

The Cycle of Advocacy

The cycle of advocacy focuses on a well defined, coordinated approach to issues and legislation.
The Iowa Nurses Association legislative and public policy efforts follow this cycle:

HOW THE ASSOCIATION TAKES A POSITION

Development of Issues and Platform

Issues are identified through the resolution process. The agenda that is advocated is developed based on current issues being discussed that members identify as affecting them.

What does the Iowa Nurses Association (INA) take forward for legislative consideration? The Association has a process of issue identification.

A *Resolution* is prepared by a member or several members and submitted to the Resolution Committee.

Resolutions are your chance to speak your mind, verbalize needed changes, express your vision for the future, and enhance the actions and services of your Iowa Nurses Association. Writing a resolution seems like a daunting task. The Reference Committee is responsible for finalizing the resolutions to be presented to the Annual Convention Business Meeting. This committee has developed guidelines to write a resolution.

The deadline for resolutions to be submitted to the Reference Committee of the Iowa Nurses Association is May 30.

Resolutions have 6 parts:

1. **Title**, this gives the reader an idea of the content and helps to categorize the resolution.
2. **Whereas**, this identifies the problem and the rationale for the resolution. Statistical and literature support for the problem is very helpful. Several statements beginning with “Whereas” may be necessary to give definition and scope of the issue.
3. **Resolve**, these are broad statements of action that INA or other entities can perform to address and hopefully resolve the concern.
4. **Action Steps**, these are specific actions that will support the implementation of the Resolves.
5. **Cost**, this is an estimate of the amount of staff time, printed information, etc. expense that will be incurred for implementation of the Resolution.
6. **Priority**, this is usually determined by the Resolution Committee as they evaluate all of the resolutions that are submitted.

The INA Board of Directors reviews and approves the proposed resolutions. After the proposed resolutions have received Board approval, they are printed in the *Iowa Nurse Reporter* for all members to review and discuss and be prepared to vote on at the Annual Convention Business Meeting. Additionally the association last year used the electronic email system to send a questionnaire asking for a ranking of the issues that should be taken forward on behalf of nursing.

The INA Board of Directors appoints a committee called “Committee on Public Policy or Public Policy Committee” to actively work on nursing issues during the legislative process and as needed throughout the year on regulatory issues.

Prioritizing Issues

As of February 2016, there were 45,196 actively licensed RNs in the state of Iowa. However only 802 registered nurses voluntarily joined the professional membership organization for registered nurses at that same time, the Iowa Nurses Association. The Association has 646 members who have shared their email addresses with INA and there were 36 members who provided the Association with their recommendations for ranking of the issues. From that input, the INA Public Policy Committee

recommended a slate of action to the INA Board of Directors who on October 15, 2015 established the legislative agenda for the 2016 Legislative Session.

ADVOCATING FOR THE PRIORITIES

As legislation is introduced, the lobbyists for the Association review the proposals and make a determination whether the proposal would affect the nursing community. Weekly during the legislative session, an electronic newsletter is prepared which lists the bill proposals, what action is being taken, recommendations as to what members should do and general comments about health care matters.

Strategy

Every two weeks the INA Public Policy Committee meets by conference call to ask questions, deliberate importance of proposals to the profession and provide direction to the lobbyists. Likewise, the association lobbyists make recommendations for positions to be taken. Positions are formulated based on the language of the bill proposal. Some issues are non-controversial, but affect nursing, while other issues are hotly contested and could require significant activity by nurse members with their elected officials and by lobbyists who are daily at the State Capitol.

The role of a lobbyist is to successfully get legislation passed, changed to be more “friendly”, or stopped. Lobbyists provide persuasive information to various lawmakers with the hope that legislators will vote in a manner supporting the Association’s position. Lobbyists often work collegially with organizations and other associations to pass legislation that may not be in the top tier of INA’s priority list but, long-term, are important in building coalitions and friendships that are important to INA.

Collective Action

A major challenge is to channel each association member’s voice into a collective voice and to be the *Voice of Nursing*. Members of the association share the responsibility to be educated on the issues and to inform their own elected officials about the “consensus” view of the nursing community. It is vitally important that as many members of the profession take an interest and speak up. Legislators measure the value/importance of issues by the number of contacts made with them by people who live in their district “back home”.

A massive “grassroots” lobby effort can be launched for issues that are critical to the profession and membership of the association. Mass lobby efforts are most effective when they are not over utilized. Regular and routine conversations help develop a trust level with an individual’s elected official and are often key when there are controversial issues. There are “wins” and “losses” experienced regularly.

EVALUATING THE RESULTS

The nursing process contains an evaluation step and the same is for the outcome of the issues in the legislative process. Evaluation of outcomes include: the number, nature and impact of bills passed which were supported or opposed by the Iowa Nurses Association. Proposals that did not get adopted in the legislative process are usually put on the Legislative Agenda again the next year.

SUPPORTING FRIENDS OF NURSING

Recognition of legislators as “Friends of Nursing”, endorsement and financial support are considered after the end of the legislative session. The Association has an award for individuals and organizations who act to improve the nursing profession. Some legislators receive this recognition.

The whole process begins the *Cycle of Advocacy* again with establishment of issues and priorities.