ARN's Health Policy and Legislative Agenda for the 112th Congress (1st Session)

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This year the ever-complicated budget and appropriations process has become even more complex. With political tensions stressed to the extreme, the American people are looking to their elected officials to make tough decisions regarding federal spending cuts to help control the country's growing debt. Below, we provide a brief overview of the budget and appropriations process and an update on where things stand (as this article's went to press). We will also introduce ARN's health policy agenda for the coming year.

With so much uncertainty in this year's political process, one thing is certain: ARN needs your voice to reach our legislative and health policy agenda goals.

Budget and Appropriations Process

Each year Congress and the President embark on a year-long, often challenging process to establish spending levels for each of the federal government's departments, agencies, and programs for the upcoming fiscal year. Although the process may vary slightly from year to year, the fashion in which the budget comes to fruition follows a basic timeline and order.

Like a personal or business budget, the federal government has income and expenditures (outlays) and must determine annually how to prioritize and allocate funds for each spending item. In Congress, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have jurisdiction over discretionary spending such as funding for the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Programs and National Institutes of Health (NIH). The budget and appropriations process begins with the development and submission of the President's budget request to Congress on or before the first Monday in February. The President's budget is a political "blueprint" that Congress can consider and use as a guideline, but does not have the force of law. It is his formal request to Congress, but Congress is not required to adopt the recommendations.

After Congress receives the President's blueprint, members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees begin developing versions of the spending bills that will fund the federal government for the upcoming fiscal year (FY). The fiscal year begins on October 1 of each year and ends on September 30 of the following year. Although both
chambers of Congress work on independent spending bills, they must eventually pass the same spending bill for the funding allocations to be made law.

**Fiscal Year 2011**

Although FY 2011 began on October 1, 2010, Congress has not yet passed appropriations bills to fund the government through the entire fiscal year. Instead, Congress has passed a series of continuing resolutions (CRs) that extend current funding levels (sometimes with some modifications) for a short period of time. At the time this article was written, funding for ARN's priority programs had not been changed from FY 2010 funding levels. The chart below depicts FY 2010 funding for those priority programs.

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<th>ARN's Federal Funding Priorities</th>
<th>FY 2010 Enacted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)</strong></td>
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<td>Title VIII Nursing Programs:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advanced Education Nursing</td>
<td>64,438,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nurse Education, Practice, and Retention</td>
<td>39,696,000</td>
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<td>Nursing Workforce Diversity</td>
<td>16,107,000</td>
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<td>Loan Repayment and Scholarship Program</td>
<td>93,854,000</td>
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<td>Comprehensive Geriatric Education</td>
<td>4,567,000</td>
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<td>Nursing Faculty Loan Program</td>
<td>25,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Title VIII Nursing Programs</strong></td>
<td>243,672,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Programs (State Grants and Prevention &amp; Advocacy)</td>
<td>9,918,000</td>
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**National Institutes of Health (NIH)**
National Institute on Nursing Research (NINR) 145,660,000

**Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)**
National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) 109,241

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**
Injury Prevention and Control (including TBI) 148,790,000

During the previous session of Congress, both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees passed their own versions of the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Programs (Labor-HSS) funding bills. The Labor-HHS funding bill contains the majority of ARN's priority programs. Unfortunately, the House and the Senate were unable to reach a compromise on this and other spending bills before Congress adjourned in December 2010, which means that both bills died. However, both the House and the Senate bills had included $292 million in funding for Title VIII Nursing Workforce Programs, a 12% increase.

**Fiscal Year 2012: The President's Budget**
As previously described, each year the President sends a spending blueprint to Congress that establishes his priorities and, under current economic constraints, indicates where he believes funding cuts should take place. Despite the floundering economy, the President, proposed increases for nearly all of ARN's priority programs. The largest proposed increase was for Title VIII Nursing Workforce Programs. Consistent with workforce funding priorities authorized under the Affordable Care Act (healthcare reform), the President's proposal contained $313 million for Title VIII Programs. However, because the President's budget proposal does not have the force of law, we must rely on Congress to determine programmatic funding levels for FY 2012. For a complete list of the President's proposed budget for ARN's priority programs, please see the chart below.

### ARN’s Federal Funding Priorities

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<th>President’s FY 2012 Budget Request</th>
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<td><strong>ARN’s Health Policy and Legislative Agenda for the 112th Congress (1st Session)</strong></td>
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ARN's Health Policy and Legislative Agenda typically includes funding priorities and key issues or programs that we would like to see authorized or made into law in the coming year. Each year ARN works with a variety of coalitions to develop our funding requests so that we can work with the broader community to our mutual benefit. Unfortunately,
this year the process of arriving at mutually agreed upon appropriations requests is made even more difficult by the fact that we still do not know funding levels for our priority programs for the current fiscal year. For that reason, some of the appropriations requests listed below ask Congress for "the maximum funding possible" for a given program. In addition, because a new Congress began in January, meaning that all legislation from the previous Congress has to be reintroduced to be considered, ARN has not yet identified the authorizing legislation that is most important to ARN members. As our coalitions agree upon funding priorities and the Health Policy Committee identifies priority legislation, we will update ARN's online advocacy materials.

The Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs at HRSA support the recruitment, education, and retention of an estimated 36,750 nurses and provide the largest source of federal funding to address the national nursing shortage. Increased funding of these programs will help bring these and other healthcare reforms to fruition. The Title VIII Programs include

- Advanced Education Nursing Grants: Provide funds to help schools of nursing, academic health centers, and other nonprofit entities improve the education and practice of nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, nurse anesthetists, nurse educators, nurse administrators, public health nurses, and clinical nurse specialists.

- Workforce Diversity Grants: Increase disadvantaged students' access to nursing education through awards to schools of nursing, nurse-managed health centers, and academic health centers.

- Nurse Education and Retention Grants: Strengthen nursing education programs at schools of nursing, academic health centers, nurse-managed health centers, healthcare facilities, and programs that provide nursing education.

- The Nurse Faculty Loan Program: Provides for cancellation of up to 85% of educational loans for students who agree to teach at a school of nursing.

- Comprehensive Geriatric Education Grants: Help to provide geriatric nursing training.

- The Nurse Loan Repayment and Scholarship Program: Provides for the cancellation of up to 85% of educational loans for nursing students who agree to practice in a designated nursing shortage area for at least 3 years.

**Recommendation:** We respectfully request $313.075 million in FY 2012 funding for Nursing Workforce Development programs at HRSA.

The National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) works to create cost-effective and high-quality health care through both basic and clinical research. The broad mandate of NINR includes seeking to prevent and delay disease and disability, to improve the settings in which care is administered, and to ease the
issues associated with rehabilitation and disability.

**Recommendation:** We respectfully request $163 million in funding for NINR in FY 2012 to continue its work to create cost-effective and high-quality health care through basic and clinical research.

The National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) provides leadership and support for a comprehensive program of research related to the rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities. All of NIDRR's efforts are aimed at improving the lives of individuals with disabilities from birth through adulthood.

**Recommendation:** We request that Congress provide the maximum possible funding for NIDRR.

The Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) programs at the CDC and HRSA—the TBI Registries and Surveillance, Prevention, and National Public Education/Awareness; the Federal TBI State Grant Program; and the Federal TBI Protection & Advocacy (P&A) Systems Grant Program provides vital resources to investigate and implement TBI prevention and treatment programs.

**Recommendation:** We request that Congress provide the maximum funding possible to support TBI prevention and treatment programs at HRSA and CDC. For more information about the entire process, including a *Budget and Appropriations Primer*, and access to ARN's advocacy materials, visit www.rehabnurse.org/advocacy/content/activities.html.