presidential Inauguration “watch party,” event in view of the Capital. The NOVA Board decided to sponsor the event.

The officers for 2012-2013 were:

President: Joan Clifford (Boston HCS)
President-Elect: Larry Lemos (Long Beach HCS)
Vice President: Mary Seaman (Tampa VAMC)
Secretary: Thelma Roach-Serry (Richmond VAMC)
Membership Secretary: Dolores Zander (Philadelphia VAMC)
Treasurer: Sharon Johnson (Maryland HCS)
Directors: Mary Ann Church (Manchester VAMC)
Janet Minard (Lebanon VAMC)
2013

Effective January 1, 2013, NOVA membership cards and membership renewal reminders are being sent via email. Members were reminded of the importance of providing a correct email address to the NOVA National Office in order to receive the 2013 NOVA electronic membership card. If NOVA does not have a valid email address electronic communications from NOVA will not be received. Send a current email address to: nova@vanurse.org or contact the NOVA National Office at 703-444-5587.

January 2, 2013, as an Alliance member NOVA received an invitation to attend the 2013 Nurse in Washington Internship March 17-18, 2013 Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill, Washington DC. The Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI) provides nurses the opportunity to learn how to influence health care through the legislative and regulatory processes. Participants learn from health policy experts and government officials, network with other nurses, and visit members of Congress.

January 4, 2013 NOVA calls for Poster Presentations for the NOVA Annual Meeting, June 19 – 21, 2013 Sir Francis Drake Hotel, San Francisco, CA. All Nurses, Nursing Students and Other Health Care Professionals are invited to submit a poster proposal on any aspect of your practice, research, or student activities.

• The poster should be a summarization of a creative activity
• It should fit on a poster board measuring approximately 30"wide by 36" long and fit easily on an easel or be a tri-fold poster board that can stand on a table. (NOVA will provide tri-fold poster boards for presenters’ use as requested).
• A poster should reflect an innovative aspect of nursing practice, education, or research.
• It may be supplemented by handouts.
• The poster’s presenter must be available for the poster session to address questions.

The Poster Submission Form, available at www.vanurse.org and email, must be received no later than Monday, April 15, 2013, send to Susan Dove at sdove@vanurse.org. Submitters will be notified by May 1, 2013, if their poster is accepted. Posters must avoid commercialism and be professional in appearance. Posters that constitute promotion and advertising will not be accepted. Statements made in posters are the sole responsibility of the author or presenter. Statements should not be viewed as, or considered representative or, any formal stance or position taken on any subject, issue or product by NOVA. You do not have to be a NOVA member to submit a poster. Each poster submission will be reviewed for the following elements:

• Quality
• Broad appeal to the nursing community
• Creativity
• Timeliness
• Uniqueness
• Creative nursing care approaches, research finds, clinical innovations or student projects with your colleagues.

NOVA membership is not required to submit a poster, but the presenter must be present.
at the annual meeting poster session on Friday, June 21, 2013.

January 8, 2013 NOVA ended the website services of Geo-Net Marketing & Design; the NOVA website will be maintained internally by NOVA staff.

The Foundation Board made the difficult decision to close down operations for the Foundation this past December 31, 2012. The main purpose of the Foundation, providing scholarships for VA nurses, will continue as an ongoing regular program of NOVA and be funded entirely out of the NOVA budget. The NOVA Foundation website is no longer needed.

NOVA has received 232 scholarship applications. A number of NOVA members inquired as to how one might support NOVA’s scholarship efforts. NOVA, a 501(c)(6) nonprofit organization, may accept monetary support as “education grants.” These “education grants,” are not tax deductible for grantors under tax law, since NOVA is a 501(c)(6) organization. (The NOVA Foundation was a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.) NOVA encourages support of this much needed program. Education grants this year will enable NOVA to provide additional scholarships in 2014 above and beyond that which can be included in NOVA’s operational budget. Send checks made payable to: NOVA, Education Grants, 47595 Watkins Island Square, Sterling, VA 20165 OR go to www.vanurse.org to submit your education grant on line. Education grantors will be recognized in NOVA News, on NOVA’s website, and at the Annual Meeting.

January 8, 2013, as an ANA affiliate, NOVA received an invitation from the American Nurses Association (ANA) seeking applicants for its Care Coordination Quality Measures professional issues panel to be convened starting in March 2013. This panel will focus on developing a framework for measuring the contributions of registered nurses engaged in care coordination.

January 9, 2013, the NOVA LPN Subcommittee met via conference call. The subcommittee’s recommendations to the Board are:

1) Title the new membership category “LPN/LVN Membership” and change the current “Active Member” category to “Registered Nurse Membership.” This language more clearly defines each membership category.

2) Grant LPN/LVN Members the right to vote.

3) Establish the LPN/LVN membership dues at $75.00 per year, approximately two-thirds that of Registered Nurses.

4) Increase the number of director positions on the NOVA Board from 6 to 9 and allow for up to 3 seats to be held by an LPN/LVN member (staying with the two-thirds concept).

5) Indicate in the Bylaws that LPN/LVN Directors may not fill officer positions.

6) Change the Bylaws to reflect all recommendations that are approved by the Board.

All subcommittee recommendations were open for review and comments, to be finalized at the next subcommittee conference call on Tuesday, January 29, 2014.

January 15, 2013 NOVA successfully launches the new NOVA website which will be managed by Dove Associates’ staff. This arrangement will allow rapid updates to the website which has enhanced features, including a member only section.

January 17, 2013 NOVA Membership Secretary, Dolores Zander and Executive Director Susan Dove presented the need to develop new membership benefits which would not only entice additional VA Registered Nurses to join, but maintain those who are currently a part of NOVA. They also requested 3-4 additional NOVA members to serve on the NOVA Membership Development Committee. As NOVA strives to present itself as a most current and professional organization through upgrading its communications electronically, redesigning its website (to be
launched in early January), affiliating with more and more other nursing organizations, participating in more and more activities within the nursing community and spreading the word about NOVA and its mission, it is vital that NOVA looks at how it is serving our current and future members and how NOVA can grow the membership. It is crucial that the Membership Development Committee be redesigned and redirected in order to meet NOVA’s needs. This can be accomplished by forming a smaller committee (about 10), composed of NOVA members who would be dedicated and willing to devote the time and effort to discuss, investigate, and help develop a proposal to the NOVA Board which would encompass new ways/programs to entice and keep members.

NOVA announces the 2013 NOVA annual meeting “VA Nurses: Joining Forces with the Community in Caring for America’s Heroes” June 19-21, 2013 Sir Francis Drake Hotel- San Francisco, California. This is the NVA’s 33rd annual meeting and First Lady Michelle Obama has been invited to present the keynote address in honor of her leadership of the “Joining Forces” initiative. There is also a special optional event on Saturday, June 22, 2013 to Muir woods, Sonoma Winery and a market place tour. Attendees will enjoy the elegance of this grand boutique hotel in the heart of the City by the Bay–for only $155 per night.

January 18, 2013 NOVA, as a member of The Nursing Community organization, informed members of an important webinar on Nursing and Healthcare Delivery Under the 113th Congress which is planned for February 6, 2013, 1-2pm.

January 21, 2013 NOVA, joined by several other organizations, sponsored an inaugural viewing event at the 101 Constitution building. NOVA President-Elect, Larry Lemos, represented NOVA at this event along with three other friends of NOVA: Robert Gallagher, Lauren Gallagher, and Col. James L. Oakes. Guests at the 57th Presidential Inauguration Ceremony were able to view the events happening at the Capitol from the seventh floor of the building across from the National Mall. Televisions set up all around the reception made it possible to follow the ceremony while enjoying a light breakfast. Attendees from each sponsoring organization were allowed to access the roof garden to take pictures. The event was co-sponsored by the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, the American Occupational Therapy Association, American Podiatric Medical Association, AARP, Health Diagnostic Laboratories, The Hill, Johnson & Johnson, National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists, NOVA, and Walgreens.

Dolores Zander, Membership Development Committee Chair, announced her retirement that is planned effective June 1, 2013. She said, “I have been very blessed with my career in the VA, and particularly the opportunity to be an active member of NOVA. It has been a more than wonderful experience.” She will continue to work on the Membership Development Committee that is forming and has developed a solid process that is in discussion and formation, but may not be fully implemented prior to her retirement.

January 26, 2013 the LPN/LVN Task force committee submitted a draft report of findings and discussion for review and editing to prepare a final version for the February 2013 Board Book. January 29, 2013 the Emergency Nurses Association informed NOVA that co-founder, Judith C. Kelleher, MSN, RN, FAAN, died on Thursday, January 24, 2013 at the age of 89. January 29, 2013 the NOVA board was informed that the NOVA DVD film crew will be present at the beginning of the NOVA Board Meeting on February 14 to film the Board in action (no sound will be recorded).

January 29, 2013 Mary Seaman, NOVA Vice-President announced she will be retiring from the VA effective March 1 and leaving the NOVA Board at that time. Her last Board
Meeting will be the February 14 meeting, but she has graciously agreed to carry through her responsibilities as chair of this year’s Annual Meeting Committee. Mary said, “As a Veteran, I leave the Board of Directors with a profound sense of gratitude knowing that NOVA will continue to “Join Forces” in leading the way in caring for America’s heroes. Thank you for the opportunity to serve on your Board of Directors in several roles throughout the years, lastly as Vice President and Chairman of the 2013 meeting. I am honored to have been of service to you through the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs. I look forward to staying involved as a Nurse Emeritus member”.

January 2013 NOVA reminded members about the “Member-get-A- Member” Campaign- running 10/15/12 thru 5/15/13. Members can win prizes for recruiting new members.
- Recruit 5 new members and get a free 2014 NOVA membership
- Recruit 15 new members and get a free registration for the 2013 Annual Meeting, June 19-21, at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel, San Francisco, California
- Recruit 25 new members and get a free 2013 Annual Meeting registration and a complimentary 2-night stay at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel
- Recruit 50 new members and get a free 2013 Annual Meeting registration, a complimentary 2-night stay at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel, and an air fare voucher for up to $500.

February 1, 2013 NOVA calls for 2013 NOVA Award Nomination. Members are encouraged to nominate one or more colleagues meeting the criteria for recognition. The deadline for nominations is April 15, 2013. NOVA awards honor individuals or groups who have made significant contributions to the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs, the nursing profession, the health care of veterans, or in service to our country. Nomination letters must be no more than 3 pages. NOVA will present the awards at the 2013 Annual Meeting, at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel in San Francisco, California, June 19-21. The awards are:

Veterans Award: This award is presented to an individual veteran, group of veterans, or an organization in recognition of dedication to improving the healthcare of veterans through the demonstration of one or more of the following:
- Active participation with legislative issues through writing campaigns, speaking engagements, and/or publication of literature which positively influence change.
- Personal sacrifice through volunteerism with underserved groups of veterans.
- Active involvement with special interest groups who seek to improve the quality of health care for veterans. The nominee does not need to be a member of NOVA, but must be nominated by a NOVA member or chapter.

Professional Nurse Award for Clinical Excellence: This award is presented to a registered nurse who has made an outstanding contribution to the nursing care of veterans through excellence in clinical practice. Examples of each area which must be addressed:
- Serving as a role model or mentor for other VA nurses.
- Improving nursing care of the veteran through implementing best practices or evidence-based practice.
- Serving as an advocate for veterans’ healthcare by advancing patient care, legislative action, or participating in local/ VISN//national nursing activities. The nominee must be a NOVA member and be nominated by a NOVA member or chapter.

Professional Nurse Award for Leadership: This award is presented to a registered nurse who has made an outstanding contribution to nursing within the VA system through their leadership abilities. Examples of each area which must be addressed:
• Advocating or advancing the use of registered nurse within their medical center/VISN/system.
• Promoting advanced education and/or certification for VA nurses.
• Advancing evidence-based practice and/or nursing research with an emphasis on improving the nursing care to veterans. The nominee must be a NOVA member but does not have to be in a managerial position. (Must be nominated by a NOVA member or chapter).

Barbara Chambers Award: This award is presented to an individual NOVA member or NOVA chapter for outstanding contributions to NOVA through the following:
• Active leadership roles within NOVA at national or local level.
• Significant contributions which advance the mission/vision/strategic plan of NOVA.
The nominee must be a current or former member of NOVA and must be nominated by a NOVA member or chapter.

Silver Star Chapter Award: This award is presented to an outstanding local NOVA chapter. NOVA chapters are the backbone of the organization. Members meet, share ideas, learn from educational speakers, share nursing stories and innovative ideas, plan legislative activities and carry on the work of NOVA. This award recognizes “grassroots” efforts by chapters. The chapter needs to be recognized by the NOVA National Office as an active chapter. For this award, the chapter needs to fill out the application which is available on NOVA’s web site and send it to the National Office, 47595 Watkins Island Square, Sterling, VA 20165, by April 15, 2013.

February 4, 2013 David Knight, Chief Operating Officer, The College Network, has purchased NOVA Associate Membership; NOVA’s first Associate Member. The College Network offers online degrees and professional certificates, including degrees and certificates in nursing, from accredited partner universities.

February 6, 2013 NOVA’s Nurse Executive Annual Update was sent to VA Nurse Executives by NOVA president Joan Clifford.

The most current script for the new NOVA Membership DVD was sent to the board. The Production Line filmed (without sound) at the beginning of the February 14 Board Meeting and early February 15 before the Legislative Roundtable began, in addition to filming portions of the Roundtable itself.

February 8, 2013 ANA’s Center for Ethics and Human Rights began a review of the Code of Ethics for Nurses to determine the need for revision. As part of this process, they were seeking public comment via a survey through March 15, 2013. NOVA members were encouraged to participate in the survey.

February 11, 2013 the FY 2014 Independent Budget was made available to the board at www.independentbudget.org. The four co-authoring organizations, AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, thanked NOVA for endorsing The Independent Budget this year.

February 13, 2013 NOVA received a synopsis of ESCAPE FIRE, as well as a summary of the broadcast viewing parties, and more information on the film's critical response. The trailer can be viewed on website www.EscapeFireMovie.com. This award-winning documentary addresses key issues within American Healthcare, and follows several military story lines, among others, to demonstrate the contrasting forces at work in healthcare today. The producers have worked extensively with the VA. The Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation used ESCAPE FIRE as a launching vehicle for their 5-year strategic plan and screened a cut of the film at all 153 VA hospitals. They also plan on using the film as a key
component to the tools offered to VA hospitals. In March, ESCAPE FIRE will have its broadcast premiere on a major cable network. Producers worked with NSNA and NLN, as well as other nursing associations, to organize coordinated viewing parties and discussions with nurses around the broadcast of ESCAPE FIRE.

February 14, 2013 the NOVA Board met in Washington, DC in the Embassy Room at the Embassy Suites Hotel. A professional photographer provided by Dove Associates was set up to take board member photos. The NOVA strategic plan was updated. The following are highlights of the meeting:

• It was reported that former VA Secretary Anthony Principi will appear in NOVA’s new promotional DVD.
• The NOVA Strategic Plan was reviewed and updated.
• The Finance Committee was charged with developing an Investment Plan for NOVA’s reserve account.
• The Board approved the proposed 2013 Budget with one change which increased monies for the Scholarships Program.
• The Board approved establishing the Anthony Principi Scholarship and the Vernice Ferguson Memorial Scholarship.
• The Board established February 14, 2014, as the date for the next Annual Legislative Roundtable.
• The Board agreed to increase visits to Capitol Hill. The visits are planned for February 13, 2014.
• It was reported the Membership Development Committee will focus on developing additional member benefits.
• A new Officer/Director nomination application, criteria, timeline, and nominations process was approved.
• Staff was asked to investigate an “education grants” process in support of nursing scholarships.
• The Board approved establishing an LPN/LVN membership category; subsequent Bylaws amendments to be drafted and sent to the NOVA membership.
• The Board reiterated the importance of Emeritus Members and will seek their input regarding how NOVA can better engage them.
• The Board agreed NOVA should investigate creating electronic chapters; further discussion will be held during the June 19, 2013, Board Meeting.

February 15, 2013 the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs Annual Legislative Roundtable took place on Friday, at the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) in Washington, DC. NOVA’s 2013 Legislative Agenda was presented. As follows:

The Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) is the professional organization of the approximately 51,000 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 VHA.

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:

☐ Adequate funds to support veterans and family members, especially those returning from the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.
☐ Adequate budget for repairs of the aging infrastructure of the VHA buildings.
Recurring funding for special initiatives such as Patient Aligned Care Teams, Clinical Nurse Leader implementation, VA Nursing Academy Program, Informatics and Information Technology.

**VACO Organizational Realignment:** Monitor VACO Organizational Realignment and its impact on the role/inclusion of nursing in strategic decision making, operational efficiency, effectiveness, research and academic efforts.

**Support the Implementation of the Institute of Medicine Report:** “The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health”, the four key messages include:

1. Nurses should practice to the full extent of their education and training;
2. Nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training through an improved education system that promotes seamless academic progression;
3. Nurses should be full partners, with physicians and other health care professionals, in redesigning health care in the United States; and
4. Effective workforce planning and policy making require better data collection and an improved information infrastructure.

The eight recommendations include:

1. Remove scope-of-practice barriers;
2. Expand opportunities for nurses to lead and diffuse collaborative improvement efforts;
3. Implement nurse residency programs;
4. Increase the proportion of nurses with a baccalaureate degree to 80 percent by 2020;
5. Double the number of nurses with a doctorate degree by 2020;
6. Ensure that nurses engage in lifelong learning;
7. Prepare and enable nurses to lead change to advance health; and
8. Build an infrastructure for the collection and analysis of inter-professional health care workforce data.

**Retention and Recruitment:** In order for VA to become the employer of choice for healthcare professionals across the Nation, NOVA supports the following:

- **Human Resources 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 have 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 in this regard.
- **Examine and follow the ramifications of the Federal Pay Freeze and proposed retirement changes on the VHA workforce, especially nursing.**
- **Continued support for Office of Nursing Services Transition to Practice Program RN Residencies with funding for expanded efforts.**
- **Support the ongoing efforts of VHA to streamline the hiring and credentialing of Title 38 employees.**
- **Examine and follow the impact of travel monies on nursing staff satisfaction.**

**Information Technology:** NOVA supports 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 healthcare records across the system. NOVA supports the
following:

☐ Development and release of a VISTA patient care flow sheet to document care provided at the bedside. This is currently not an IT priority.

☐ Update the format of the computerized medical record to include easily accessible decision support functionality.

☐ Continue appropriate funding to support current system demand and updates for CPRS, BCMA imaging (VISTA clinical applications) and patient engagement in their plan of care.

☐ Allow for on call pay for IT which supports the entire VHA infrastructure of care.

**Healthy Work Environment:** Creation of a healthy work environment is critical to ensure patient safety, and enhance staff retention and recruitment. NOVA supports skilled and open communication, collaboration, staffing, meaningful recognition and authentic leadership.

**Staffing:** NOVA supports adequate staffing levels to ensure veterans are monitored and observed in a safe environment

The NOVA 2013 Legislative Roundtable Participants were: Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs Participants: Mary Ellen McCarthy attended for Kathryn Becker Van Haste, Senior Legislative Assistant, Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs. House Committee on Veterans Affairs Participants: Dolores Dunn, Staff Director, Subcommittee on Health, House Committee on Veterans Affairs Benjamin Falkowski, Legislative Assistant, Congresswoman Jackie Walorski (IN-02) Vivek Kembaian, Legislative Correspondent, Member of Congress Jordan Vivian, Legislative Assistant, Congressman Dan Benishek, MD (MI-01) Cathy Wibleno, Director, Subcommittee on Health, House Committee on Veterans Affairs. Department of Veteran Affairs Participants: James Harris, DSN, APRN-BC, MBA, CNL, FAAN Deputy Chief Nursing Officer, Office of Nursing Services; Irene Trowell-Harris, RN, EdD, Director, Center for Women Veterans, Office of the Secretary.

Veterans Service Organization Participants: American Legion Warren Goldstein, National Field Service Representative; Disabled American Veterans John Bradley Ill, Senior Advisor, Joy Ilem, Deputy National Legislative Director. Paralyzed Veterans of America, Alethea Predeoux, Associate Director, Health Analysis. Veterans of Foreign Wars Teresa Morris, Manager, Grassroots Advocacy, National Legislative Service. Vietnam Veterans of America Bernie Edelman, Deputy Director for Policy and Government Affairs. Professional Nursing Organizations Participants: American Academy of Nursing Cheryl Sullivan, Chief Executive Officer; American Association of Colleges of Nursing Lauren Inouye, BSN, RN, Government Affairs Manager; American Association of Nurse Anesthetists; Frank Purcell, Senior Director, Federal Government Affairs; American Hospital Association, Jo Ann Webb, Senior Director, Janice White, Intern; Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists David Polner, CRNA, President, Sherry Swearingen, President-Elect, Karen Peddicord, PhD, RNC, Chief Executive Officer; Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association Bill Applegate, Senior Vice President Emily Wilson, Government Affairs Specialist; National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women’s Health Lilly Pinto, Communications and Outreach Coordinator; National Association of Veterans Research and Education Foundation Thomas Stripling, Executive Director.

NOVA Legislative Committee Participants: Cecilia McVey, BSN, MHA, VA Boston Health Care System; Chair, NOVA Legislative Committee; Nancy Elliott, RN, Lebanon VA Medical Center; Betty Pettway, RN, BSN, CPHQ, VA North Texas Health Care System;
February 18, 2013 the board was informed that as discussed during the NOVA Board meeting, plans for the 2014 Annual Meeting for Wednesday, June 25, through Friday, June 27, in New Orleans at The Monte Leone Hotel, 214 Royal Street were confirmed. The Nursing Organizations Alliance announced the 2013 Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI) Scholarship winners.

February 26, 2013 NOVA announced the availability of the 2013 NOVA Scholarships for qualified VA Nurses. The following will be awarded, two $1500 NOVA Scholarships; one $3,000 Anthony Principi Scholarship; one $3000 Jesse Brown Memorial Scholarship and one $3,000 Vernice Ferguson Memorial Scholarship. The Anthony Principi Scholarship was added to the document. The Word Version of the scholarships application was updated with information from Scholarships Committee Chair; Nancy Claflin (added new NOVA logo, eliminated 2013 and added 2018 graduation years, etc.). Rather than ONS staff compiling all the details from the applications in order for the Scholarship Committee to review, NOVA will utilize Survey Monkey and Luba Litvinova will oversee the process. The deadline for applications will be April 30. Cara Goff offered to post the NOVA scholarship application link on the ONS webpage and we will provide her with the link, the new NOVA logo and the new text for the announcement.

March 3, 2013 NOVA members were sent information regarding ESCAPE FIRE: The Fight to Rescue American Healthcare, a Sundance-selected documentary film, to premiere on March 10 at 8 pm EST, and re-air on March 16 on CNN. Members were invited to set up viewing parties.

March 9, 2013 the Memorial Service to celebrate the life and leadership of Vernice Ferguson was held in New York. NOVA sent a donation to the Vernice D. Ferguson Memorial Scholarship Fund. NOVA notified members of the passing of Vernice Ferguson, RN, MA, FAAN, FRCN, one of the most highly respected leaders of the nursing community and one of NOVA’s strongest supporters. As VA’s Deputy Assistant Chief Medical Director for Nursing Programs (1980-1992), Ms. Ferguson gave the Keynote Address at the 2nd NOVA Annual Meeting, asking each participant to take back the message that all VA nurses must be part of the decision making process in the VA nursing service at each station. Prior to her position at the Department of Veterans Affairs, Ms. Ferguson served for seven years as Chief of the Nursing Department at the Clinical Center, at the National Institutes of Health. She was an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Nursing of the United Kingdom, the second American nurse so honored. Over the years, she received eight Honorary Doctorates and two Fellowships. In 2008, Ms. Ferguson was awarded the prestigious FREDDIE Lifetime Achievement Award, the first time in the award’s 34- year history that it was given to a nurse. VA’s Chief Nursing Officer,
Cathy Rick, once said “Vernice Ferguson is a transformational leader whose distinguished career has inspired a generation of professionals to pursue academic success. She shaped nursing practice in the largest healthcare delivery system in the world.” Her passing is a great loss to NOVA and the nursing Community.

March 11, 2013 the NOVA Nominating Committee called for election ballot applications for qualified members interested in being considered for a Director position on the NOVA Board.

March 26, 2013 the NOVA VISN and Chapter Contacts were informed that the Membership Development Committee has been redesigned and redirected in order to meet NOVA’s needs. The committee is a smaller committee composed of NOVA members who would be dedicated and willing to devote the time and effort to discuss, investigate, and help develop a proposal to the NOVA Board which would encompass NEW ways/programs to entice and keep members. The committee will continue to maintain a regular connection and communication with VISN & Chapter Contacts on a quarterly basis.

March 27, 2013 NOVA Members were informed about the White House Petition to Support APNs. The petition on the White House web-site supporting APN full scope of practice requires one hundred thousand signatures April 22, 2013. This can be done on a Facebook and / or twitter account. https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/petition/remove-barriers-prevent-advanced-practice-registered-nurses-practicing-their-full-scope/WJSdg1P3

April 1, 2013 NOVA called for poster presentations to be presented at the NOVA annual meeting, June 19-21, 2013 at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel-San Francisco, CA. Posters are to be submitted no later than April 15, 2013 and submitters will be notified by May 1, 2013 if poster is accepted.

April 2, 2013 the NOVA Membership Development Committee, NOVA VISN and Chapter Contacts call was held.

April 10, 2013 the NOVA Board received the February Board Minutes, the updated Strategic Plan, and the updated Action List for review.

ANSR Alliance, of which NOVA is a member, sent information related to the HRSA’s Title VIII programs, with an attached a copy of the report from HHS which includes more detail. In FY 2014, $251 million is included in the budget for the Title VIII programs.


April 18, 2013 NOVA Election Ballot Applications were received from: Sharon Johnson – for the position of Vice President; Thelma Roach-Serry – for the current position of Secretary (to be changed in June to Secretary-Treasurer); Kelly Skinner – for the position of Membership Secretary; Nancy Elliott – for the position of Director; Ruth Holmes – for the position of Director; Betty Pettway – for the position of Director.

April 27, 2013 a request was sent out by Nancy Claflin to the board requesting volunteers to review NOVA scholarships applications. This year there were 121 applications.

May 4, 2013 the Spring 2013 issue of NOVA News was sent to members electronically.

May 6, 2013 NOVA Members were sent NOVA's 2013 Election Ballot link on Survey Monkey. http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=t9m0q9keUF4PWcbFhShIuQ_3d_3d

May 7, 2013 NOVA Members were sent a Nurses Week message from NOVA President, Joan Clifford.

Happy Nurses Week!
begin Nurses Week, with the theme of “Delivering Quality and Innovation in Patient Care,” let
us all continue in the spirit of always looking for ways to make things better for our veterans and
our fellow nursing team members. Creativity flows through the veins of VA nurses, so give it all
you’ve got! Celebrate being a VA Nurse!!”

May 15, 2013 the Senate confirmed Marilyn Tavenner, RN, MHA, FACHE, as the
Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services by a vote of 91-7. Ms.
Tavenner is the first nurse to hold this position! The Nursing Community supported her
nomination through letters in January of last year and February of this year. It is the first time in
nine years that lawmakers have approved an administrator for that agency. Tavenner becomes
the first confirmed CMS administrator since Mark McClellan, who served from 2004 to 2005
when George W. Bush was president. She has been acting administrator since the end of 2011
when Donald M. Berwick stepped down because his recess appointment by President Barack
Obama was set to expire.

May 20, 2013 NOVA members were sent a message noting the proposed bylaw changes.
According to the current NOVA Bylaws, “These Bylaws may be amended at the Business
Meeting of the voting members provided that the amendment is submitted in writing to the
voting membership at least thirty (30) days prior to a Business Meeting and is approved by at
least two-thirds (2/3) of the voting members present.” The next Business Meeting of the NOVA
voting members will take place on Friday, June 21, during the NOVA Annual Meeting in San
Francisco. In accordance with the current Bylaws, the NOVA Bylaws changes were reviewed
and approved by the NOVA Board of Directors and are provided to members for information
and review prior to the vote at the June 21 Business Meeting in San Francisco.

June 11, 2013 NOVA Members were sent the NOVA’S 2012-2013 Annual Report &

June 16, 2013 the NOVA board was informed that The First Lady would not be attending
the NOVA National Meeting. The following is the letter received:

First Lady to the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs. We appreciate your thinking of us.
The First Lady values each and every invitation, but due to time constraints, she must decline the
majority she receives. We have reviewed your invitation and, unfortunately, the First Lady will
be unable to attend. The First Lady sends her best wishes and appreciation for your interest, and
please keep us in mind for future events.” Sincerely,
Michelle Obama

June 18, 2013 NOVA announced the 2013 NOVA Membership Campaign Results. The
Member-Get-A-Member Campaign ran from October 1, 2012 - May 15, 2013 and resulted in
recruiting over 200 new members. The campaign winners are:

2013 complimentary Annual Meeting registration for recruiting 15 new members was
awarded to: Nancy Elliott, Chapter #346, Lebanon VA Medical Center
#158, Bay Pines VA Health Care System Melissa Nixon, Chapter #260, St. Louis VA Medical
Center
Patricia Watson, Chapter #224, Edith Nourse Rogers VA Medical Center

2014 complimentary NOVA membership for recruiting at least five new members is
awarded to: Nancy Claflin, Chapter #110, Phoenix VA Health Care System
Chapter #384, VA North Texas Health Care System
Lawrence Lemos, Chapter #126, VA Long Beach Health Care System
Chapter #384, VA North Texas Health Care System Beverly Ross, Chapter #420, Hunter Holmes
McGuire VA Medical Center Irene Silvernail, Chapter #128, VA Northern California Health

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Care System Kelly Skinner, Chapter #226, VA Boston Health Care System.

June 19, 2013 the NOVA Board met from 3:00pm to 6:00pm on Wednesday, June 19, in the Carmel Room at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel in San Francisco. The NOVA strategic plan was reviewed and updated. The following are actions from the meeting:

• Reviewed and updated NOVA’s Strategic Plan and action items
• Approved the March 31, 2013 Financial Statement.

• Approved the development of a series of educational webinars to be offered to NOVA members in 2014 on a complimentary basis as part of their membership dues.
• Approved the establishment of a NOVA Education Committee which would assist in the development of the 2014 webinar series.
• Reviewed and approved NOVA’s new membership video and marketing efforts.
• Approved establishing an on-line forum for NOVA Chapters.
• Approved moving the editing and production of NOVA News from the Board to the National Office staff.

• Approved conducting a Regional Meeting in Pennsylvania in 2014.
• Supported the suggestion that Nurse Emeritus goals, projects and activities be reviewed and enhanced.
• Approved new Committee Chairs for 2013-2014.

2013 NOVA annual meeting “VA Nurses: Joining Forces with the Community in Caring for America’s Heroes” June 19-21, 2013 at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel- San Francisco, California. The conference room was filled, with over 200 people in attendance. NOVA members made the 2013 Annual Meeting one of the most successful programs in years! Ms. Obama was unable to attend as she was with the President in Ireland at the time of the conference. The program attendees participated in sessions focused around the theme of “Joining Forces”. For information on Mrs. Obama’s and Dr. Jill Biden’s initiative regarding Joining Forces, go to: www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces. The focus of Joining Forces is that all nurses in the country need to know how to provide care to Veterans. There is no one better than a VA nurse, to share the knowledge and experience with those in nursing school or working outside the VA system. It is this knowledge and expertise that makes VA nursing unique. It was the first nursing meeting of its kind where NOVA brought together nursing scholars, renowned professional colleagues, Department of Veterans Affairs, leaders and Veterans from across the country to promote this national initiative.

Mary C. Seaman, MSN, RN, NEA-BC was chair of the Program Committee. Day one of the program began with a warm welcome to San Francisco by Marjorie Carlton, RN San Francisco VA Medical Center Associate Chief of Staff, Patient Care Services and Gloria Martinez, MS, RN, NEA-BC, VHA-CM Chief, Nursing Services VA Palo Alto Health Care System. Presentation of colors, the national anthem, followed by a moment of silence for lost friends, preceded the opening remarks by Joan Clifford, MSM, RN, FACHE, President, Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs; and then remarks by program chair Mary Seaman, MS, RN, NEA-BC. In the absence of First Lady Michelle Obama, Barbara Cohoon, PhD, RN, Deputy Director, Government Relations, National Military Family Association (NMFA) brought the keynote address, followed by Roxane Rusch, RN, BSN, MPA, Department of Veterans Affairs Acting Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Health for Quality, Safety and Value presented, “VHA’s Integration of Quality, Safety & Value, In Caring for America’s Heroes”. James L. Harris, DSN, APRN-BC, MBA, CNL, FAAN, Deputy Chief Nursing Officer, Office of Nursing
Services presented, “ONS Initiatives Tied to Joining Forces”. Karen H. Seal, MD, MPH, Associate Professor-Departments of Medicine and Psychiatry University of California, San Francisco and Director, Integrated Care Clinic-San Francisco VA Medical Center presented, “Post Deployment Care”. J. Wesson Ashford Jr., MD, PhD, Director, War Related Illness and Injury Study Center, VA Palo Alto Health Care System and Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences Stanford University presented “War Related Illness & Injury Care”. Concurrent sessions included:

A. “PTSD Care”, presented by a representative from the National Center for PTSD Dissemination and Training Division, VA Palo Alto Health Care System

B. “Polytrauma Care”, presented by Marti Veneman, BSN, RN, CRRN, NE-BC, Nurse Manager, Polytrauma and PTRP, VA Palo Alto Health Care System; Lucille Raia, DNP, RN-BC, NEA-BC, CBIST, Associate Chief, Nursing Education-Director, Nursing Academy, James A. Haley VA Medical Center and Laureen G. Doloresco, MN, RN, NEA-BC, Associate Director, Patient Care/Nursing Services, James A. Haley VA Medical Center

C. “Military Sexual Trauma Care”, presented by Beverly E. Ross, PMHCNS, BC, Women Veterans Program Manager, Psychiatric Clinical Nurse Specialist, Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center.

Day two of the program began with a continental breakfast, followed by “How VA Facilities Are Connecting with Educational Institutions”, that included speakers:

Judy A. Beal, DNSc, RN, FAAN, Dean, School of Nursing & Health Sciences, Simmons College, Boston, Massachusetts; Afaf Meleis, PhD, DrPS (hon), FAAN, Margaret Bond Simon Dean of Nursing, Professor of Nursing and Sociology, University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing; Dianne Morison-Beedy, PhD, RN, WHNP-BC, FNAP, FAANP, FAAN, Senior Associate Vice President, USF Health, Dean, College of Nursing, University of South Florida; David Vlahov, RN, PhD, FAAN, Dean and Professor of Nursing Education, University of California, San Francisco, School of Nursing.

The poster presentations took place in the hotel lobby mezzanine area from 11:30am to 12:45pm, followed by the awards luncheon 12:45-2:15pm. The Annual Business meeting followed with NOVA President, Joan Clifford, moderating. Awards were presented, the bylaw changes were discussed resulting in the bylaws allowing LPN/LVN membership in NOVA was tabled for a later date. New officers and board members were instated and the anvil was passed to Larry Lemos as the new president of NOVA. Dessert was served with time to visit and speak with the various exhibitors. The next session began at 3:30pm with “Caring for The Entire Veteran Family”, presented by Carla Nye, DNP, ARNP, CPNP-BC, CNE, VANA Nursing Faculty, Assistant Professor, University of South Florida Health. The program ended with Norman Lloyd, a former CBS news cameraman showcasing his moving film of the Vietnam War. “Shakey’s Hill” portrays the realities and impact war continues to have on all Veterans and their families regardless of the time frame of service. This was followed by a wrap up and evaluations and an invitation to come to the 2014 NOVA Meeting in New Orleans.

During the NOVA annual meeting the following award recipients were announced:

NOVA Professional Nurse Award for Leadership: Judee L. Gozzard, MSN, RN, BC, CSPHP Bay Pines VA Health Care System

Barbara Chambers Award: Mary Seaman, MSN, RN, NEA-BC

Veterans Award: Kathleen A. Hayes, MS, RNC, CHPN, Dayton VA Medical Center
NOVA Professional Nurse Award for Clinical Excellence: Effie Saly, DNP, MS, RN, RPT, VA Boston Health Care System

July 10, 2013 NOVA members received information from the American Nurses Association: concerning “The Harvard School of Public Health and Brigham and Women's Hospital are excited to announce that the Nurses' Health Study is growing. Previous cohorts taught us much of what we currently know about how diet and lifestyle can affect women's risk of developing cancer and other serious health conditions. The goal is to enroll 100,000 female nurses into a new web-based study for female nurses between the ages of 20 and 46 years old.

The NOVA Board received the Annual Meeting and Poster Session Evaluation Tabulations. The results were very positive.

July 14, 2013 the NOVA Board was notified of the 2013 Scholarship results from Nancy Claflin with the suggestion to increase the budget due to a tie in the point totals for two recipients.

July 24, 2013 the NOVA Board is informed that Christine Engstrom has been named Interim Deputy Chief Nursing Officer effective August 1, 2013 and until the CNO position is posted, searched and a new CNO is in place.

July 29, 2013 the board officially increased the scholarship budget by a vote of 8 to 2; the NOVA Board voted in favor of increasing this year’s budget for scholarships from $12,000 to $13,500. Therefore, the two individuals who were tied may both receive $1,500.

August 8, 2013 a call for the 2014 annual meeting program committee was sent out to Board members. At the June Board meeting Joan Clifford volunteered to be the Chair of the 2014 Annual Meeting Program Committee, but more members are needed to complete the committee.

August 12, 2013 NOVA Board Members were sent minutes of the June Board Meeting, the Action List resulting from discussions at the June Board Meeting, the Strategic Plan as updated by Nancy Claflin, and the revised NOVA Bylaws per votes taken at the June Annual Business Meeting.

August 18, 2013 NOVA announced its new membership video. The video is intended for members and others to learn more about NOVA, its achievements and importance within the Nursing Community. The video is available on the NOVA website- WWW.VANURSE.ORG VIDEO GALLERY

August 21, 2013 the Summer issue of NOVA News was sent to members electronically.

August 27, 2013 NOVA Members were informed of Veteran Affairs Chief Nursing Officer, Cathy Rick, currently on detail to the Department of Health and Human Services, is planning to retire at the end of January 2014. and her "Town Hall" sessions at our Annual Meetings have always been one of the highlights of NOVA programs.

September 19, 2013 the NOVA Board was informed the site for the 2015 Annual Meeting. The top choice is the Liaison Capitol Hill Hotel at 415 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. – just four blocks from the Capitol and four blocks from Union Station. It is a
“boutique” hotel and NOVA would be “the” group in-house and would occupy all their meeting space. The sleeping room rate is equivalent to the 2015 government lodging per diem.

September 23, 2013 the ANA announced the selection for the Code of Ethics for Nurses Revision Panel Steering Committee and Advisory Committee members. NOVA Member and Board of Directors member, Nancy Elliott BSN, RN-BC is on the panel.

September 30, 2013 Christine Murphy, Senior Public Policy Specialist National League for Nursing, Co-Chair ANSR Alliance announced government shutdown. Over the weekend the House passed a CR with a provision that would delay President Obama’s health-care law by one year and repeal a tax on medical devices. The tax would help pay for the ACA. The Senate voted 54 to 46 to reject the latest House proposal. Obama said he is not resigned to a shutdown and plans to continue talking to congressional leaders”.

October 4, 2013 after discussion with the Susan Dove and the regional committee, the NOVA Regional Meeting planned for April 2014 was put on hold. It may be reconsidered for October 2014.

October 8, 2013 NOVA announces the new "Member-Get-A-Member" Campaign for October 15, 2013 - May 15, 2014 with the opportunity to win exciting prizes.

October 11, 2013 NOVA sent members information on the 2015 Independent Budget with an opportunity to add suggestions or comments to the nursing portion.

November 6, 2013 the NOVA Board meeting scheduled for Wednesday, November 6, from 3:00pm to 5:00pm Eastern Standard Time was postponed until December 5, 2013, due to unanticipated work schedule issues.

November 7, 2013 the American Nurse, ANA's member newspaper requested an article from NOVA for the Nov/Dec issue. The article VA Nurses: Honoring and Caring for America’s Heroes! Written by Joan Clifford, MSM, RN, FACHE, NOVA Immediate Past President and Nancy Claflin, PhD, RN, CCRN, CPHQ, FNAHQ, NOVA Past President was submitted.

November 13, 2013 NOVA Board Members were informed that Scholarship applications for the 2014 Nurse in Washington Internship (NIWI) program are now being accepted. Applications are due Friday, January 10, 2014. Several scholarships are being offered this year including three full scholarships, one registration scholarship, and one student registration scholarship.

November 14, 2013 NOVA members were sent the article for The American Nurse, ANA’s magazine, regarding the impact nurses have on the care and well-being of veterans and their families. The article was written by NOVA Past Presidents Joan Clifford and Nancy Claflin. http://www.theamericannurse.org/index.php/2013/11/08/va-nurses-honoring-and-caring-for-americas-heroes/.

November 21, 2013 the NOVA Board and Legislative committee was sent a copy of the email regarding the NOVA 2014 Legislative Roundtable. It was also sent to all those who have participated in the Roundtable over the past number of years. The Roundtable is scheduled for Friday, February 14, 2014, 9:00 am – 12:00 noon, at the Disabled American Veterans offices 807 Maine Avenue, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20024.

NOVA Members were sent the Fall 2013 issue of NOVA News Electronically.

December 15, 2013 the NOVA Board met via conference call from 3-5pm Eastern Standard Time. Nancy Claflin, Chair of the Education and Scholarships Committees, and Mary Seaman, Chair of the Nurse Emeritus Group, were invited to be on the call to update specific agenda items. The NOVA strategic plan was reviewed and updated.
December 16, 2013 NOVA sent a message to members reminding them to provide NOVA with a current personal email address.

December 18, 2013 NOVA Members were provided information from the American Nurses Association related to an update on the Healthy Nurse TM/Pfizer Health Risk Appraisal and an opportunity for a Complimentary Healthy Nurse TM and Weight Watchers Webinar – January 9, 2014 - Earn 1 CE. The link is HRA is www.anahra.org

December 31, 2013 the board was sent the schedule for the February Board Meeting and associated activities.

The officers for 2013-2014 were:
President: Larry Lemos (Long Beach HCS)
Vice President: Sharon Johnson (Maryland HCS)
Secretary/Treasurer: Thelma Roach-Serry (Richmond VAMC)
Membership Secretary: Kelly Skinner (Boston HCS)
Directors: Nancy Elliott (Lebanon VAMC)
Ruth Holmes (OMI)
Janet Minard (Lebanon VAMC)
Melissa Nixon (St. Louis VAMC)
Betty Pettaway (Dallas HCS)
Taryn-Janae Wilcox-Olson (Black Hills HCS)
Immediate Past President: Joan Clifford (Boston HCS)
Executive Director: Susan Dove
Director of Membership: Luba Litvinova
Manager Education: Linda Howe

2014

NOVA sent a reminder about the “Member-Get-a-Member Campaign” from October 14, 2013 through May 15, 2014, with the opportunity to win exciting prizes.

February 13, 2014 The NOVA Board of Directors met at the Embassy Suites in Washington DC for discussion and to update the strategic plan. The following board actions took place:

- Reviewed and updated NOVA’s strategic plan
- Approved the December 31, 2013 financial statement
- Approved the proposed 2014 NOVA budget
- Approved the $10 membership dues increase. NOVA – Active membership is now $115 annually or $4.42 per pay period
- Approved the 2014 NOVA history document
- Approved establishment of a Bylaws Task Force to review current bylaws and recommend bylaws updates
- Approved new NOVA scholarship requirements
  1) Applicant must be a current NOVA member for at least two years
  2) Applicant must be a VA employee, full-time or part-time
  3) Applicant must be a U. S. citizen
  4) Applicant must be enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a baccalaureate, masters, post-masters, or doctoral program
  5) Applicant must show satisfactory or higher rating on proficiency or performance evaluation
Approved further development of Nurse Emeritus projects and activities
Approved establishment of a Task Force to work on development of a white paper regarding current problems with DFAs regulations

February 14, 2014 The NOVA Board and Legislative Committee members hosted the 20th Annual Legislative Round Table at the DAV National Headquarters in Washington, DC. NOVA provides a leadership role in this event, advocating for VA nurses and Veterans, and sharing NOVA’s legislative agenda. Invitees included Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committee members and their staff, representatives from Veterans Service Organizations, and members of other nursing and professional organizations. NOVA’s legislative agenda was presented by Sharon Johnson, the Legislative Committee Co-Chair, and included the following:

The Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) is the professional organization of the approximately 51,000 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 VHA. This legislative agenda was developed to align with the following VHA goals:

Goal One: Provide veterans with personalized, proactive, patient-driven health care.
Goal Two: Achieve measurable improvements in health outcomes.
Goal Three: Align resources to deliver sustained value to veterans.

Budget: The primary goal of VA nurses is to have adequate resources to provide high quality patient care and ensure the VA continues to:

1. Avoid sequestration
2. Have adequate funds to support veterans and family members, especially those returning from war/active duty
3. Have an adequate budget for repairs of the aging infrastructure of VHA buildings
4. Have recurring funding for special initiatives such as Patient Aligned Care Teams, VA Nursing Academy Program, Informatics and Information Technology, and Nursing Scholarship programs.
5. Have sufficient funds for cash awards.

VACO Organizational Realignment: Monitor VACO organizational realignment and its impact on the role/inclusion of nursing in strategic decision making, operational efficiency, effectiveness, research, and academic efforts. The reorganization of the Office of Information and Technology (OI&T) to a separate entity has caused unanticipated challenges.

DFAS/VTAS: Implementation of this poorly tested system should be halted until it is modified to fit medical center needs and functionality. VA should provide a mechanism to disburse convenience checks or cash to affected employees in current pay periods as a VATAS contingency measure.

Retention and Recruitment: In order for the VA to become the employer of choice for health care professionals across the nation, NOVA supports the following:

1. Continued support for the hire of the best qualified candidates with the most relevant current experience.
2. Our veterans deserve the finest care from the best and brightest professionals.
3. Human Resources staff as well as Nurse Recruiters must receive adequate training and support.
4. We appreciate VA’s efforts to continue to enhance and support labor/employee relations. With increased retirement and turnover in Nurse Recruiter positions, there is
significant need for this support.

5. Decrease nurse hiring freezes and intended lags. Inadequate budgets can result in hiring slowdowns and freezes which create a negative impact of long duration on recruitment and retention and quality of care.

6. Programs to help decrease delays in hiring licensed staff. Continue to support the ongoing efforts of VHA to streamline the hiring and credentialing of Title 38 employees.

7. Review and enhance Nurse Pay – The years of federal pay freezes have impacted nurse salaries which have dropped below community standards. This has affected recruitment and retention of experienced staff.

8. Remove the cap from nurse pay scales. With the ongoing retirement of Nurse Executives and senior nurse staff, the pay cap creates a disincentive for current employees to assume leadership positions and discourages private sector candidates. This has led to long-standing vacancies in vital positions.

9. Continued support for the Office of Nursing Services Transition to Practice Program RN Residencies with funding for expanded efforts.

10. Examine and follow the impact of reduced travel monies on nursing staff satisfaction.

Information Technology: NOVA supports improvements 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 healthcare records across the system.

1. Update the format of the computerized medical record to include easily accessible decision support functionality.

2. Continue appropriate funding to support current system demand and updates for CPRS, BCMA, Imaging (VistA Clinical Applications), and patient engagement in the plan of care.

3. Allow for on call pay for IT which supports the entire VHA infrastructure of care.

4. NUMI/BMS – Continue appropriate funds for current system demands.

5. Funding for IT centralized to a separate non-VHA appropriation prior to the IT reorganization, and IT reorganization moved IT staff out of VHA to a centrally managed organizational structure outside of the three administrations. Both of these changes have removed VHA from decision making over the assignment of IT resources and manpower. Instead, although VHA has input at the VACO level over priorities of resource assignment to VHA projects, at the field level only sustainment of existing contracts and projects is currently supported. This results in no funding for new equipment or new projects, or for expansion of existing projects (unless they are associated with activations). For example, no funding for new IT equipment is available, even though VHA continues to hire additional staff. The realignment of IT staff outside of VHA inadvertently removed IT staff from being eligible for on call pay (as that was only available via Title 38 to VHA as an entity). Therefore, IT can no longer provide paid on call to staff to cover emergencies after hours, and instead, VHA has to rely on an uncertain voluntary call back system when there are emergencies with IT systems. Recent centralization of technical specialties in IT from the facility level to the regional level has resulted in a significant net loss of IT manpower at the facility level without corresponding coverage of the range of duties that had been performed by the facility staff. This drain in local staffing has been exacerbated by hiring freezes nationwide that has stopped further realignment of technical specialty staff to the regional level, leaving inadequate staffing at both the facility level and the regional service level.
Health Work Environment: Creation of a healthy work environment is critical to ensure patient safety and enhance staff retention and recruitment. NOVA supports skilled and open communication, collaboration, staffing, meaningful recognition, and authentic leadership.

Staffing: NOVA supports adequate staffing levels to ensure veterans are monitored and observed in a safe environment. Staffing methodology should be the accepted mechanism for all facilities that VACO supports to determine nurse patient staffing.

The agenda was also shared with the NOVA membership via NOVA News.

February 25, 2014 NOVA announced the 2014 Education Webinars. NOVA will be launching a series of educational webinars this year which will be free to NOVA members and which will offer CEUs.

Webinar I: Wednesday, March 12, 3-4pm ET; Providing Meaningful Input for Your Proficiency for Nurse I Level 3 and Nurse II; Presenter Connie Perry-Simon RN MSN BC NOVA Nurse Emeritus

Objectives: After completion of the program, the participants will be able to compare and contrast the critical distinctions in levels of practice for Nurse I and Nurse II; state two examples of the scope of practice for Nurse I Level 3 and Nurse II; select one of the elements in the dimensions of nursing practice and develop one specific example of how the dimension is met at the next grade.

Webinar II: Friday, May 16, 3-4pm ET; Reviewing Your Meaningful Input for Your Proficiency for Nurse I Level 3 and Nurse II; Presenters Nancy Claflin RN PhD CCRN CPHQ FNAHQ Phoenix VA Healthcare System and Leora Jacober MSN RN Associate Chief Nursing Service Phoenix VA Healthcare System.

Objective: After completion of the program, the participant will be able to identify examples of meaningful input for his/her personal evaluation. Prior to the presentation, written examples will be reviewed for a “live” discussion of strengths and weaknesses.

Webinar III: Wednesday, July 16, 3-4pm ET; Providing Meaningful Input for Your Proficiency for Nurse III; Presenter Connie Perry-Simon RN MSN BC NOVA Nurse Emeritus.

Objectives: After completion of the program, participants will be able to compare and contrast the critical distinctions in levels of practice for Nurse III, state two examples of the scope of practice for Nurse III, select one of the dimensions of nursing practice and develop one specific example of how the dimension is met at the next grade.

Webinar IV: Friday, September 19, 3-4pm ET; Reviewing Your Meaningful Input for Your Proficiency for Nurse III; Presenters Nancy Claflin RN PhD CCRN CPHQ FNAHQ Phoenix VA Healthcare System and Leora Jacober MSN RN Associate Chief Nursing Service Phoenix VA Healthcare System.

Objective: After completion of the program, the participant will be able to identify examples of meaningful input for his/her personal evaluation. Prior to the presentation, written examples will be reviewed for a “live” discussion of strengths and weaknesses.

Each webinar stands alone. You don’t need to take one to move to the next session. Each participant receives one CEU per 60 minute class session.

NOVA announced new programs and benefits for NOVA members. Starting in 2014, only NOVA members will be allowed to apply and be considered for scholarship monies totaling $15,000. NOVA has formed a partnership with The College Network to provide NOVA members with tuition discounts for higher education as well as discounts on preparatory materials.

March 13, 2014 NOVA members received information from the VA regarding VA
nurses attending the NOVA Annual Meeting. A direct link for pre-registration for External Nursing Conferences for the month of June 2014 was provided. Nurses had to click on the link to the ACES website and pre-register. ACES registration link: https://conferences.lrn.va.gov/vacr/default.asp?CampID=732 ACES registration closes March 31, 2014.

March 18, 2014 NOVA announced that the Nominating Committee is now accepting applications from members interested in being considered for a director position on the NOVA board. The application was attached. Deadline for submission of election ballot applications is April 15.

March 27, 2014 NOVA announces the application period for 2014 NOVA scholarships. Scholarships will be awarded to nurses employed within the VA who are enrolled in BSN, Masters, Post-Masters, or Doctoral programs. Only applications submitted online will be accepted. The application is online at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2014NOVAScholarshipApplication The deadline for application submission is April 15, 2014.

May 2, 2014 NOVA requested articles and photos for NOVA news. The deadline for submission is June 1, 2014. Send your articles and photos via email to nova@vanurse.org or luba@vanurse.org

May 5, 2014 Happy Nurses Week to all VA Nurses! A message from the NOVA President, Larry Lemos, was sent to NOVA Nurses: “As we celebrate Nurses Week, let us all continue in the spirit of always looking for ways to make things better for our nation’s heroes and fellow nursing team members. Creativity flows through the veins of VA nurses, so give it all you’ve got!” Celebrate being a VA Nurse!!

May 15, 2014 NOVA President Larry Lemos was interviewed recently by Johnson & Johnson (The Campaign for Nursing’s Future) for an article on Nursing Careers, titled “Helping Defend the Nation: The Dual Role of Military Nurses.” The entire article was available on http://www.discovernursing.com/nursing-notes/may-2014-helping-defend-nation-dual-role-military-nurses#.U3QLhV6Cj0A

June 25, 2014 The NOVA board meeting was held at the Hotel Monteleone, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Approved investing a portion of NOVA’s reserves in short-term CDs/identified other revenue generating opportunities with the board. Evaluated need to increase membership dues and recommended an increase to $125 in 2015.

Agreed to investigate companies to conduct an organizational needs assessment.

Agreed to a strategic planning and marketing discussion in concert with the February 2015 board meeting.

Approved the February 2014 board minutes.

Reviewed and updated NOVA’s current strategic plan.

Reviewed and approved NOVA’s March 31 financial statement.

Approved recommended changes to NOVA’s bylaws; providing those changes to members for review prior to interactive conference calls and electronic vote.

Approved making NOVA webinars available to members in “Members Only” section of website.

Approved allowing non-members the opportunity to participate in 2015 webinars at a fee.

Approved partnering with Capella University to provide NOVA members with a 10% discount on tuition fees.
June 26 – 27, 2015 NOVA’s 34th Annual Meeting at the Hotel Monteleone in New Orleans, Louisiana. The theme of the meeting was “Serving up Quality, Safety, and Value.” The keynote speaker was Eric Arauz, MLER, who shared his story of how he overcame childhood trauma, addiction, and mental illness. Eric shared how a VA nurse helped him to feel human again while he was a patient on an acute psychiatric unit. It was the simple things she did to make his experience and memories of her unforgettable.

Other session topics included: The Affordable Care Act’s (ACA) Impact on the VHA by Duane Flemming, PMP; Health Consequences of Military Deployments, Conflicts, and War by Victoria J. Davey, PhD, MPH, RN; Women’s Health Issues by Patricia Hayes, PhD; Palliative Care and Aging Veterans by Maura Farrell Miller, PhD, ACHPN, GNP, PMHCNS, BC; VA Nursing Academy Partnerships by Kimberly Froelich, PhD, RN, ARNP, NE-BC, VHA-CM, and Cynthia S. Selleck, PHD, RN, FNP; Community Resources for Veterans and Resources for Returning Combat Troops by Andrew Hendrickson, RN. Marine Veteran Kelley Monroe closed the opening day and challenged us to “Wake the Warrior Within” by using a Power Action Plan to empower ourselves so that we can be everyday heroes. Presentations the second day included The Role of the Office of the Medical Inspector in Ensuring Quality, Safety, and Value in VHA by Ruth A. Holmes, BSN, MSA; VA Nurses: Serving Up Quality, Safety, and Value by Gloria A. Williams, RN, BSH, MHSA; Veterans Information Seminar by Ms. Love, DAV staff; Retired VHA Chief Nurse Cathy Rick, RN, NEA0BC, FAAN, FACHE, Senior Advisor Jonas Center for Nursing and Veteran Healthcare; spoke about nursing’s impact on the continuum of care.

The Awards Luncheon and Annual Business Meeting included a special donation from a Veteran’s family coordinated by Patricia Watson to the World War II Museum in New Orleans accepted by Toni Kizer, as well as a presentation of awards, election results, and review of our financial position as an organization. The NOVA Professional Nurse Award for Leadership was presented to Sharon Valente, PhD, APRN, BC, VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System. The NOVA Professional Nurse Award for Clinical Excellence was presented to Keesha Davis, MSN, MPA, NE-BC from the Southern Nevada Healthcare System. The Veterans’ Award was presented to Al J. Ciplickas, Peter D. Mitchell, and Conrad D. Osby from the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System.

July 1, 2014 The Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs has partnered with Capella University, an accredited online university, to provide NOVA members access to powerful education benefits. NOVA members are eligible for a 10% tuition discount, opportunities for exclusive scholarships that will save NOVA members thousands of dollars on their degrees. Capella also has nursing and health care webinars and professional development webinars, with some qualifying for free contact hours. For more information, visit www.capella.edu/vanurse

July 3, 2014 Donna Gage was appointed as the Chief Nursing Officer. Dr. Gage supports shared governance structure that is in place to allow local leaders to be involved in shaping VA Nursing. Dr. Gage has a plethora of experience in establishing shared governance with organizations, and leading a medical center to Magnet status.

July 29, 2014 Robert “Bob” McDonald is named VA Secretary.

July 30, 2014 NOVA’s 35th Anniversary Planning Committee held its first meeting to discuss this monumental meeting to be held June 10-12, 2015 at the Liaison Capitol Hill Hotel, Washington, DC.

August 7, 2014 The “Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act” (HR 3230) to strengthen Veterans’ access to care, advance Veterans’ healthcare workforce development, and promote Veterans Affairs agency management improvements signed by President Barack
Obama. This bill was highly supported by Advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs). [https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/hr3204#summary]

September 8, 2014 NOVA Executive Board and Executive Director Susan Dove met with Dr. Gage and Office of Nursing Service (ONS) staff. After the meeting with Dr. Gage, she and other ONS staff attended events hosted by The Nursing Community celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Nursing Workforce Development Programs. There was a strong presence at the celebration for Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act which provides several scholarship and grant options for nurses to advance their education. They also had the opportunity to attend a Congressional briefing entitled “Supporting the Health of America: Fifty Years of Bolstering the Nursing Workforce.” To end the day there was a reception honoring America’s nursing workforce. Staff from approximately 50 offices of both the House and Senate attended the events which provided NOVA leaders the opportunity to discuss NOVA’s current legislative agenda.

October 1, 2014 Teresa Morris joined Dove Associates as a part time employee who will serve as Manager, Advocacy & Government Relations for NOVA and other clients of Dove Associates. Ms. Morris has experience discussing a variety of topics with members of Congress (taxes, healthcare, and environmental issues). She also has extensive knowledge of VA healthcare and benefits policies. Ms. Morris served on the NOVA Foundation board for three years and was instrumental in helping the Foundation raise monies for nurse scholarships.

October 1, 2014 NOVA President Larry Lemos was elected to the 2015 – 2017 Coordinating Team for the Nursing Organization Alliance (NOA). The NOA is a coalition of 61 nursing organizations united to create a strong voice for nursing.

October 1, 2014 Cathy Rick with the Jonas Foundation provided NOVA with two Jonas Foundation Scholars, Shanina Knighton and Natalie Meyers, who are both nursing PhD students. They will be assisting with the implementation of a mentoring program for NOVA. Shanina Knighton has worked at the Cleveland VA since 2008 in the surgical unit. Natalie Meyers has been with VA since 2012 and is a CRNA at the West Los Angeles VA. They will be invited to present a brief overview of the mentoring program at the NOVA Annual Meeting in June. The two Jonas Fellows assisted with the development of a needs assessment to go out to NOVA members in January 7, 2015 to gather information for the mentoring program and to support provision of CEUs according to the American Nurses Credentialing Center requirements. In addition to educational topics, the needs assessment will include preferred dates and times for the webinars, and needs for mentoring.

November 12, 2014 NOVA’s “Members Only” section of the website opened two online discussion forums. If you’d like to start a NOVA chapter in your facility, have questions about chapter membership recruitment and retention, or perhaps would like to share chapter activities and ideas, you may post your questions and comments in the Online Chapter Forum.

The finance committee meeting identified investment opportunities and other revenue generating opportunities with the board. They evaluated the need to increase membership dues and recommended an increase.

November 13, 2014 The NOVA Board of Directors met via conference call. Highlights of the meeting included:

Verbiage will be developed regarding ethical nursing practice and added to the strategic plan.

NOVA’s policies and procedures booklet will be reviewed, updated, and presented to the board for approval.
NOVA staff will secure three proposals regarding the updating of NOVA’s strategic planning/marketing for presentation to the board at their next meeting. Work will continue in seeking collaboration with other organizations in offering certification discounts for NOVA members. NOVA has completed and filed its application with the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) to become an accredited CE provider. The Education Committee will conduct a needs assessment survey of the membership. The Nurse Emeritus group has established a new scholarship to be funded by the group. NOVA is working with two Jonas Center Scholars to develop a mentoring program. The criteria for poster presentations at the Annual Meeting have been enhanced.

December 17, 2014 The General Accounting Office (GAO) requested to talk with NOVA leaders regarding VA nurse recruitment and retention. NOVA President Larry Lemos, NOVA President Elect Sharon Johnson, and NOVA Past President Joan Clifford participated in a discussion with the GAO on December 22, 2014.

The officers for 2014-2015 were:

President: Larry Lemos (Long Beach HCS)
President-Elect: Sharon Johnson (Maryland HCS)
Secretary/Treasurer: Thelma Roach-Serry (Richmond VAMC)
Membership Secretary: Kelly Skinner (Boston HCS)
Directors: Carmen Concepcion (Boston HCS)
Nancy Elliott (Lebanon VAMC)
Holly Francis (Milwaukee VAMC)
Ruth Holmes (OMI)
Betty Pettaway (Dallas HCS)
Taryn-Janae Wilcox-Olson (Black Hills HCS)

Immediate Past President: Joan Clifford (Boston HCS)
Executive Director: Susan Dove
Director of Membership: Luba Litvinova
Manager, Education: Linda Howe