

**NURSES ORGANIZATION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
LOCAL CHAPTER GUIDELINES**



Sponsored by the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs Foundation



NOVA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Welcome and Who's Who in NOVA
2. NOVA Membership Committee Contact Groups
3. NOVA Chapter Contacts
4. NOVA History
5. NOVA Mission and Vision
6. Benefits of Membership
7. Starting a Local Chapter
8. Applying for Chapter Status
9. Chapter Board of Directors
10. Directions for Applying for an EIPN
11. Chapter Agreement Form
12. Directions for Filling out Chapter Bylaws
13. Payroll Deduction
14. NOVA Memo to Meet on Station
15. Chapter Responsibilities
16. Keys to Success
17. Ideas for Local Chapter Meetings
18. Establishing a Mentoring Program
19. Mentoring Bibliography
20. New Member Welcome Checklist

21. New Member Welcome Packet
22. New Member Survey
23. Sample Letter to Welcome New Members
24. Accessing the NOVA webpage
25. Handouts

- Communicating With Your Legislators in Writing
- No time for Silence
- Political Advocacy
- NOVA's Annual Report
- NOVA and the Unions
- Former Secretary Anthony J. Principi's Article
- What Does NOVA Do For Me?
- NOVA Bylaws

Welcome and Who's Who in NOVA

Thank you for requesting information about starting or reviving a NOVA Chapter!

Starting a Chapter is really fairly easy to do; it just takes a few basic ingredients

- Passion for the cause—belief in the value of membership in your VA nurses organization.
- Enthusiasm—if you can dream it, you can do it!
- Persuasion—talking to your colleagues.

This book of Guidelines contains many of the tools you need for success. Your other resources are only a telephone call away—your Membership Secretary, Membership Committee Members, and the other members of the Board of Directors will gladly assist you. That brings us to the **Who's Who in NOVA** portion of this book.

William S. Bergman and Associates (WSBA) is our Management Firm. They handle the day-to-day operation of our organization. This includes processing applications and maintaining the membership database. They will assist you with your membership roster and any operational questions you may have. WSBA is also our “eyes and ears” in Washington DC—they spearhead all of our legislative activities. NOVA's National Office is located just a few blocks from Capitol Hill and the White House.

Deborah Beck is the Executive Director of NOVA, **Susan Dove** is the Deputy Executive Director, **Luke Zorich** is the Deputy Director, and **Luba Litviniova** is the Administrative Specialist. Deborah, Susan, Luke, or Luba may be reached by telephone (202-296-0888) or email (NOVA@vanurse.org).

The NOVA Board of Directors also includes

President	Nancy Claflin
President-Elect	Joan Clifford
Vice President	Larry Lemos
Secretary	Sharon Johnson
Treasurer	Mary Seaman
Membership Secretary	Cheryl Knowles
Directors	Janet Minard
	Melissa Nixon
	Thelma Roach-Serry
	Sharon Simpson
	Kelly Skinner
	Dee Zander
Immediate Past President	Cecilia McVey

The Board of Directors believes strongly in Chapter development and growth; we believe this can be accomplished through mentoring your Chapter through this initial period. A member of the NOVA Membership Committee has been assigned to your chapter. The Membership Committee contacts are listed below by state. Your contact will answer all of your questions and assist you in any way possible.

Good luck and welcome aboard!

NOVA Membership Committee Contact Groups

The members of NOVA's Membership Committee (listed in bold) are assigned to VISNs. Each NOVA chapter has been assigned to a member of the committee as your NOVA contact for information, including starting new chapters.

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, Providencia Cardona
VISN 10, 11	Janet Parrish, Ron Patrick
VISN 12, 15	Rainee Mitchell, Melissa Nixon
VISN 16, 17	Portia McDaniel, Jenny Urban
VISN 18, 19, 20	Janet Minard, Sharon Simpson
VISN 21, 22, 23	Sonia Olivar, Ethel Warren

NOVA Chapter Presidents/Contacts

This is the listing of current NOVA Chapter Presidents/Contacts. Please feel free to contact them for more information about NOVA. If changes need to be made to this list or you would like to serve as a contact for facilities not listed, please contact Nancy Claflin by email at nclaflin@cox.net or call 602 277-5551, x7333.

100 Anchorage	Anchorage, AK	Margaret Balster
104 Central Alabama	Tuskegee, AL	_____
102 Birmingham VAMC	Birmingham, AL	Ehrica Spencer
110 Carl T. Hayden VAMC	Phoenix, AZ	Nancy Claflin/Gregg Gordon
112 Prescott VAMC	Prescott, AZ	Debra McAninch
114 Southern Arizona HCS	Tucson, AZ	Cindy Bakko/Sharon Simpson
116 Fayetteville VAMC	Fayetteville, AR	_____
118 John L. McClellan	Little Rock, AR	Terry Rae Beam
120 Fresno VAMC	Fresno, CA	Deborah Ruggles
124 Jerry L. Pettis VAMC	Loma Linda, CA	Anne Gillespie
126 Long Beach VAMC	Long Beach, CA	Larry Lemos
128 Sacramento VAMC	Sacramento, CA	Lourdes Cintron/Ethel Warren
129 Palo Alto VAMC	Palo Alto, CA	Mary Montufar/Cherina Tinio
130 Greater Los Angeles	West LA, CA	_____
138 San Diego VAMC	San Diego, CA	Rita Scott
140 San Francisco VAMC	San Francisco, CA	Cassandra Worthington/Patricia Miller/ Judith Rosen
144 Eastern Colorado	Denver, CO	Cindy Adamek
152 Connecticut VAMC	West Haven, CT	Lorraine Taylor
154 Wilmington VAMROC	Wilmington, DE	Norby Aquino
156 Washington DC VAMC	Washington, DC	Rodney Rector
158 Bay Pines VAMC	Bay Pines, FL	_____
160 N. Florida/S. Georgia	Lake City/ Gainesville, FL	Donna Titus
164 Miami VAMC	Miami, FL	Lee Fealy/Providencia Cardona
165 West Palm Beach VA	West Palm Beach, FL	_____

166 Tampa VAMC	Tampa, FL	Mary Seaman
167 Orlando VAMC	Orlando, FL	
168 Augusta VAMC	Augusta, GA	Mary P. Forbes/Mary Powe/Maggie James
170 Atlanta VAMC	Atlanta, GA	Barbara Berlin
172 Carl Vinson VAMC	Dublin, GA	Vivian Chappell
173 Pacific Island VA	Honolulu, HI	
174 Boise VAMC	Boise, ID	
176 Jesse Brown VAMC	Chicago, IL	Daphne McDonald
180 Danville VAMC	Danville, IL	Ramona Charles
182 Hines VAMC	Hines, IL	Christine Szkarlat
184 Marion VAMC	Marion, IL	
186 North Chicago VAMC	North Chicago, IL	
188 Fort Wayne VAMC	Fort Wayne, IN	Ed Treace
190 Indianapolis VAMC	Indianapolis, IN	
192 Marion VAMC	Marion, IN	Ed Treace
196 Iowa City VAMC	Iowa City, IA	
202 VA Eastern Kansas	Topeka/Leavenworth	Tony Wedeking
204 Wichita VAMROC	Wichita, KS	Janice Stevens
208 Louisville VAMC	Louisville, KY	
210 Alexandria VAMC	Alexandria, LA	Portia L. McDaniel
212 Southeast Louisiana	New Orleans, LA	
214 Overton Brooks VAMC	Shreveport, LA	Burnace Byers
216 Togus VAMC	Togus, ME	
218 Maryland HCS	Baltimore, MD	Sharon Johnson
224 Edith Nourse Rogers	Bedford, MA	Kathy Lehmann/Ken Hamilton
226 New England HCS	Boston, MA	Kelly Skinner/Donna DeMartino
232 Northampton VAMC	Northampton, MA	Janice Pastuszek
236 Detroit VAMC	Detroit, MI	
238 Ann Arbor VAMC	Ann Arbor, MI	Patricia Lello
240 Battle Creek VAMC	Battle Creek, MI	Terry Suchyta
242 Iron Mountain VAMC	Iron Mountain, MI	Kathy Truax
244 Saginaw VAMC	Saginaw, MI	
246 Minneapolis VAMC	Minneapolis, MN	Pam Snyder
250 Biloxi VAMC	Biloxi, AL	William Keber
252 Jackson VAMC	Jackson, MS	Peggy King
254 Columbia VAMC	Columbia, MO	
256 Kansas City VAMC	Kansas City, MO	Vergie Hickmon
260 St. Louis VAMC	St. Louis, MO	Melissa Nixon
262 Ft. Harrison VAMC	Ft. Harrison, MT	Diane Longtine
266 Grand Island VAMC	Grand Island, NE	Eileen Kingston
268 Lincoln VAMC	Lincoln, NE	Eileen Kingston
270 Omaha VAMC	Omaha, NE	Eileen Kingston
272 Sierra Nevada HCS	Reno, NV	
273 Southern Nevada HCS	Las Vegas, NV	Marcia Evans
274 Manchester VAMC	Manchester, NH	Carol A. Williams
276 New Jersey HCS	East Orange, NJ	Nora Krick

280 New Mexico HCS	Albuquerque, NM	_____
282 Albany VAMC	Albany, NY	_____
284 Batavia VAMC	Batavia, NY	Thomas Wommack
286 Bath VAMC	Bath, NY	Cheryl Knowles
288 Bronx VAMC	Bronx, NY	_____
290 Brooklyn VAMC	Brooklyn, NY	Yolanda Nurse
292 St. Albans VAMC	St. Albans, NY	Yolanda Nurse/Nellie K. Geraci
294 Buffalo VAMC	Buffalo, NY	Kathleen Burns
300 Hudson Valley VA	_____	_____
302 Manhattan VAMC	Manhattan, NY	Yolanda Nurse
304 Northport VAMC	Northport, NY	Linda O'Connor
308 Asheville VAMC	Asheville, NC	Margaret Anderson
310 Durham VAMC	Durham, NC	La Tricia Knight
312 Fayetteville VAMC	Fayetteville, NC	Teresa Wright
314 Salisbury VAMC	Salisbury, NC	Lisa T. Kelly
316 Fargo VAMC	Fargo, ND	_____
318 Chillicothe VAMC	Chillicothe, OH	Jennifer Burke
320 Cincinnati VAMC	Cincinnati, OH	Janet R. Parrish
322 Cleveland VAMC	Cleveland, OH	Mary Bobulsky
Cleveland Wade Park	Cleveland, OH	Christine Mlidaneo
326 Dayton VAMC	Dayton, OH	Ronald Dean Patrick
328 Muskogee VAMC	Muskogee, OK	_____
330 Oklahoma City VA	Oklahoma City, OK	_____
332 Portland VAMC	Portland, OR	Rosalind Rockweit
334 Roseburg VAMC	Roseburg, OR	Susan Ward
338 James E. Van Zandt VA	Altoona, PA	Judy Ott
340 Butler VAMC	Butler, PA	Christine Meyer
342 Coatesville VAMC	Coatesville, PA	Teresa Eze
344 Erie VAMC	Erie, PA	_____
346 Lebanon VAMC	Lebanon, PA	Janet Minard
348 Philadelphia VAMC	Philadelphia, PA	Joan A. Gallo/Dee Zander
352 Pittsburgh VAMC	Pittsburgh, PA	Marian Ehrhart
356 San Juan VAMC	San Juan, PR	Vanessa Torres-Cruz
358 Providence VAMC	Providence, RI	Jean Taft
360 Ralph H. Johnson VA	Charleston, SC	Maureen Distler
362 Columbia VAMC	Columbia, SC	_____
364 Black Hills HCS	Fort Meade, SD	Mary Ann Pulaski
368 Royal C. Johnson VA	Sioux Falls, SD	Rachel Crossley
370 Memphis VAMC	Memphis, TN	_____
372 Mountain Home VAMC	Mountain Home, TN	Lynn Ricker/Donna Lindsay
374 Tennessee Valley	Murfreesboro, TN	_____
376 Nashville VAMC	Nashville, TN	Sarah Wiseman
378 Amarillo VAMC	Amarillo, TX	_____
380 West Texas VAMC	Big Spring, TX	_____

382 Sam Rayburn VAMC	Bonham, TX	Mary (Kathy) Simpson
384 Dallas VAMC	Dallas, TX	Jay Purser/Jeff Allen
386 El Paso VAMC	El Paso, TX	Laura Sarmiento/Maria O'Toole-Pitts
388 Houston VAMC	Houston, TX	Connie Ward/Mary Kelly
400 Kerrville VAMC	Kerrville, TX	_____ m
406 South Texas HCS	San Antonio, TX	Teresa Weaver
410/ Olin E. Teague VAMC	Temple, TX	Jenny Urban
412 Waco VAMC	Waco, TX	Jenny Urban
414 Salt Lake City VAMC	Salt Lake City, UT	Karey Johnson
416 White River Jct VAMC	White River Jct, VT	Pamela Pickett
418 Hampton VAMC	Hampton, VA	Cheri White
420 Hunter Holmes McGuire	Richmond, VA	Beverly Ross/Thelma Roach-Serry
422 Salem VAMC	Salem, VA	Barbara Zicafoose
424 American Lake VAMC	Tacoma, WA	Janice Rosell
426 Puget Sound	Seattle, WA	Dianne Long
428 Spokane VAMC	Spokane, WA	Sharon Bradley
432 Walla Walla VAMC	Walla Walla, WA	_____
438 Huntington VAMC	Huntington, WV	Deborah Neal
440 Martinsburg VAMC	Martinsburg, WV	_____
442 Madison VAMC	Madison, WI	_____
444 Tomah VAMC	Tomah, WI	_____
446 Milwaukee VAMC	Milwaukee, WI	Ethel Davenport
692 White City Domiciliary	White City, OR	Karen Allen

NOVA is dedicated to working for you!

NOVA's History

During the fall of 1980, the nationwide shortage of registered nurses reached crisis proportions. Nurses were leaving the profession in droves, enrollment in nursing schools was decreasing, and discontent was widespread. Discontent ranged from disillusionment with nursing as a profession to adversarial relationships with physicians and resulted in pronounced staffing shortages.

Nowhere was this unfortunate situation more pronounced than in the VA system. When PL 96-330 was passed by Congress without direct input from VA nurses, a small group of dedicated nurses at the Hines VA Hospital in Illinois decided that it was time for action. This decision marked the birth of the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs.

Earlier, in the spring of 1980, a proposal was drafted encompassing the concept of a nationwide professional nursing organization with an educational and legislative emphasis. Since it was founded, NOVA has grown to represent VA nurses from all over the United States. These nurses have pursued their goals resolutely and have been able to influence significantly our nation's legislators on issues of veterans' health care.

NOVA Mission and Vision

NOVA Mission: Shaping and influencing healthcare in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

NOVA Vision:

VA nurses will provide high quality nursing care.

VA nurses will have an optimal work environment.

VA nurses will be well informed on relevant issues that impact VA healthcare and nursing practice.

VA nurses will have a strong voice in the legislative arena.

VA nurses will have a strong presence at the VHA corporate leadership level.

VA nurses will be NOVA members.

Benefits of Membership

A Major Lobbying Power

NOVA has an agreement with William S. Bergman Associates to ensure that NOVA has a powerful, independent voice in the Department of Veterans Affairs and on Capitol Hill.

News from NOVA

A quarterly newsletter published by National NOVA, *News from NOVA* keeps you informed of NOVA activities across the U.S. It is also an excellent source of information on national health care policy, internal VA issues and their effect on the nursing field.

E-News from NOVA

Monthly updates sent on e-mail keep you informed of legislative updates and other news affecting the VA, VA nurses, and veterans

NOVA Web Page

A place where you can find up to date information on NOVA including Hot News, NOVA position papers, ability to join NOVA and pay dues online; ability to register for the annual conference online; contacts for NOVA board members, NOVA history.

National Health Care Forum

Becoming a member of NOVA links the individual VA nurse to national nursing, health care and veteran groups.

Educational Programs

Each year, NOVA members have access to presentations by the nation's top health care policy, political and health experts. These presentations are consistently rated superior to many competing programs, NOVA members receive continuing education credits for attending these programs.

Annual Meeting

NOVA's Annual Meeting presents an opportunity for its members to participate directly in the organization's decision-making process and influence its legislative agenda. The Annual Meeting is also an excellent introduction to the industry's latest pharmaceutical, educational and software innovations.

The Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) is a nationwide voluntary, non-profit, professional organization composed of Registered Nurses employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Starting A Local Chapter

IF YOU CAN DREAM IT, YOU CAN DO IT!

If you believe in what NOVA can accomplish, if you have passion and enthusiasm, you can start and grow your chapter. You do not have to do this alone. Enlist the help of your immediate co-workers or other nurses who share the same vision. You may be designated the leader until you have official elections.

MEMBERSHIP

Local chapter members must also be National NOVA members. Enter the names of your members on the Chapter Agreement Form; keep a copy of this list for your files and send one copy of the list to the National Office. Members must also fill out a NOVA Membership Application and send this to the National Office. An application needs to be sent with a check if paying by check. You also need to send an application if you are paying by payroll deduction. Take the original over to payroll and make a copy to send to the National Office.

Many local Chapters have dues; the revenue from dues may be used at the discretion of the Chapter. National Office does not collect local dues.

MEETINGS

Some NOVA Chapters meet monthly; others meet quarterly; others less often. Talk with your members and find a meeting schedule that fits your needs. You may meet on station (on your own time) in your facility. A memo from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs authorizes NOVA meetings on station. Or, you may meet off station in a restaurant or in a member's home. Your first Chapter meeting could be a getting-to-know-you meeting and a brainstorming session to decide goals you would like to meet or projects you would like to do as a group. Also contact your Nurse Executive to elicit support.

PUBLICIZE YOUR MEETINGS

Every facility is different in what they will and will not allow in the way of publicity. Check the policies of your facility and use bulleting boards and email, if allowed. Also, word of mouth is very effective.

FILL OUT CHAPTER BYLAWS

Use the NOVA Chapters Bylaws form; fill in the appropriate blanks. Send the form to National Office for approval.

HOLD ELECTIONS FOR CHAPTER OFFICERS

Some of your Chapter members are natural leaders; others need to be nudged a little! At a minimum you need to have a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. **Submit the names of your Board of Directors to National Office.**

APPLYING FOR CHAPTER STATUS

Now that you have your chapter established, you need to make it official! There are four easy steps:

1. Fill out the Application for Employer Identification Number (Instructions included).
2. Fill out the names of your Chapter officers/board of directors. (Blank form included)
3. Fill out Chapter Bylaws. (Blank form included)
4. Fill out the Chapter Agreement Form. All local Chapter members must also be National NOVA members. (Blank form included)

Mail all of the required documents to:

**NOVA National Office
1726 M Street, NW, Suite 1101
Washington, DC 20036**

When your application for Chapter status is approved, you will receive written notice from National Office. Your new Chapter will also be recognized during the NOVA Annual Meeting.

DIRECTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (SS-4) FORM

1. This form can be complete online at the following address:
<http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=97860,00.html>
2. Employer ID Numbers (EIN) - How to Apply
3. **APPLY BY EIN Toll-Free Telephone Service**
Taxpayers can obtain an EIN immediately by calling the Business & Specialty Tax Line(800-829-4933). The hours of operation are 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. local time, Monday through Friday. An assistor takes the information, assigns the EIN, and provides the number to an authorized individual over the telephone.
4. **APPLY BY FAX**
Taxpayers can FAX the completed Form SS-4 application to their state FAX number (see Where to File - Business Forms and Filing Addresses), after ensuring that the Form SS-4 contains all of the required information. If it is determined that the entity needs a new EIN, one will be assigned using the appropriate procedures for the entity type. If the taxpayer's fax number is provided, a fax will be sent back with the EIN within four (4) business days.
5. **APPLY BY MAIL**
The processing timeframe for an EIN application received by mail is four weeks. Ensure that the Form SS-4 contains all of the required information. If it is determined that the entity needs a new EIN, one will be assigned using the appropriate procedures for the entity type and mailed to the taxpayer.
6. **APPLY BY EIN ONLINE**
This [Internet EIN](#) (I-EIN) application is another avenue for customers to apply for and obtain an employer identification number. Once all the necessary fields are completed on the online form, preliminary validation is performed and the taxpayer will be alerted to information IRS needs that may not have been included. An EIN will be issued after the successful submission of the completed Form SS-4 online. ***Please note that not all business entity types may use this method.***

Follow the instructions to complete the form. Mail the original SS-4 form to NOVA National Office; keep one copy in your file. National Office will send the Employee Identification Number to your Treasurer.

CHAPTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Office/Board of Directors

Name

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

CHAPTER AGREEMENT FORM

We, the undersigned, are applying for a charter for the _____
Chapter of the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs. We have read the NOVA Bylaws and
Rules and Regulations of the Organization and agree to abide by them.

1. Name: _____

Address: _____

Home telephone: _____ Home email: _____

Work telephone: _____ Work email: _____

Unit/Department: _____ Date of joining NOVA: _____

Signature: _____

2. Name: _____

Address: _____

Home telephone: _____ Home email: _____

Work telephone: _____ Work email: _____

Unit/Department: _____ Date of joining NOVA: _____

Signature: _____

3. Name: _____

Address: _____

Home telephone: _____ Home email: _____

Work telephone: _____ Work email: _____

Unit/Department: _____ Date of joining NOVA: _____

Signature: _____

4. Name: _____

Address: _____

Home telephone: _____ Home email: _____

Work telephone: _____ Work email: _____

Unit/Department: _____ Date of joining NOVA: _____

Signature: _____

5. Name: _____

Address: _____

Home telephone: _____ Home email: _____

Work telephone: _____ Work email: _____

Unit/Department: _____ Date of joining NOVA: _____

Signature: _____

6. Name: _____

Address: _____

Home telephone: _____ Home email: _____

Work telephone: _____ Work email: _____

Unit/Department: _____ Date of joining NOVA: _____

Signature: _____

7. Name: _____

Address: _____

Home telephone: _____ Home email: _____

Work telephone: _____ Work email: _____

Unit/Department: _____ Date of joining NOVA: _____

Signature: _____

8. Name: _____

Address: _____

Home telephone: _____ Home email: _____

Work telephone: _____ Work email: _____

Unit/Department: _____ Date of joining NOVA: _____

Signature: _____

9. Name: _____

Address: _____

Home telephone: _____ Home email: _____

Work telephone: _____ Work email: _____

Unit/Department: _____ Date of joining NOVA: _____

Signature: _____

10. Name: _____

Address: _____

Home telephone: _____ Home email: _____

Work telephone: _____ Work email: _____

Unit/Department: _____ Date of joining NOVA: _____

Signature: _____

DIRECTIONS FOR FILLING OUT CHAPTER BYLAWS

1. Fill in the blanks as they pertain to your chapter. Make minor changes to the bylaws as needed for your chapter. For example, you may combine the Secretary and Membership Secretary into one position. You may vary the numbers of board members, length of office, etc.
2. Send the original to NOVA National Office.
3. Keep one copy for your Chapter file.

Chapter Bylaws

ARTICLE I. PREAMBLE, NAME & OBJECTIVES

SECTION 1. Preamble

The professional nursing staff of VA hereby creates this assembly of nurses for the purpose of the objectives as stated within these bylaws.

SECTION 2. Name

The name of this organization shall be the _____ Chapter of the Nurses Organization of the Veterans Affairs, hereafter also referred to as "NOVA" or as the "Organization".

SECTION 3. Objectives

The objectives of NOVA shall be to:

- provide for quality nursing care to the veteran patient,
- facilitate open communication among all VA nurses and those persons or organizations impacting on VA Health Care System,
- influence the recruitment and retention of professional nurses,
- provide learning opportunities for NOVA members,
- foster a high level of professional nursing practice,
- foster research and academic excellence in VA Nursing Service.

ARTICLE II. MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1. Classification

_____ Chapter of NOVA shall be composed of three classifications of members: Active, Associate and Honorary.

SECTION 2. Qualifications and Privileges

A. - Active membership shall include any registered nurse employed full time, part time and/or intermittent status by VA. Active members shall be eligible to vote, to hold office and to participate in all other membership benefits offered by the Organization.

B. - Associate membership shall include any registered nurse retired from VA. Associate members shall have the same rights as Active members, except the right to hold office.

C. - Honorary membership shall be awarded to a member or non-member who has rendered notable and outstanding service to the Organization. They shall be recommended by a member to the Board of Directors. Honorary membership shall be approved by three-fourths (3/4) vote at any business meeting. Honorary membership shall include all privileges of Association Membership, but shall not be subject to the payment of annual dues.

SECTION 3. _____ Chapter Membership

_____ Chapter members must be members of the National Organization.

SECTION 4. Nondiscrimination Policy

No person shall be denied membership on the basis of sex, race, age, religious beliefs, handicap, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political affiliation/belief, or status as a veteran.

SECTION 5. Responsibilities

Each member shall abide by the provisions of the bylaws of the _____ Chapter of

NOVA, the Chapter's bylaws, and such additional policies as may be established by the Organization.

SECTION 6. Dues

- A. - The annual dues if any shall be determined by the Board of Directors and shall be remitted in accordance with policies established by the Board of Directors.
- B. - Members who are ninety (90) days delinquent in payment of their dues shall automatically be dropped from the National and Chapter membership roles.
- C. - _____ Chapter dues shall not exceed the National dues.
- D. - Upon resignation, there shall be no refund of dues.

ARTICLE III. OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

SECTION 1. Composition

The Officers and Directors of the Organization shall consist of a President, President-Elect, Vice-President, Secretary, Membership Secretary, Treasurer and six (6) Directors.

SECTION 2. Term of Office

- A. - Officers and Directors shall begin their terms of office at the close of the annual meeting following the election or until the election of the successor.
- B. - Officers and Directors shall serve a two-year term except the President-Elect who shall serve a one-year term prior to succeeding to the Presidency.
- C. - Officers shall hold no more than one office at a time.
- D. - The President and President-Elect shall not serve for more than one (1) term in the same office. All other Officers and Directors shall not serve for more than two (2) consecutive terms in the same office.

SECTION 3. Election of Officers and Directors

The Membership Secretary, Treasurer and three (3) Directors shall be elected in even numbered years; and the President-Elect, Vice President, Secretary and three (3) Directors shall be elected in odd numbered years.

SECTION 4. Qualifications

- A. - All candidates shall be a current member of _____ Chapter of NOVA.
- B. - All candidates shall have been a member of _____ Chapter of NOVA for two years prior to becoming a candidate.
- C. - President and Vice-President shall have previously served on the Board of Directors for at least one (1) year prior to taking office.
- D. - All candidates shall comply with the requirements set forth by the Nominating Committee and approved by the Board of Directors.

SECTION 5. Vacancies

- A. - Unless stated otherwise in these bylaws, should a vacancy of an Officer or Director occur, the vacant office may remain vacant, or be filled by appointment of the President with Board approval, for the remainder of the term.
- B. - Should a vacancy occur in the office of President, the Vice-President shall fill the vacancy for the unexpired term. If the Vice-President is unable to fill the office of President, the President-Elect shall fill the vacancy for the unexpired term and shall subsequently serve as President for the term to which he/she was elected.
- C. - Should a vacancy occur in the office of President-Elect, the office shall be declared vacant until the next annual meeting at which time a President and a President-Elect shall be elected to serve for the ensuing year.

ARTICLE IV. ELECTIONS

SECTION 1.

The Nominating Committee shall solicit and select candidates for those offices that shall become vacant at the close of the forthcoming annual meeting.

SECTION 2.

The Nominating Committee shall present to the voting members a ballot of the candidates for office at least thirty (30) days prior to the annual meeting.

SECTION 3.

Write-in candidates shall be accepted and tallied.

SECTION 4.

Elections shall be solely by mail ballot. The Nominating Committee shall establish a deadline for the return of ballots.

SECTION 5.

Candidates shall be elected by a plurality of those eligible members voting.

SECTION 6.

Tie votes shall be decided by the drawing of lots.

SECTION 7.

Rules and procedures for the conduct of all elections shall be recommended by the Nominating Committee and approved by the Board of Directors.

SECTION 8.

Officers and Directors shall perform those duties prescribed by these bylaws and shall perform all such other duties as usually pertain to their respective offices or as directed by the President and Board of Directors.

A. - President: Shall be the chief executive officer of the Organization and is designated as the Organization's primary spokesperson. The President shall be directly responsible to the Board for the overall administration of the Organization.

B. - Vice-President: Shall preside in the absence of the President.

C. - Secretary: Shall be responsible for the general correspondence and communication of the Organization, for recording of the official minutes of the business meeting and the meetings of the Board of Directors and for the maintenance of all official records of the Organization. The Secretary shall serve as the historian.

D. - Treasurer: Shall be responsible for the maintenance of all the financial affairs of the Organization, which include, but are not limited to, the preparation of periodic financial reports to the Board. The Treasurer shall be the Chairperson of the Finance Committee.

E. - Membership Secretary: Shall be responsible for the maintenance of the membership records, preparation of renewal notices and membership confirmation. The Membership Secretary shall serve as the Chairperson of the Membership Committee.

ARTICLE V. MEETING OF THE MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1.

The Annual Meeting of the Organization shall be held at least yearly and the time and place shall be determined by the Board of Directors.

SECTION 2.

The Business Meeting shall be held at a time of the Annual Meeting for the purpose of receiving reports of the Officers and Committees and for the discussion of, and actions concerning, issues which affect the membership.

SECTION 3.

All other meetings of the Organization (if any) shall be in accordance with policies established by the Board of Directors.

SECTION 4.

Those members present at any Business Meeting shall constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE VI. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SECTION 1. Composition

A. - The Board of Directors shall be the governing body of the Organization and shall establish policy, direct activities and approve all actions pertaining to the business of NOVA and its Chapters.

B. - The Board shall reserve the right to charter Chapters.

C. - The Board shall have the responsibility to conduct the fiduciary affairs of the Organization in a prudent manner in accord with its bylaws and the laws under which it is governed.

D. - The Fiscal Year shall be determined by the Board of Directors.

E. - The Board shall approve and authorize the official acts of the elected officials and its committees.

SECTION 2. Meetings of the Board of Directors

A. - Regular meetings of the Board of Directors shall be held at least twice annually.

B. - Special meetings of the Board of Directors may be called by the President, or upon written request of three (3) members of the Board, or the written request of five (5) chapters. The purpose of the meeting shall be stated in both the request and in the notice of special meeting.

C. - A quorum for meetings of the Board of Directors shall be constituted by 50% of the members of the Board of Directors.

SECTION 3. Compensation

No members, including officers and directors of the Board of Directors, shall be compensated for their service to the Organization, except for reimbursement of usual and proper expenses incurred in the attendance of Board meetings and those other necessary activities in the course of duties in accordance with the policies set forth by the Board of Directors.

SECTION 4. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee of the Board shall consist of the Officers of the Organization: President, President-Elect, Vice-President, Secretary, Membership Secretary and Treasurer. The Executive Committee shall be empowered to act for the Board between meetings of the Board of Directors. All actions of the Executive Committee shall be approved by the Board of Directors at its next scheduled meeting.

ARTICLE VII. COMMITTEES

SECTION 1.

All Standing and Special Committees shall be appointed by the President and approved by the Board of Directors.

SECTION 2.

The Board of Directors shall determine the composition, duties and responsibilities of all committees.

SECTION 3.

Committee members shall be appointed for a term of one year and shall be made on a year-to-year basis.

SECTION 4.

The President or his/her designee shall be an ex-officio member of all committees except the Nominating Committee.

SECTION 5.

The Standing Committees may include, but are not limited to: Awards, Bylaws, Chapters, Finance, Historical, Legislative, Nominating, Membership, Newsletter, Policy-Procedure, Program and Publicity.

ARTICLE VIII. INDEMNIFICATION

The Organization shall indemnify any and all persons who may serve or who have served at any time as a director, officer, committee chairperson or staff member of the Organization and their respective heirs, administrators, successors and assigns, against any and all expenses incurred by such a person in connection with any action, suit or other proceeding, including any settlement thereof approved by the Board of Directors, by reason of such person's having been a director or officer of the Organization. The directors or officers shall not be liable to the Organization or its members for any mistake of judgment, negligence or for any other reason except in the case of bad faith or willful misconduct on the part of any such person. The officers or directors shall have no personal liability for any contract or other commitment made by them, in good faith, and the Organization shall indemnify and forever hold each such director or officer harmless against any and all liability to others on account of any such contract or commitment.

ARTICLE IX. PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

The rules contained in the current edition of the Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern the Organization in all cases to which they are applicable and which they are not inconsistent with the bylaws of NOVA and any special rules of order the Organization may adopt.

ARTICLE X. DISSOLUTION

In the event of the dissolution of the Organization, all assets shall be disposed of in keeping with its tax exempt status and governing laws.

ARTICLE XI. INCORPORATION & NON-PROFIT STATUS

The Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs was incorporated in the State of Illinois under the 'General Not for Profit Corporation Act' of January 1944, on December 10, 1980.

The Organization is also an exempt, non-profit Organization under the Internal Revenue Code, Section 501(c)(6).

ARTICLE XII. AMENDMENTS

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.

Payroll Deduction

One of the wonderful benefits of NOVA is that you can pay your national dues by payroll deduction. All you need to do is to complete a membership application (available on the web page), take it to payroll for them to get started, and mail a copy to the national office.

If your payroll staff members are unfamiliar with processing dues for NOVA by payroll deduction, give them the following information. To process payroll dues for NOVA members by payroll deduction, use the union dues screen with a 4999 union code with the \$3.80 payroll deduction. This is the same way as processing union dues. Austin sends the money to NOVA each pay period for those nurses who belong to NOVA.

If you are a supervisor, however, be aware that your payroll deduction may be cancelled without your knowledge. Supervisors may receive a message from a human resources representative who has received the following error message automatically generated from the PAID system. The message indicated "supervisory position review entitlement for withholding union dues." Human resources may conclude that supervisors are currently paying union dues, and should ask the supervisor to let them know if this was an error, since supervisors cannot pay union dues. The problem occurs because there is only one place on the earnings and leave slip for both union and professional dues. All chapters should check with any members who are supervisors and using payroll deduction to make sure that the NOVA payroll deductions are still occurring. This is the link to the bulletin that spells it out. Office of Financial Policy issued OF Bulletin 02GA2.01 dated Oct 30, 2001. http://www.va.gov/publ/direc/finance/02GA2_01bul.htm

Memo Allowing NOVA To Meet on Station

**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Memorandum

Date: June 30, 2003

VAOPGCADV 10-2003

From: General Counsel (02)

Subj: Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) use of VA facilities

To: Secretary (00)

QUESTION PRESENTED:

Whether VHA could lawfully (1) exclude the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) from use of VA rooms for meeting and (2) prohibit NOVA from posting flyers on bulletin boards?

DISCUSSION:

1. The Executive Director of NOVA requested clarification from the Secretary regarding a decision by VHA Veterans Health Administration Medical Center (MC) Director and Human Resources (HR) Director in Altoona, PA to prevent NOVA's use of VA facilities, specifically use of meeting rooms and bulletin boards. The same problem has apparently arisen at other facilities as well.
2. According to NOVA, the VHA MC and HR Directors in Altoona indicated that their decision was, in part, motivated by the increasing number of grievances filed by the union representing the Altoona nurses, and a deteriorating labor-management relationship. NOVA also indicated that the union apparently pointed to VHA IL 10-81-42 (dated October 29, 1981) and a memorandum dated April 20, 1990 to all VHA directors in support of its position that NOVA should be prohibited from using the facilities.
3. We understand NOVA to be a non-union professional association comprised exclusively of VA nurses. The NOVA bylaws indicate that membership consists primarily of registered nurses, without distinction of whether they are bargaining unit members or eligible. Its objectives are to:
 - provide for quality nursing care to the veteran patient,
 - facilitate open communication among all VA nurses and those persons or organizations impacting on VA Health Care System
 - influence the recruitment and retention of professional nurses,
 - provide learning opportunities for NOVA members,

- foster a high level of professional nursing practice, and
- foster research and academic excellence in VA Nursing Service.

4. Access to use of VA facilities for activities relating to or promoting professional employee associations is a First Amendment issue. See *generally, Good News Club v. Milford Cent. Sch.*, 533 U.S. 98 (2001). VA could legally bar all professional employee associations from using VA facilities. However, VA policies specifically permit a professional employee associations' access to departmental facilities. See VA Handbooks 5023 and 5025. VA must therefore provide equal access to VA facilities for all professional associations. However, VA may prescribe limitations. *Id.*

VA Handbook 5023 (Labor-Management Relations) and 5025 (Legal) indicate that VA may cooperate with professional associations under certain circumstances. Indeed, VA voluntarily assumes a cooperative role in encouraging and assisting employee associations. VA Handbook 5025, Part X, ¶ 6. VA's cooperative role includes permitting employee professional associations to use Department facilities, such as bulletin boards and meeting rooms, where the activities are purely social, fraternal or professional, and do not relate to issues within the purview of an exclusive collective bargaining unit. VA Handbook 5025, Part X, ¶ 8. Both Handbooks recognize certain limitations to VA's involvement with associations. A pertinent example is VA Handbook 5023, Part 1, Chapter 1, ¶ 4. It dictates that these dealings must "not assume the character of negotiations or discussion on matters of human resources policy or practice or other general conditions of employment covering employees in the unit."

These guidelines arise from the statutory and case law authorities which govern labor relations law. See *e.g.* 5 U.S.C. §§ 7114, 7116(a). Under current law, an employer commits an unfair labor practice if it permits a non-exclusive representative labor organization use of facilities in other than a routine or customary manner. See *e.g. Social Security Administration and NTEU*, 55 F.L.R.A. 964 (1999).

VHA IL 10-81-42 (dated October 29, 1981) and memorandum dated April 20, 1990 to all VHA directors, which the union referred to correctly apply the law.

Our review of current Federal sector case law precedence found no case on point. However a parallel issue was addressed in *Dep't. of Agric. and AFGE, Local 3325*, 1987 FLRA Lexis 423, 423 FLRA ALJ Dec. No. 68 (June 26, 1987), a non-authoritative administrative judge (AJ) decision. In that case professional and non-professional associations for agency employees were permitted to use the office mail to transmit communications relating to conditions of employment. The union, which was not the exclusive representative, was precluded from using the mail for the same reasons. The Administrative Law Judge found the agency had committed an unfair labor practice in precluding the union from using the office mail.

It is thus clear that professional associations for VA employees may use Department facilities to promote their goals for a limited scope of activities. Such

activities may include, but are not limited to, such things as improvement of the exchange of information (e.g. news relating to the professional position), improvement of effectiveness of the professionals in question (e.g. information about additional training or education), and establishment of policies or practices other than those relating to working conditions (e.g. best practices). *See e.g. Dep't. of Agric., supra.* However, the scope of activities which a professional associations may conduct using departmental facilities is however limited to exclude activities which are covered by the representation of an exclusive bargaining unit for the professional association employee members, e.g. anything involving personnel policies, practices, or matters involving conditions of employment.

Where there is no professional collective bargaining unit, a professional association is not so constrained in its use of Department facilities. VA Handbook 5025, Part X. Similarly, where the professional association's activities relate to purely social, fraternal and professional issues, outside the scope of any applicable collective bargaining unit's purview, the department facilities may be utilized even where there is an exclusive collective bargaining unit. *Id.*

5. We reviewed NOVA's website (www.vanurse.org/). Some of NOVA's activities relate to the Congressionally mandated Commission on VA Nursing, which was created in response to the "Call to Action" to improve VA's recruitment and retention of nurses. *See Pub. L. 107-135; see also A Call to Action: VA's Response to the National Nursing Shortage* (VA VHA, November 2001). The work focuses on improving the working conditions for nurses within the Department. To the extent that NOVA's activities relate to changing the conditions of employment of VA nurses, a subject which is under the purview of an exclusive collective bargaining unit at the pertinent facility, they could be excluded from using Department facilities.

6. If NOVA seeks access to Department facilities or access to bulletin boards to perform activities limited to such areas as continuing education, training or professional development, VA must provide access to Department facilities and bulletin boards to the same extent as provided to other professional associations.

Tim S. McClain

Chapter Responsibilities

We want to know what your Chapter is doing! Many marvelous things are happening around the country and we can all learn from each other. There are two major ways of doing this:

1. Contribute an article for Chapter News in our newsletter, News From NOVA.
2. Bring a poster presentation from your chapter to the NOVA annual meeting.

We suggest you conduct your Chapter Meetings using Parliamentary Procedure. One reference book would be Roberts Rules of Order (available in any bookstore).

By becoming a part of NOVA as a local Chapter, you are individually and collectively identified with NOVA and its primary objective of ensuring quality health care to all veterans.

Locally, you portray what NOVA is and what NOVA can accomplish. Your Chapter members need to volunteer to be on the committees making the decisions that impact nursing care to veterans. You should be a strong voice to your nurse executive and to your chief operating official, as well as to Congress.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Keys to Success

HOW TO KEEP YOUR CHAPTER ACTIVE AND GROWING

Now that you have an official NOVA Chapter, you need to keep members engaged, active and passionate. The next group of documents will do just that.

- **Suggestions for Local Chapter Meetings**
- **Establishing a Chapter Mentoring Program**
- **Strategies for Membership Recruitment and Retention**
- **How to Access the NOVA Webpage and Subscribe to “E-News from NOVA”**

Ideas for Local Chapter Meetings

Timing is everything! Poll your members; pick a convenient time and location for your meetings. You will never be able to accommodate the needs of every Chapter member, but you can reach a consensus for the majority of your members.

If you choose to meet on station, please remember to do it on your own time. Some choices include:

Breakfast: meet in the cafeteria before the workday begins; encourage night shift workers to attend.

Lunchtime: everyone brings a “brown bag” lunch to eat while meeting. You could even do “Pot Luck” meals occasionally.

After work: this is a little tricky because of varying work hours; pick a “happy medium.”

Happy Hour: meet off station at a local restaurant.

Evening: off station at a club or restaurant or in a member’s home.

Here are some of the things other Chapters are doing:

- An educational session featuring CEU’s:
 - You have many nurse experts in your facility; ask them to give a presentation on their field of expertise.
 - Have a pharmaceutical company sponsor an educational program.
 - Tap into nursing educational resources outside of your facility.
- A combination of an educational program and a meal or other refreshments
- Meetings/events based on a celebratory theme:
 - Christmas Open House: invite all nurses for refreshments and a look at what your Chapter is doing
 - Valentines Day: giving cards or flowers to all nurses

Nurses Day: sponsor a celebration for all nurses to attend; have a table to display NOVA information and membership applications

Veterans Day: doing something special for the inpatients or making a poster to display in outpatient reception rooms

- Several chapters hold an Annual Meeting. They select a clinical topic and speakers, offer CEU's and solicit support from pharmaceutical or medical equipment companies. They also hold their annual business meeting at this time.
- Raffles: many chapters have raffles to raise money for chapter activities. Check your local policies. In some facilities any moneymaking events need to be approved by the VAEA. Chapters raffle anything from flowers to gourmet gift baskets.
- Community service: many chapters participate in community fund-raisers for cancer programs, AIDS, diabetes and other causes.
- National Board of Directors: invite a member of the Board to speak at your facility; combine this with a membership recruitment drive.
- Marine Corps Marathon: NOVA participates annually in the Marine Corps Marathon the last Sunday in October. Even if you don't have any runners or 10K participants, your chapter can raise funds to support NOVA in the marathon. There are many activities chapters can get involved with to raise funds for the marathon including golf tournaments, dinners, silent auctions, bake sales.

Make the meetings fun and informational. Make everyone feel welcome and engaged. Keep minutes and share them with members who were not present (some chapters do this via email). Make every nurse wish they were a NOVA member!

Chapter Mentoring Program

Introduction

Members are the backbone of our organization! We need sustained growth in membership in order to meet our goals. This growth takes place at the local, chapter level. We have annual Member-Get-a-Member Campaigns, and we want these new members to remain in NOVA for many years. It is an interesting paradox that, while the first year offers the best opportunity to lay the foundation for long-term loyalty to a chapter, it is also the year that members are most likely to leave the organization. Why? Frequently the reasons are that the new member feels unwelcome or does not receive personal attention.

The purpose of the Chapter Mentoring Program is to welcome and engage new members when they join NOVA and throughout their first year of membership. Mentoring is defined as “A supportive and nurturing relationship between an experienced professional, a mentor, and an aspiring protégé, the adult learner.” Mentoring is a partnership your chapter can create between experienced chapter members and new members, resulting in better membership retention and a more active chapter.

Benefits of Mentoring

In order to insure the success of the Chapter Mentoring Program, it is important to understand the benefits of being a mentor:

- Enjoying the satisfaction of helping others achieve their goals within the organization
- Assisting an individual to gain new experiences and foster personal and professional growth.
- Opportunity to increase one’s influence within the chapter by sharing skills and knowledge.
- Ability to give something back to the chapter.
- The excitement of learning from those being mentored.

New members benefit because they quickly become active, participating members of NOVA. They feel satisfied, recognized and welcome; they possess a more complete knowledge of the chapter than new members who are not mentored.

Chapters benefit because they have satisfied, knowledgeable members who understand the purpose of the organization. Chapters also receive the benefit of future leaders.

Role of the Mentor

A mentor makes the new member feel welcome and helps her/him become familiar with the chapter's structure, procedures and activities by giving guidance, instilling a sense of purpose and nurturing leadership potential.

Qualities of successful mentors include:

- **Generosity**—Mentors are willing to share their time and knowledge with others.
- **Empathy**—Mentors know what it is like to be “the new kid on the block” and are willing to help.
- **Equality**—The mentoring partnership should be based on interdependence, respect and mutuality.
- **Integrity**—Communication should be based on honesty.
- **Trust**—The relationship should be one in which mistakes are viewed as a step in the learning process.
- **Enthusiasm**—Mentors enthusiastically embrace the mission and vision of NOVA.
- **Bravery**—Both members are taking risks, one of teaching and one of learning.

Steps to Mentoring

To implement a mentoring program, chapter leaders need to take the following steps:

- **Talk to new members**—Find out what they hope to achieve as members of your chapter. Use that information to assign mentors to new members.
- **Assign a mentor**—Devise a formal structure for assigning mentors; give every new member an opportunity to work with a mentor.
- **Train your mentors**—They will need guidance on the type of information to be discussed, how to assess the new members' progress and how to encourage new members to be candid with their concerns and

needs. Mentors also need to know how to benefit the most from the mentoring relationship.

Guidelines for success:

1. Do not smother new members. Show them what to do, then step back and let them do it. Be careful not to be patronizing or manipulative.
 2. Provide the big picture. New members need to know where they are going before they start out. When you understand the reason for a particular approach, you are better equipped to relate to the process.
 3. Encourage the new member to think creatively. Hearing new ideas will refresh the chapter.
- **Follow through**—Follow up with new members and mentors; assess how the program is working. Ask them what is successful and what is not.

Engaging New Members

Get the entire chapter involved in helping new members feel welcome and find their place within the chapter. Think back to your first chapter meeting. Was it a positive experience or a stressful one? If it was positive, it was probably because other members went out of their way to make you feel welcome and help you understand the structure and processes of the chapter. Here are some tips for alleviating the stress of being a new member:

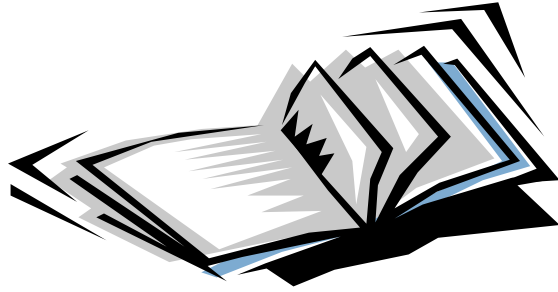
- Use nametags; do color coding or use ribbons to identify new members. Chapter Board members should make it a priority to focus on new members and make introductions to other members.
- The mentor could call the new members prior to chapter meetings and events and attend the meeting with the new member. This will boost attendance and help to retain senior members.
- Have a reception or orientation for new members before a chapter meeting. This allows new members to meet one another and chapter leaders and ensures they will not sit alone at the meeting that follows. Use this opportunity to talk about upcoming activities and recruit volunteers.
- After the first few months, do a survey of new members to determine their level of satisfaction and their needs.

Ensure Continued Success

As engaging and effective as these activities may be, your efforts should not end here. Successful retention of members relies on three actions that form the foundation upon which new members build a personal connection and long-term relationship with your chapter.

- **High Touch**—Most members will need help in understanding and taking full advantage of their membership and your chapter’s programs and services. A personal telephone call when the member joins can be invaluable. Ongoing contact after the first few meetings is also important.
- **High Active**—Begin to draw the member into participating in the chapter as soon as possible. The more actively engaged new members are, the greater the chance they will recognize the personal value of the organization. You may want to consider incentives to encourage participation, such as paying for their dinner at a chapter meeting, or giving them a coupon to attend a chapter educational event.
- **High Inform**—New members will require special information during their first year. They need to understand both local and national policies and events. Consider putting together a new member kit that includes:
 1. names and contact persons from the Board of Directors
 2. past local and national newsletters
 3. a chapter directory
 4. a calendar of events, local and national
 5. pertinent legislative information
 6. a current list of chapter members

Mentoring Bibliography



References used for this session

DePree, Max. *Leadership is an Art*. Dell Publishing Group, New York, NY, 1989.

Peddy, Shirley. *The Art of Mentoring*. Bullion Books, Houston, TX, 1998.

Shea, Gordon F. *Making the Most of Being Mentored*. Crisp Publications, Inc., Lanham, MD, 1999.

Shea, Gordon F. *Mentoring*. Crisp Publications, Inc., Lanham, MD, 1992.

Sirkin, Arlene Farber and McDermott, Michael. *Keeping Members: The Myths and Realities*. Foundation of the American Society of Association Executives, Washington, DC, 1995.

Sinetar, Marsha. *The Mentor's Spirit*. St. Martin's Press, New York, NY, 1998.

Other Mentoring References

Hargrove, R. *Masterful Coaching*. Pfeiffer, San Francisco, CA., 1995

Mickelson, G. *Mentoring Leadership Shift for the New Millennium*. Minneapolis Regional Education Center, Minneapolis, MN, 1999.

Mink, O. G., Owen, K. Q. & Mink, B. P. *Developing High Performance People: The Art of Coaching*. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, New York, NY, 1993.

Minor, M. *Coaching For Development*. Crisp Publications, Menlo Park, CA, 1995.

Stowell, S. J., & Starcevich, L. E. *Win-Win Partnerships*. CMOE Press, Salt Lake City, UT, 1996.

Winstead-Fry, P. *Career Planning: A Nurse's Guide to Career Advancement*. National League for Nursing, New York, NY: University of Vermont School of Nursing, 1990.

NURSES ORGANIZATION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

New Member Welcome Checklist

New member Name: _____

Address: _____

Home Telephone: _____

Work Station: _____ **Telephone:** _____

Mentor Name: _____

Part One - To be completed by the Membership Chair

<i>Task</i>	<i>Date Completed</i>
1. Add to the email group/chapter directory.	1. _____
2. Send notification of upcoming meetings/events.	2. _____
3. Add to newsletter list.	3. _____
4. Assign chapter mentor.	4. _____
5. Handout "New Member Welcome Packet."	5. _____
6. Make committee assignment based on interest level.	6. _____
7. Prepare welcome name badge.	7. _____
8. Introduce at chapter meeting.	8. _____
9. Publish name in newsletter.	9. _____
10. Complete follow-up survey (after 6 months).	10. _____

Part Two – To be completed by the chapter mentor

<i>Task</i>	<i>Date completed</i>
1. Invite new member to the next chapter meeting.	1. _____
2. Plan to attend the meeting with the new member.	2. _____
3. Orient new member to chapter structure and activities.	3. _____
4. Review the "New Member welcome Packet" with the member.	4. _____
5. Remain in telephone contact with the new member.	5. _____

NURSES ORGANIZATION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

New Member Welcome Packet

The purpose of the New Member Packet is to give the new member valuable information about the chapter and make them feel welcome and involved. The packet may be given to the new member when they complete the NOVA membership application, or it may be distributed to new members during the next chapter meeting. The decision as to which method to use should be based partially on the proximity of the next meeting.

Place the contents of the New Member Packet in a brightly colored folder. Attach a new member nametag to the folder. If the information will be distributed during the next chapter meeting, telephone the new member to invite them to the meeting. Otherwise, the mentor should present the new member with their packet.

Contents of the New Member Welcome Packet:

1. Welcome letter on chapter letterhead.
2. New Member Welcome Checklist.
3. Name, address and telephone numbers (work and home) of the chapter mentor.
4. List of current chapter members; if possible, list where they work.
5. List of the chapter officers, Board of Directors and committee chairs with addresses and telephone numbers of each.
6. Description/purpose of chapter committees.
7. Copy of current chapter membership list.
8. Copy of current chapter bylaws.
9. Calendar of chapter and national educational events and meetings.
10. NOVA membership brochures for recruiting new members.
11. Copy of the latest chapter newsletter.
12. Copy of the latest News from NOVA.
13. Pertinent legislative information on pending congressional bills.

NOVA New Member Survey

Date _____

Name of new member _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip code _____

Dear (name of new member),

We are pleased to have you as a member of our chapter! We value your membership and your ideas/opinions. We want to make NOVA and our chapter even more attractive to VA nurses. Please take a few moments to respond to this questionnaire. Your responses will let us know how we are doing to meet your needs and expectations, and how to improve our meetings in the future.

1. How many meetings have you attended in the last 6 months? _____

2. Do you feel welcome at the meetings? Yes No

Please explain why or why not.

3. Has your chapter mentor helped you? Yes No

If yes, how, or comments on how to improve the mentoring program.

4. Are chapter meetings held on a day/time that is convenient for you?

Yes No

5. What day/time would be better? _____

6. Are chapter meetings held in a location that is convenient for you?

Yes No

Suggestions for other locations _____

7. Please circle all words that describe how you feel about chapter meetings.

interesting boring stimulating informative a waste of time
too short too long just right organized disorganized

8. Do you receive minutes of the meetings if you are unable to be present for the meetings? Yes No

9. Do you feel the national newsletter, News From NOVA, keeps you informed of legislative events? Yes No

10. If you could change anything about your local chapter, what would it be?

11. If you could change anything about NOVA in general, what would it be?

12. Do you have any additional comments or ideas?

Please return this questionnaire in the enclosed envelope. Thank you very much for your input!

Sincerely,

Name
Membership Chair or chapter president

(The Membership Chair or Chapter President will forward a summary of the questionnaires to National NOVA office every six months).

NURSES ORGANIZATION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Sample Letter to Welcome New Members

Date

New Member Name

Address

City, State, Zip code

Dear *(name of new member)*,

On behalf of the membership committee, I want to welcome you to our NOVA Chapter. The *(name of chapter)* chapter is *(number of members)* strong and growing. We value the talents and expertise you bring to our organization and we look forward to interacting with you at chapter events.

Our chapter meets on the *(e.g., first Wednesday)* of each month from *(time)* to *(time)*. Our President sends out meeting notices via email prior to the meetings. I have enclosed the notice of our next meeting.

Please wear the enclosed nametag to the first meeting you attend. A Chapter Mentor will help orient you to our Chapter. You will receive a "New Member Welcome Packet" with the name and telephone numbers of your mentor. The packet also contains a wealth of information about NOVA, both locally and nationally. Also, any chapter member would be happy to assist you and answer any questions you may have.

Again, *(name of new member)*, welcome to NOVA and the *(name of chapter)* Chapter. We look forward to meeting you in the near future!

Sincerely,

Name

Membership Committee

Work telephone number

(Please feel free to modify this letter to accommodate your chapter structure).

Visit the New NOVA Web Page

<http://www.vanurse.org>

Join **NOVA**

Pay **Annual Dues**

Register for the **Annual Meeting**

Register for **Regional Meetings**

Read the latest **E-News form NOVA**

Sign Up to Receive **E-News from NOVA**

Keep up to date on **Legislative News**

Network with colleagues using the **Message Boards**

Update your personal **Membership Profile**

Contact your **Board Members**

Check out the **Health Policy Handbook**

Check out **NOVA's Position Papers**

Check out **NOVA Foundation Scholarships**

Learn about NOVA's **History**

Learn about **Nurses & the Legislative Process**

Review previous issues of **News From NOVA**

Stay informed online!

Get the latest information!

Join our email group to receive the latest news and updates.

Go to: www.vanurse.org

Click on the "Subscribe" button and follow the instructions.

You will automatically receive up-to-date information on issues that impact us as VA nurses.

Information IS Power!

Contact us at nova@vanurse.org

Handouts:

Communicating With Your Legislators in Writing

One of the most effective tools for communicating with elected officials is through a letter. Legislators rely on letters to find out what their constituents are thinking. Also, letter writing can be a first step in building an ongoing relationship with your legislator or other elected officials.

Before contacting legislators, it is important to do some preparation on the issue at hand and on the legislator. Carefully planned contacts are usually the most effective. Being prepared can be as simple as reading the newspaper or other news media and keeping abreast of the issue in News from NOVA or other publications.

Here are some guidelines for more effective communication:

- Type your letter or write legibly.
- Use your own words; personal letters are more effective than form letters or post card petitions.
- In the opening sentence clearly state the topic and your position on it; stay on one topic.
- If the legislation has a bill number, use it.
- Use your personal and professional experience to make your case.
- Be concise; one page is best.
- Be polite, timely, positive and constructive; do not plead and never threaten.
- Use your name and address on both the envelope and the letter to assist staff in relying, as well as identifying you as a constituent.
- If appropriate, establish yourself as a source of information and offer your assistance.

Address your legislator properly:

For Senators:
The Honorable (insert name)
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

For Representatives:
The Honorable (insert name)
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

For a salutation, use "Dear Senator (last name)" or "Dear Representative (last name)."
It cannot be stressed enough how much your voice counts! Nurses are major stockholders in the legislative process. Whether acting as individuals or part of a group, we must continue to impact the political scene.

No Time For Silence: Political Advocacy

Nurses often are passionate about health care issues; they want what's right or best for the patient. However, to be effective, this passion and righteousness needs to be focused. With the appropriate approach, a few nurses alone can affect legislation at the state and federal levels, influence politicians and be effective politically.

Political activist and author Joel Blackwell describes a strategy he calls "ARM:" attitude, relationship, and message. These key elements can help shape and focus nurses' passion, knowledge of the issues and righteousness of the cause into coherent and effective political advocacy.

The main objective of any politician is to get elected. With this in mind, politicians want to know what their constituents are thinking and be responsive to them. They want to hear our "stories"; they want to know how their vote on a bill before Congress will affect our nursing practice. But, they are very busy people and that is where the ARM theory comes in.

ATTITUDE

What makes the most powerful lobbying groups successful? What gives them power? It is their attitude--the passion they convey about the issues they are lobbying for.

Most politicians enter politics wanting to do the right thing. Each year, legislators at the state and federal levels must wade through hundreds of bills covering a broad range of issues. It is impossible for them to be versed in all issues and completely understand each bill. They rely on their constituents to help educate them on the issues so they can vote accordingly. Constituents wield a lot of power.

Through personal attention and passion, you as a constituent can call attention to particular legislation or issues. As a professional nurse, you are an expert in your field and in many aspects of the health care system. You are an expert on veteran's issues. You are in a position to be recognized by your elected officials.

RELATIONSHIP

In a productive relationship, the legislator knows and cares about you. How do you build that relationship? By asking yourself "What can I do that will help this person?" There is a difference between what you do for your elected officials and what you want them to do for you. By helping the legislator, you build a relationship. And, in a good relationship, the legislator knows you and your issues and considers you an expert in your field.

You can build relationships through personal visits to "the Hill," through telephone calls expressing your opinions, or through letter-writing and email. Another way to build relationships is to volunteer to help with the next election campaign.

MESSAGE

How do you get your message to an elected official through the clutter of email, letters and cookie-cutter messages? The message must be a personal story conveyed directly to an elected official or to their aides. A personal story connects your issue with an actual event, providing a visible image for the legislator. Speaking in the abstract or using nursing jargon does not help the legislator to understand your concern. The following elements are essential to any message, whether it is conveyed via letter or telephone:

- Be accurate and truthful
- Be brief
- Keep it simple. Emphasize three or four points. Providing too much data and detail can clutter the message.
- Tell your name, where you live in the legislators' district, along with brief personal information (how long you've lived in the community, how many years you've been a nurse).
- Use a personal story to tell the legislator something new and relevant about your issue.
- Be clear in your request. Tell the legislator what you want and ask for support or opposition to the issue. Be explicit but polite.
- Help the official understand the issue. Give the actual bill number.
- Follow up any conversation, written or verbal, with a thank you letter. Include your name, address and telephone number.

There is no time for silence; we must be political advocates for our profession and for our patients.

NOVA Annual Report 2008

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
- Health Care 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 FY 2008 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.
- 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
- By laws 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, RNC 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, RNET, 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, CNA, 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, CNA-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 a Nurse Emeritus group are as follows

- Currently 15% of VA nurses are retirement eligible and projections are 4% will actually retire each year through 2013.
- Applying those same percentages to the NOVA membership it is anticipated that the organization will be losing a minimum of 120 members per year due to retirement.
- 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.
- 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 these 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 Dated May 20, 2008 titled The Role of NOVA at VHA Facilities where RNs are represented by AFGWebCIMS #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 Affairs so that when testimony is needed on veteran’s issues, NOVA is called. 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 Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs and presented on 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.

- b. 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.

- c. 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 retirees 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.

Determination of clinical competence is best reserved for those responsible in ensuring 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 Claffin RN PhD 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 **Magelene James, Mary Powe**

VISN 8, 9 **Lee Fealy, Providencia Cardona**

VISN10, 11 **Janet Parrish, RonPatrick**

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. Also, a letter from the NOVA President which states the winner’s accomplishments and the phrase, “include this letter when you submit your annual proficiency to the NPSB” will be sent to the top five recruiters.

□ 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 November 15, 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:

VA Facility

Charleston, S.C.

Hines, Ill.

Michigan Consortia

(Detroit, Saginaw, Battle Creek, Ann Arbor) University of Detroit Mercy, and Saginaw Valley State University

Oklahoma City, Okla.

Providence, R.I.

Tampa, Fla.

School of Nursing

Medical University of South Carolina

Loyola University of Chicago

University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center

Rhode Island College

University of South Florida

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 2008-2009 Board of Directors are:

President – Nancy Claflin

Vice President – Larry Lemos

Treasurer-Mary Seaman

Secretary- Joan Clifford

Membership Secretary- Cheryl Knowles

Immediate Past President- Cecelia McVey

Directors- Sharon Johnson

Ann Narciso

Sharon Simpson

Thelma Roach-Serry

Executive Director-Deborah Beck

Deputy Director - Susan Dove

Administrative Specialist- Luba Litvinova

NOVA and the Unions

NOVA is the professional organization of registered nurses employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs. NOVA is frequently mistaken for a union, but professional organizations and unions have very different missions.

NOVA's mission is to shape and influence health care in the Department of Veterans Affairs, and its members are registered nurses. NOVA deals with national issues which affect patient care and all registered nurses.

Unions (also called Bargaining Units) represent bargaining unit members on these issues as well as on very specific concerns. Unions are also membership organizations and spend a majority of their time representing their members on more specific issues such as salaries, working conditions, and grievance procedures.

NOVA and VA unions have shared concerns, and these two organizations have worked together on many occasions regarding shared concerns. Shared areas include: needle stick injuries; mandatory overtime; shift rotation; and implementation of locality pay. Areas of great concern to NOVA include: funding for VA; allocation of budget dollars to specific clinical programs, such as mental health, OEF/OIF and women's programs; access to care; aging facilities; and the impact of the centralization of information technology and other centralization initiatives on the quality and delivery of patient care.

NOVA and VA unions are natural allies on a number of shared issues. At both the national and chapter/facility level, NOVA encourages chapters to form coalitions on these issues, and work together for a better VA health care system.

Nurses--VA's Most Important Health Care Resource

By Anthony J. Principi

Former Secretary of Veterans Affairs

"Nursing is live in action," according to the famous social worker Lillian D. Wald. The 30,000 nurses of the Department of Veterans Affairs demonstrate the truth of that statement every day, at each of the more than 1,100 hospitals, outpatient clinics, nursing homes and other facilities where our department provides health care to America's veterans. It is the caring heart, the inquiring mind, and the skilled hands of our nurses that best represent VA health care to our veterans, to their families--and to the world.

Recently, NOVA's Board of Directors asked me if I would be interested in using this newsletter as a forum to communicate directly with VA nurses. I am delighted to do so, because I know how vital your work is to our department's success, and how dedicated you are to the veterans we serve.

NOVA does so much to promote quality care for our nation's veterans. The educational opportunities for VA nurses you provide, the research grants that you offer, and the award programs you promote, all make a significant contribution to VA's sacred mission. Thank you for everything you do, as individuals and as part of this fine group.

The profession of nursing is central to our department's success, because VA health care is central to our mission of caring for our veterans' needs. You are the chief guardians of VA health care. You are the teachers, and the rest of us are your students.

VA nurses teach veterans and their families a great deal about their health, their lives, and themselves. You teach VA physicians an important lesson--that they would be lost without you. And, every day, you teach your fellow VA employees about the length to which an employee of this department can and will go to show caring and concern for the veterans we serve.

Whenever I visit a VA facility, I always try to talk to veterans about themselves--about their service, about their lives, and about the care they are receiving. And one subject comes up again and again--how much those veterans appreciate the care they receive from our nurses.

I also talk to VA employees on my visits--not only facility directors and their senior staffs, but those who work throughout the hospital. And I am always impressed by the professional knowledge of VA nurses and their ability to transform that knowledge into compassionate care.

Strong nursing skills directly translate into better patient care. A recent nationwide study tells us that patients run a higher risk of developing avoidable post surgical complications if their nurses have to care for more patients.

And a recent patient satisfaction survey of more than one million patients nationwide identified the factors that would affect how likely patients would be to recommend the hospital to others. Of the top ten factors, six were related to the quality of nursing care.

You are all part of a great tradition: one that has spanned generations. It is a tradition of dedication to meeting the challenge Abraham Lincoln first set forth in 1865, when he called on our nation to care for those who had borne the battle. It is a tradition that has included two Nobel prize winners, and medical breakthroughs like the Seattle Foot, kidney transplants, and drug treatments for high blood pressure and schizophrenia.

I challenge you to help us meet the needs of veterans today--and tomorrow. I ask VA's nurses to be leaders in the delivery of health care to veterans; to be part of policy discussions in

this department on the future of health care for veterans; and, to be among those who propose and evaluate changes that will continue to reshape the way VA health care is provided.

I will work with you--every step of the way. Together with VA's other health care professionals, we will provide America's veterans with the kind of world-class health care to which their service has entitled them. Once again, thank you for everything you do, every day, for my fellow veterans.

"I am always impressed by the professional knowledge of VA nurses and their ability to transform that knowledge into compassionate care."

Please copy this article and share it with every nurse you work with!

"What Does NOVA Do For Me?"

We, the "true believers" of NOVA hear this question asked all the time. We generally reply with the obvious:

- A strong lobbying power on Capitol Hill
- A quarterly newsletter featuring national and local activities of the organization related to nursing practice within the DVA
- Timely legislative updates on our web page, in News From NOVA, and in periodic issues of "Legislatively Speaking"
- Links (personal, electronic and telephonic) to other nursing/legislative organizations
- National, regional and local educational programs
- Scholarship opportunities through the NOVA Foundation
- A voice in policy making through our contacts on Capitol Hill, the VSO's and VA Central Office

These are our core values, the things we really believe in. Our challenge today is to "think out of the box." Where do we go from here? How do we capture/market what we believe in and propel those beliefs forward in non-conventional ways?

Like all living things, organizations have a life cycle. Growth and prosperity are followed by a slow period. If the organization does not address the changes it encounters, a period of decline can occur. Organizations and companies that respond to change are successful. Organizations that stop to take the pulse of changing times and adjust their course are able to move into new periods of prosperity.

We are attempting to "take your pulse." Our newly expanded web page offers many ways to stay informed. Joining the NOVA email group gives you instant information pertaining to legislative forces that will impact our delivery of patient care. You can offer suggestions and give us input by utilizing the "contact us" section of the web page.

NOVA is a recognized force in Washington. The NOVA Board bombarded the Secretary of Veterans Affairs with calls and letters expressing our concerns about the lack of an appointment of a Chief Nurse Consultant. Shortly thereafter, Secretary West met with two members of the Board and announced Cathy Rick would assume this critical position.

The status of the Nurse Appreciation Act and new legislation about locality pay seemed dormant until NOVA awakened the House Veterans Affairs Committee and now we have the potential of getting something passed before Congress retires for the election campaign.

We are planning more Regional Seminars in an attempt to bring you timely, quality educational programs within your geographical area. We are listening to your requests for more clinical content in our Annual Meeting.

Cathy Rick, our Chief Nursing Officer, is anxious to "walk a mile in your shoes." She wants to know what it is like "in the trenches." We have a marvelous opportunity to expand our sphere of influence by keeping Cathy apprised of the patient care issues we are most concerned about.

We also need to modify our thinking about the legislative process. No matter what you think about politics or the legislative process, we have to learn to navigate the system. And the Internet enables us to express our opinions with just a few keystrokes. There is no excuse for

complacency! We cannot be part of the silent majority, not if we want to live our mission statement and influence health care within the Department of Veterans affairs.

There is national concern about staffing levels, patient safety and the impending nursing shortage. NOVA will make these issues part of the agenda for our December Legislative Roundtable. VA nursing needs a strong, unified, informed voice which speaks for our profession, its rightful place in health care, and its impact on advocacy and optimal care for our patients. NOVA is that power and voice!

This is what NOVA can do for you! Spread the word!

NOVA Bylaws

ARTICLE I. PREAMBLE, NAME & OBJECTIVES

SECTION 1. Preamble

The professional nursing staff of VA hereby creates this assembly of nurses for the purpose of the objectives as stated within these bylaws.

SECTION 2. Name

The name of this organization shall be the Nurses Organization of the Veterans Affairs, hereafter also referred to as "NOVA" or as the "Organization".

SECTION 3. Objectives

The objectives of NOVA shall be to:

- provide for quality nursing care to the veteran patient,
- facilitate open communication among all VA nurses and those persons or organizations impacting on VA Health Care System,
- influence the recruitment and retention of professional nurses,
- provide learning opportunities for NOVA members,
- foster a high level of professional nursing practice,
- foster research and academic excellence in VA Nursing Service.

ARTICLE II. MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1. Classification

NOVA shall be composed of three classifications of members: Active, Associate and Honorary.

SECTION 2. Qualifications and Privileges

A. - Active membership shall include any registered nurse employed full time, part time and/or intermittent status by VA. Active members shall be eligible to vote, to hold office and to participate in all other membership benefits offered by the Organization.

B. - Associate membership shall include any registered nurse retired from VA. Associate members shall have the same rights as Active members, except the right to hold office.

C. - Honorary membership shall be awarded to a member or non-member who has rendered notable and outstanding service to the Organization. They shall be recommended by a member to the Board of Directors. Honorary membership shall be approved by three-fourths (3/4) vote at any business meeting. Honorary membership shall include all privileges of Association Membership, but shall not be subject to the payment of annual dues.

SECTION 3. Chapter Membership

Chapter members must be members of the National Organization.

SECTION 4. Nondiscrimination Policy

No person shall be denied membership on the basis of sex, race, age, religious beliefs, handicap, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political affiliation/belief, or status as a veteran.

SECTION 5. Responsibilities

Each member shall abide by the provisions of the bylaws of NOVA, the Chapter's bylaws, and such additional policies as may be established by the Organization.

SECTION 6. Dues

- A. - The annual dues if any shall be determined by the Board of Directors and shall be remitted in accordance with policies established by the Board of Directors.
- B. - Members who are ninety (90) days delinquent in payment of their dues shall automatically be dropped from the National and Chapter membership roles.
- C. - Chapter dues shall not exceed the National dues.
- D. - Upon resignation, there shall be no refund of dues.

ARTICLE III. OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

SECTION 1. Composition

The Officers and Directors of the Organization shall consist of a President, President-Elect, Vice-President, Secretary, Membership Secretary, Treasurer and six (6) Directors.

SECTION 2. Term of Office

- A. - Officers and Directors shall begin their terms of office at the close of the annual meeting following the election or until the election of the successor.
- B. - Officers and Directors shall serve a two-year term except the President-Elect who shall serve a one-year term prior to succeeding to the Presidency.
- C. - Officers shall hold no more than one office at a time.
- D. - The President and President-Elect shall not serve for more than one (1) term in the same office. All other Officers and Directors shall not serve for more than two (2) consecutive terms in the same office.

SECTION 3. Election of Officers and Directors

The Membership Secretary, Treasurer and three (3) Directors shall be elected in even numbered years; and the President-Elect, Vice President, Secretary and three (3) Directors shall be elected in odd numbered years.

SECTION 4. Qualifications

- A. - All candidates shall be a current member of NOVA.
- B. - All candidates shall have been a member of NOVA for two years prior to becoming a candidate.
- C. - President and Vice-President shall have previously served on the Board of Directors for at least one (1) year prior to taking office.
- D. - All candidates shall comply with the requirements set forth by the Nominating Committee and approved by the Board of Directors.

SECTION 5. Vacancies

- A. - Unless stated otherwise in these bylaws, should a vacancy of an Officer or Director occur, the vacant office may remain vacant, or be filled by appointment of the President with Board approval, for the remainder of the term.
- B. - Should a vacancy occur in the office of President, the Vice-President shall fill the vacancy for the unexpired term. If the Vice-President is unable to fill the office of President, the President-Elect shall fill the vacancy for the unexpired term and shall subsequently serve as President for the term to which he/she was elected.
- C. - Should a vacancy occur in the office of President-Elect, the office shall be declared vacant until the next annual meeting at which time a President and a President-Elect shall be elected to serve for the ensuing year.

ARTICLE IV. ELECTIONS

SECTION 1.

The Nominating Committee shall solicit and select candidates for those offices that shall become

vacant at the close of the forthcoming annual meeting.

SECTION 2.

The Nominating Committee shall present to the voting members a ballot of the candidates for office at least thirty (30) days prior to the annual meeting.

SECTION 3.

Write-in candidates shall be accepted and tallied.

SECTION 4.

Elections shall be solely by mail ballot. The Nominating Committee shall establish a deadline for the return of ballots.

SECTION 5.

Candidates shall be elected by a plurality of those eligible members voting.

SECTION 6.

Tie votes shall be decided by the drawing of lots.

SECTION 7.

Rules and procedures for the conduct of all elections shall be recommended by the Nominating Committee and approved by the Board of Directors.

SECTION 8.

Officers and Directors shall perform those duties prescribed by these bylaws and shall perform all such other duties as usually pertain to their respective offices or as directed by the President and Board of Directors.

A. - President: Shall be the chief executive officer of the Organization and is designated as the Organization's primary spokesperson. The President shall be directly responsible to the Board for the overall administration of the Organization.

B. - Vice-President: Shall preside in the absence of the President.

C. - Secretary: Shall be responsible for the general correspondence and communication of the Organization, for recording of the official minutes of the business meeting and the meetings of the Board of Directors and for the maintenance of all official records of the Organization. The Secretary shall serve as the historian.

D. - Treasurer: Shall be responsible for the maintenance of all the financial affairs of the Organization, which include, but are not limited to, the preparation of periodic financial reports to the Board. The Treasurer shall be the Chairperson of the Finance Committee.

E. - Membership Secretary: Shall be responsible for the maintenance of the membership records, preparation of renewal notices and membership confirmation. The Membership Secretary shall serve as the Chairperson of the Membership Committee.

ARTICLE V. MEETING OF THE MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1.

The Annual Meeting of the Organization shall be held at least yearly and the time and place shall be determined by the Board of Directors.

SECTION 2.

The Business Meeting shall be held at a time of the Annual Meeting for the purpose of receiving reports of the Officers and Committees and for the discussion of, and actions concerning, issues which affect the membership.

SECTION 3.

All other meetings of the Organization (if any) shall be in accordance with policies established by the Board of Directors.

SECTION 4.

Those members present at any Business Meeting shall constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE VI. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SECTION 1. Composition

A. - The Board of Directors shall be the governing body of the Organization and shall establish policy, direct activities and approve all actions pertaining to the business of NOVA and its Chapters.

B. - The Board shall reserve the right to charter Chapters.

C. - The Board shall have the responsibility to conduct the fiduciary affairs of the Organization in a prudent manner in accord with its bylaws and the laws under which it is governed.

D. - The Fiscal Year shall be determined by the Board of Directors.

E. - The Board shall approve and authorize the official acts of the elected officials and its committees.

SECTION 2. Meetings of the Board of Directors

A. - Regular meetings of the Board of Directors shall be held at least twice annually.

B. - Special meetings of the Board of Directors may be called by the President, or upon written request of three (3) members of the Board, or the written request of five (5) chapters. The purpose of the meeting shall be stated in both the request and in the notice of special meeting.

C. - A quorum for meetings of the Board of Directors shall be constituted by 50% of the members of the Board of Directors.

SECTION 3. Compensation

No members, including officers and directors of the Board of Directors, shall be compensated for their service to the Organization, except for reimbursement of usual and proper expenses incurred in the attendance of Board meetings and those other necessary activities in the course of duties in accordance with the policies set forth by the Board of Directors.

SECTION 4. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee of the Board shall consist of the Officers of the Organization: President, President-Elect, Vice-President, Secretary, Membership Secretary and Treasurer. The Executive Committee shall be empowered to act for the Board between meetings of the Board of Directors. All actions of the Executive Committee shall be approved by the Board of Directors at its next scheduled meeting.

ARTICLE VII. CHAPTERS

SECTION 1.

Members in each VA medical facility shall be granted Chapter status provided that:

A. - There are local members who are members of the National Organization in good standing.

B. - The established policies and procedures for Chapter status application have been completed.

C. - The Chapter bylaws have been approved.

SECTION 2.

A NOVA chapter may be formed in each VA facility. A facility with two or more divisions may form two or more chapters upon approval by the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE VIII. COMMITTEES

SECTION 1.

All Standing and Special Committees shall be appointed by the President and approved by the Board of Directors.

SECTION 2.

The Board of Directors shall determine the composition, duties and responsibilities of all

committees.

SECTION 3.

Committee members shall be appointed for a term of one year and shall be made on a year-to-year basis.

SECTION 4.

The President or his/her designee shall be an ex-officio member of all committees except the Nominating Committee.

SECTION 5.

The Standing Committees may include, but are not limited to: Awards, Bylaws, Chapters, Finance, Historical, Legislative, Nominating, Membership, Newsletter, Policy-Procedure, Program and Publicity.

ARTICLE IX. INDEMNIFICATION

The Organization shall indemnify any and all persons who may serve or who have served at any time as a director, officer, committee chairperson or staff member of the Organization and their respective heirs, administrators, successors and assigns, against any and all expenses incurred by such a person in connection with any action, suit or other proceeding, including any settlement thereof approved by the Board of Directors, by reason of such person's having been a director or officer of the Organization. The directors or officers shall not be liable to the Organization or its members for any mistake of judgment, negligence or for any other reason except in the case of bad faith or willful misconduct on the part of any such person. The officers or directors shall have no personal liability for any contract or other commitment made by them, in good faith, and the Organization shall indemnify and forever hold each such director or officer harmless against any and all liability to others on account of any such contract or commitment.

ARTICLE X. PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

The rules contained in the current edition of the Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern the Organization in all cases to which they are applicable and which they are not inconsistent with the bylaws of NOVA and any special rules of order the Organization may adopt.

ARTICLE XI. DISSOLUTION

In the event of the dissolution of the Organization, all assets shall be disposed of in keeping with its tax exempt status and governing laws.

ARTICLE XII. INCORPORATION & NON-PROFIT STATUS

The Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs was incorporated in the State of Illinois under the 'General Not for Profit Corporation Act' of January 1944, on December 10, 1980.

The Organization is also an exempt, non-profit Organization under the Internal Revenue Code, Section 501(c)(6).

ARTICLE XIII. AMENDMENTS

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.

Adopted October 2, 1982

Amended November 7, 1984

Amended October 4, 1986

Amended April 14, 1988

Amended April 15, 1989

Amended April 11, 1992

Amended April 17, 1993
Amended April 16, 1994
Amended April 22, 1997