

The Nurses Organization of the Veterans Administration: The First Five Years, 1980-1984.

Introduction

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

1980

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

April – August

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

September - December

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

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

Cathy Gawron
Isaac Wilson

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

December

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

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

1981

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

The culmination of several months' planning was a highly successful reception held at the Rayburn Building in Washington, D.C., for Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committee members and their staffs. NOVA members from Hines, Illinois; St. Louis, Missouri; Des Moines, Iowa; Manhattan, New York; Albany, New York;

Richmond, Virginia; and Washington, D.C. attended to discuss their nursing and veteran patient care concerns with the legislators.

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

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

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

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

Ballauer, and Company in laying the groundwork for the “Financial Aspects of the Organization.”

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

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

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

1982

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

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

concerned about nursing problems but also is concerned about programs and healthcare aspects related to the veteran. She encouraged the Senators to use VA nursing service as a resource of healthcare knowledge when legislative decisions are being made.

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

It was an exhilarated now seasoned group that laid plans for the Second Annual Meeting September 30-October 3, 1982 in the nation's Capital. The theme was "Personal, Professional and Political Growth." NOVA went on record with the statement: *NOVA recognizes the impact of the legislative process on the health care of the nation's Veterans. The politically aware nurse can influence legislation that affects professional practice while continuing to serve as an advocate for the Veteran patient.* Jerome Freeman, Program Committee Chairperson, put together an excellent program, and the Washington Hilton provided an elegant setting. A reception at the Rayburn Building for members of Congress and their legislative staffs was hosted by NOVA.

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter Growth

As of November, 1982, NOVA boasted thirty (30) chapters, including:

Hines, IL	Manhattan, NY
Albany, NY	Phoenix, AZ
Jerry L. Pettis Mem., CA	Battle Creek, MI
Reno, NV	Gainesville, FL
Salt Lake City, UT	Walla Walla, WA
Colmery-O'Neil, KS	Montrose, NY
Palo Alto, CA	Atlanta, GA
Miami, FL	Philadelphia, PA
Cleveland, OH	Coatesville, PA
Lyons, NJ	American Lake, WA
Butler, PA	Bath, NY
New Orleans, LA	Seattle, WA
Syracuse, NY	Ann Arbor, MI
West Haven, CT	St. Louis, MO
Lexington, KY	Dayton, OH

The total paid membership to date was 2315 members, quite a record for an organization that had gone national officially approximately one year earlier in September of 1981.

1983

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

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

It was fitting that the Board reviewed the organization's "growing pains" at the Bismarck, site of the first annual meeting. The vital issue of strategies for stabilizing NOVA's financial structure came under discussion. The Board was faced with the reality

that the mainstay of the organization would be expanded membership and increased dues. \$12.00 per annum had been too modest a beginning. The Board reviewed the legislative report on the VA Study of the Feasibility and Desirability of Converting Selected Healthcare Occupations to Title 38. It was decided that the NOVA President would be in communication with the National LPN group regarding their stance on this issue.

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

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

The program titled "Veteran Healthcare – The Mandate to VA Nursing" focused on timely issues related to healthcare for the veteran patient. NOVA's goals maintained that the primary function of VA nursing is quality health care for the Veteran. Therefore the focus of this program was imparting care through nursing and nursing's potential political activity. We were honored to have Harry N. Walters, Administrator, Veterans Administration, Washington, D.C., as the keynote speaker. He exchanged grass root information with the NOVA Executive Committee at an informal breakfast prior to his address on "Challenges of the VA in the next 5 years." The legislative tone was set by Yvonne Moody, M.S.N., R.N., Chief Nursing Program, Region 6, VACO, in her message "Veterans Care: The Mandate to VA Nurses." United States Senator Dennis DeConcini of Arizona spoke on "Current Political Issues of Concern in Veteran Healthcare." Cherly Beversdorf, B.S.N., M.N.S.C., R.N., American Health Association, gave her firsthand account of "Nursing Involvement in the Political System." Patricia Hunter, R.N., California Board of Registered Nursing told us about her road to a political appointment.

A variety of other topics included "Political Action in the Nursing Curriculum" by Donna Ver Steeg, Ph.D.; "Power Skills" by Veneer Farley, Ph.D., Long Beach, California; "How An Idea Becomes a Law," Tom Adamski, M.S., R.N., Manhattan VAMC; "Nursing and the Aged Veteran," Elizabeth Lattell-Beardmore, Ed.D., R.N., Miami VAMC; "The Image Nurses Want to Project," Alice Tulanowski, M.S.N., R.N., Lyons VAMC; and "The Joint Appointment," Mary Ann Mikulic, M.N., R.N., Seattle VAMC. These varied and high powered presentations gave participants a crash course in becoming viable change agents for NOVA. Arthur Rodriguez, Dept. Service Officer in Charge of the San Diego area, and F. Joseph Dwyer, Senior Field Service Officer, San Diego, gave participants "The Veteran's View." This outstandingly inclusive program was highlighted by the presentation of the first NOVA Achievement Award to Chief

Nurse Jennie Umbel McCoy. Ms. McCoy responded to the president's accolades with "Reflections and Predictions."

Election results demonstrated the strength of NOVA nationwide, with:

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

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

1984

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

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

As a broad spectrum of issues were dealt with during 1984, the emphasis fell on budget planning in relationship to the legislative and membership programs. A new membership brochure and pro-ration of dues was provided for. The Chapter Update publication was well received as a mechanism to keep Chapters informed of NOVA's activities on a bi-monthly basis. In an effort to provide NOVA members with a service not available to VA employees, the Board did a search for disability insurance coverage.

A San Francisco based marketing firm was selected as the provider. Every visit to Washington, D.C. was grasped as an opportunity to reaffirm NOVA's visibility and credibility. President Elaine Lloyd met with Dr. Custis, the Chief Medical Director VACO. NOVA Officers exchanged ideas and concerns with Ms. Vernice Ferguson at a dinner meeting. Once again Board members met with the National leaders of the Veteran Organization Service Groups.

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

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

It was with profound admiration that the participants received the moving address of the "Experiences of a Nurse POW" by Col. (Ret.) Ruby Bradley. NOVA gave Col. Bradley the Public Service Award on behalf of the World War II Nurse Prisoners of War, and Col. Bradley gave NOVA a renewed pride in the profession of nursing. Nothing could have been more timely than Nora S. Kinzer, Ph.D.'s topic, "The Women Veteran

and the VA Healthcare System.” Ms. Kinzer serves as Special Assistant to the Administrator of the VA, Washington, D.C.

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

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

National election results were announced:

Vice President:	Betty Beardmore (Miami, FL)
Secretary:	Verdelle Bellamy (Atlanta, GA)
Board Members:	Vivian John (Hines, IL)
	Luis Medina (San Francisco, CA)
	Noreen Sommer (Palo Alto, CA)

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

1985

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

apprising them of their concerns of how the current recommendations for budget cuts would directly or indirectly affect health care delivery to the Veteran patient.

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

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

A NOVA Alert was sent to each Chapter President in June asking that they notify their members about concerns for the VA portion of the Federal Budget. Members were asked to write legislators on the Budget Conference Committee who would be hammering out the final budget and deciding whether or not the VA budget would be reduced, causing a reduction in staffing for patient care. Also in June, NOVA responded to proposed drastic cuts in the separate VA Central Office budget with nursing personnel affected by a reduction of 50%. Letters were sent from NOVA's President to legislators, to the Chief Medical Director in VACO as well as others about our opposition to any pay reduction or freeze, any increase in retirement contributions, and any reduction in VA Central Office Nursing Service Staff. VA nursing and patient care would be weakened with such cuts, so NOVA's voice was heard on these issues. HR 2663: Angela Beth Bohannon and the Topeka, Kansas Chapter succeeded in having Congressman Slattery of Kansas introduce legislation for the Cadet Nurses to get creditable time towards retirement. Committee hearings on the legislation were scheduled for the fall of 1985, with NOVA represented.

The membership recruitment project consisted of an extensive mailing to 6000 VA employed Registered Nurses was completed; the Board analyzed the results at the June Board meeting. Membership increased by 18% in the last three months with the Membership Recruitment project credited with many new members. The Board learned more about the membership in their efforts to keep numbers growing. The Long Range Planning Committee completed a Postcard Survey of members who had not renewed to gain information on why they hadn't. An important finding was that 27% of those surveyed had left VA employment. The growth rate will be calculated taking that yearly

loss into consideration. One of the 1985 projects of the Long Range Planning Committee was the development of an "Issues and Needs" Questionnaire. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the current status of NOVA and factors that might influence the future of NOVA. The results of this analysis will assist with planning long-range goals and objectives which will insure that NOVA's actions can meet the needs of its members.

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

Summary—The First Five Years

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

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

National Officers and the Board of Directors meet annually with National Veterans Service Organizations, to share concerns regarding Veteran healthcare issues. Liaisons have also been established with numerous other national nursing and health care organizations. NOVA, with a potential membership of 30,000 Registered Nurses, is

recognized as a voice for nurses employed by the Veterans Administration, the largest single employer of registered nurses in the nation.

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

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

Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs: A History of NOVA, The Second Five Years, 1985 - 1989.

Forward

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

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

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

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

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The First Five Years: A Summary

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

Nancy Schliefer, Membership Secretary; and Judith Paice, Catherine Gawron, and Isaac Wilson, Board of Directors.

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

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

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

The second annual meeting, chaired by Jerome Freeman, took place September 30 – October 2, 1982, in Washington, D.C. with the theme: "Personal, Professional, and Political Growth." Miss Vernice Ferguson was the keynote speaker. The NOVA constitution and bylaws were adopted. Another congressional reception was held at the

Rayburn Building. By November, 30 chapters had been formed and membership was 2,315. NOVA had “gone national” only one year earlier.

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

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

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

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

Nineteen eighty-five began with NOVA voicing its opposition to a proposed decrease in FTEs and a five per cent pay reduction. Nursing staff to patient ratios were already less than those in the private sector. The Board met in April to discuss the impact

of the Grace Commission Report and to oppose the reduction of VACO nursing staff by 50%. A membership recruitment project sent 6,000 letters to potential members resulting in an 18% increase in membership. The Long Range Planning Committee sent a post card survey to nurses who had not renewed their NOVA membership and found that 27% of these nurses no longer worked for the VA. An issues and needs questionnaire was also developed by the committee.

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

1985

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

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

The officers for 1985-1986 were:

President:	E. Elaine Lloyd (Palo Alto VAMC)
Vice President:	Elizabeth Lattell-Beardmore (Miami VAMC)
Secretary:	Verdelle B. Bellamy (Atlanta VAMC)
Membership Secretary:	Lenore Manak (Loma Linda VAMC)
Treasurer:	Lynna Smith (American Lake VAMC)
Directors:	Kenneth Hall (Syracuse VAMC)
	Vivian John (Hines, VAMC)
	Linda McDonald (Seattle VAMC)
	Claudette Morrissey (Brooklyn VAMC)
	Carolyn S. Rose (Coatesville VAMC)
	Noreen Sommer (Palo Alto VAMC)

The Fifth Annual Meeting of NOVA, "VA Nursing: What Does the Future Hold?" took place November 7 – 10, 1985, at the Crystal City Marriott Hotel in Virginia.

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

1986

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

As the 1987 Budget Bill was being considered in Congress, NOVA and others successfully opposed a \$507 million cut, preventing the loss of nearly 9,000 VA employees. Senate Bill 2197, providing for “early outs,” was unable to get out of Committee. NOVA also opposed this Bill, as those who retired early could not be replaced before 1991 and nurses could not support this concept. NOVA constantly remains alert to any similar proposals in Congress, with opposition to those that are not supportive of VA health care or VA Nursing. It was also in 1986 that a resolution, submitted by Jean A. Wilkinson of the New Orleans Chapter, suggesting overtime pay at the RN’s salary rate was passed. It would be 1989 before NOVA would succeed in having this provision appear in a bill before the 101st Congress. NOVA members are learning patience and power; legislation takes time.

NOVA’s Sixth Annual Meeting was held at the Fairmont Hotel in New Orleans on October 2 – 4, 1986. One hundred eighteen nurses participated in the annual program: “The Power of Nursing—Reality or Myth?” Claudette Morrissey chaired the Program Committee. One of the outstanding speakers was Tom Sherwood, R.N., M.A., M.Ph., M.Ed., Legislative Intern, U.S. Congress, House Budget Committee and Former Chief,

Nursing Service Coatesville VAMC, who addressed the issues surrounding the achievement of power and complexities of power. The “Mardi Gras in October” party on the last night of the meeting was a perfect ending for the New Orleans setting.

The officers for 1986-1987 were:

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

1987

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

On March 11, 1987, several members of NOVA were in the Senate Gallery as Senator Frank Murkowski (R-AK) introduced legislation authorizing bonus pay for nurses. Although NOVA felt provisions of this bill might adversely affect the retention of skilled nurses, it was exciting to hear Senator Murkowski recognize the contributions of nurses. He called registered nurses “the matrix upon which our health-care system is built. For too long, registered nurses have been taken for granted. The quality of the health care delivered to our nation’s veterans relies upon the quality of the professional nursing care delivered.” He further acknowledged that: “We can appropriate all of the dollars we wish to expand our VA Health Care System, but in the final analysis, without professional nurses, we would have no alternative but to close the doors of VA hospital wards, clinics, and nursing homes.”

History was in the making over the next few months. NOVA’s view on the major issues confronting VA nurses were presented by President Lloyd as she testified April 22, 1987, before the U.S. Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Hospitals and Health Care on

the Status of Recruitment and Retention of VA Health Care Personnel. She again testified on May 21, 1987, before the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs. Themes throughout the testimony were the need for competitive salaries, tuition reimbursement, and realistic workloads. Did these themes sound familiar? Yes, our NOVA president kept reminding Congress of the 15 recommendations from the study mandated Congressionally by Public Law 96-330, "Recruitment and Retention of Nurses in the Veterans Administration."

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

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

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

The officers for 1987-1988 were:

President:	Claudette Morrissey (Brooklyn VAMC)
Vice President:	Verdelle B. Bellamy (Atlanta VAMC)
Secretary:	Patricia A. Krull (Atlanta VAMC)
Membership Secretary:	Lenore Manak (Loma Linda VAMC)
Treasurer:	Lynna Smith (American Lake VAMC)
Directors:	Bette Davis (Washington VAMC)
	Linda McDonald (Seattle VAMC)
	Carolyn S. Rose (Coatesville VAMC)
	Sheila Savala (Cheyenne VAMC)
	Noreen Sommer (Palo Alto VAMC)
	Mae Williams (New Orleans VAMC)

Although the meeting was short – two days, because of the early 1988 meeting – it lived up to its theme: "Revolution in Health Care: Time for Action," chaired by

Verdelle Bellamy. Members from 21 states across the country were challenged by the speakers to keep abreast of the many changes in health care and to become actively involved in activities to publicize nursing's agenda for our veterans. A panel of experts from service organizations related how they support nursing issues as they work toward maintaining and improving health care for veterans: Dr. John Gronvall, Chief Medical Director, speaking on "The Impact of Administrative Policy;" Nancy Sharp, Director of Practice and Legislation, The Organization for Obstetric, Gynecologic, and Neonatal Nurses, speaking on the imperative for legislative involvement; a panel of legislative staff from the House and Senate updating us on activity on "the Hill" related to veterans health care and VA nursing; and other speakers with hints to improve our recruitment and retention strategies. Miss Vernice Ferguson, Deputy Assistant Chief Medical Director for Nursing Programs, enthusiastically offered suggestions for balancing the issues of the day and presenting information factually to others. She summed up the then-current climate by saying "Nobody will live successfully in tomorrow's world unless they are happy and comfortable with temporary systems."

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

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

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

1988

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

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

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

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

The Seattle and American Lake Chapters presented an award to Senator Warren G. Magnuson (D-WA) for his tireless efforts for 36 years on behalf of health care. He believed that as national health care in some form emerges, nurses must determine how and what kind of care they will give. NOVA lost a friend when Senator Magnuson died less than a year later. Due to the change in the annual meeting date from Fall to Spring,

the Board decided that for Board members whose terms would have expired in 1988, terms of office would be extended for an additional six months. Throughout 1988, the NOVA Board was diligently working on many vital issues: the 1989 VA budget, bylaws, chapter starter kit, testimony, policy statements, Chapter Charters, and the date and location for the 1989 annual meeting. Several policy and position statements were issued by the Board:

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

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

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

The Office of Personnel Management allowed payment of COLAs for nurses on special salary rates, an issue supported and promoted by NOVA. In October, Public Law 100-527 established the VA as the Department of Veterans Affairs. A productive, challenging year closed as NOVA set its legislative priorities in December. Reflection on the year raised the unanswered question of what will it take for all VA nurses to join the

few who are willing to shape our destiny? As 1988 ended, the federal budget deficit took its toll on legislative issues of concern to NOVA. The Department of Medicine and Surgery was already almost \$1 billion short of its need to meet existing responsibilities. The 100th Congress failed to come to agreement on the pay issues of H.R. 5114 and S.2011 that were crucial to recruitment and retention of nurses.

1989

The stage was set for 1989. The Senate promised to place salary and pay issues of VA nurses high on its agenda for 1989. Since the whole process was to begin from scratch, NOVA's highest legislative priority for the 101st Congress was Competitive Salary Rates for VA Nurses, beginning with revision of base pay rates for Title 38 registered nurses. Other issues of concern were to be: 1) nurses on special pay rates receiving the cost of living adjustment, 2) recruitment and retention bonuses, 3) removal of the pay cap on overtime pay for registered nurses, and 4) removal of restrictions on VA nurses seeking second jobs. In the vanguard of support for the creation of a Cabinet-level position for the Veterans Administration, NOVA was pleased to congratulate Edward J. Derwinsky as he became the first Secretary of Veterans Affairs on March 15, 1989.

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

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

The busy first day prepared participants for visits to "the Hill," and ended with the members meeting legislators and staff from Veterans Service Organizations at the NOVA sponsored Congressional reception in the Rayburn Building. Part of the preparation for the legislative aspects of the program was a reference, "A Guide for Legislative Action," written by Patricia McCorkle, Legislative Committee Member from the Wilmington VAMC, and Noreen Sommer, Legislative Chairperson. Among the legislators meeting and talking with NOVA members and VACO staff were Chairman George V. "Sonny"

Montgomery (D-MS), Jim Jontz (D-IN), and Bruce Morrison (D-CT). The keynote speaker on the second day was Miss Vernice Ferguson, Deputy Assistant Chief Medical Director for Nursing Programs, Department of Veterans Affairs, who gave an inspiring address: "VA Nursing Service: Priorities and Programs in a Changing Environment," She challenged NOVA to develop strategies and to act on issues of legislative importance.

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

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

The officers for 1989-1990 were:

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

We concluded our ninth annual meeting in what had been, as President Morrissey said, "truly our most active legislative year to date." Bette Davis of the Washington, DC Chapter assumed the Legislative Chair position. Former Chair and President-Elect Noreen Sommer was commended for six years of outstanding service to NOVA as Legislative Chair. As we neared the halfway mark in 1989, H.R. 1199 had been passed

by the House and S. 947 had been introduced to the Senate by Senator Alan Cranston (D-CA). A long struggle was ahead as compromises would be needed to reach consensus on a final bill regarding issues of vital concern to VA nurses.

In April 1990, we will gather for the 10th Annual Meeting in Atlanta, GA. It will be another milestone for NOVA as we celebrate, acknowledge, and reflect on the past 10 years. Certainly during the second five years of NOVA, we honed our legislative skills. We moved from the thrill of being asked to present testimony to the expectation that no VA legislation would pass without the testimony of NOVA.

Five years ago, it was stated in NOVA's history: "If we ever needed NOVA, the time is now." This sentiment continues to be timely. However, we must remember that NOVA can best impact future legislative issues only with the support of each and every VA professional nurse.

Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs: A History of NOVA, The Second Five Years, 1985 - 1989. NOVA History Committee: Patricia A. Krull, R.N., Atlanta VAMC, Chairman, Joann R. Marshall, R.N., Seattle VAMC, Co-Chairman, Elizabeth D. Cook, R.N., Seattle VAMC, Catherine Gawron R.N., Hines VAMC, Elizabeth N. Shapiro, R.N., Seattle VAMC, E. Elaine Lloyd, R.N., Palo Alto VAMC, Past National President

(End of published NOVA histories)

1990

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

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

Informative presentations were also given by Mary Long, R.N., Vice President of Government Affairs, Arthritis Foundation National Office and Second National Vice President, American Nurses Association; Donald B. Thompson, Southeast Regional Director for the DVA; and the Honorable J. Roy Rowland, M.D., Member, Committee on Veterans Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives. Positioning nursing for the 90's was

highlighted by discussion panel. Bobbie Vance, R.N., C.N.A.A., M.S.N., Chief Nursing Service, Atlanta, moderated the panel which included Clair Martin, R.N., Ph.D., Dean and Professor, Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing, Emory University; Mary Woody, R.N., M.A., F.A.A.N., Associate Hospital Director and Director of Nursing, Emory University University Hospital; Jamesetta A. Halley-Boyce, R.N., M.A., Chief, Nursing Service, VAMC Brooklyn; and Jane O'Donnell, R.N., C.N.A.A., M.S.N., Chief, Nursing Service, VAMC Gainesville.

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

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

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

The excitement of a great accomplishment was realized during the first week of August 1990, with the passage of the Department of Veterans Affairs Nurse Pay Act of 1990, rewarding NOVA's persistence and patience. President Bush signed the bill into law on August 15, 1990. The VA Nurse Pay Bill of 1990 (PL 101-366) established a system of competitive pay for VA nurses to improve the VA's ability to recruit and retain RNs and certain other categories of health care personnel. It allowed local VA medical centers to offer salaries competitive with those offered by other health care facilities in the same local market, taking into account other employee benefits, including non-monetary benefits. This approach offered a consistent annual system that can respond quickly, and more frequently if a need is indicated by changing local conditions. PL 101-366 provided for nurse pay grades to be based upon local labor market area survey data of the Bureau of Labor Statistics if available; otherwise, the facility director would collect data of local facilities using the BLS methods. It prohibited the VA from making

changes in pay rates that would result in the VA being the remuneration leader in local areas. It provided that the maximum rate of pay in each grade is not more than 133% of the minimum rate paid in that grade. When the maximum is non-competitive for recruitment and retention purposes, however, the Secretary may increase the minimum up to 175% of the minimum rate of basic pay in that grade. It required the VA facility director to consider survey results when federal employees are scheduled to receive a cost of living adjustment, when BLS releases a new industry wage survey or the relevant labor market, and at any other time the director deems it necessary.

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

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

Legislative priorities continuing at the end of 1990 included:

- ❖ extending Saturday and Sunday premium pay to all licensed practical or vocational nurses and nursing assistants,
- ❖ allowing re-employment of retired VA nurses without reductions in pay, allowing outside employment, exploring the options and support for cadet nurses retired before 1986, and part-time VA employees' retirement equity.

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

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

The officers for 1990-1991 were:

President:	Noreen Sommer (Palo Alto V AMC)
Vice President:	Verdelle B. Bellamy (Atlanta VAMC)
Secretary:	Patricia A. Krull (Atlanta VAMC)
Membership Secretary:	Sadie Thomas (Allen Park VAMC)
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	Barbara Hamilton (Little Rock VAMC)
	Marcia Kiernan (New Orleans VAMC)
	G. Sue Kinnick (Topeka VAMC)
	Maura Farrell Miller (Miami VAMC)

1991

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

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

The recipient of NOVA's Barbara Chambers Award was Verdelle B. Bellamy, Associate Chief, Nursing Home Care Unit, Atlanta VAMC, for her long and distinguished service to NOVA, who completed service to NOVA as the last remaining

member of NOVA's first elected board. The recipient of the Professional Nurse Award was Margaret Kruckemeyer, Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist, Dayton VAMC, for her sustained professional excellence.

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

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

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

NOVA completed a member survey in 1991, identifying adequate nursing staff and support services as top concerns of members. On December 5, 1991, NOVA President Noreen Sommer and President Elect Bette Davis received a warm reception meeting with Congressional Committees and Central Office staff in December, pressing NOVA's message of quality care for the veterans and a quality environment in which nurses provide care. NOVA made every effort to lead and respond rapidly to issues

affecting VA nursing and health care. Throughout the day, similar themes and topics recurred with the various groups, including budget, appropriations, Commission Report, locality pay system, cost of living allowance, cash awards, transfers, Nurse Pay Task Force Recommendations, grades/steps, pay retention, surveys, shift rotation, FTEE, quality care, Weiss Report, computerization, access/eligibility, Hospice care, and overall health care reform.

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

The officers for 1991-1992 were:

President:	Noreen Sommer (Palo Alto VAMC)
President-Elect:	Bette Davis (Washington DC VAMC)
Vice President:	Lynna Smith (American Lake VAMC)
Secretary:	Sally E. Nutter (American Lake VAMC)
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	Barbara Hamilton (Little Rock VAMC)
	Louise L. Knight (Augusta VAMC)
	Maura Farrell Miller (Miami VAMC)

1992

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

In President Noreen Sommer's testimony to the House Veterans Affairs Committee on February 19, 1992, and to the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees on February 27, 1992, she firmly stated that NOVA's objective for quality care for the veteran patient would require proper funding or care would be restricted. NOVA was extremely dismayed to realize that funding had not been included in the FY 1993 proposal to continue the very successful pilot project to eliminate shift rotation. Pilot 798, originally funded for 1991 and to be continued in phases over five years, would reduce the need for the day time RN staff to rotate to off tour evenings, nights, and weekends. Funding was absent in 1992, therefore, in the budget testimony, President

Sommer stated “NOVA strongly recommends funding for 1,100 RN FTE for FY 1993 to improve the nurse-patient ratios and to ensure shift stability for all VA RNs.” In addition, the testimony reflected the serious shortage of funding for nurse pay. On other issues, NOVA urged the Congress to adequately fund computerization at the point of care to provide the highest level of care quickly and efficiently and supported the continued expansion of the automated unit dose dispensing system.

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

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

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

covering overtime compensation for RNs, on call pay, cigarette smoking, and pay for supervisors.

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

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

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

President Davis and Margaret Kruckemeyer presented testimony before the Senate VA Committee on July 2, 1992, regarding women veterans' health care. Although there has been some improvement, NOVA shared the committee's concerns and agreed with the GAO report. H.R. 5885, the "Women Veterans Health Programs Act of 1992" was introduced on August 12, 1992. On September 17, 1992, President Davis and Margaret Kruckemeyer also testified before the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the House Veterans Affairs Committee on the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace and VA health care for women veterans. In September,

1992, NOVA wrote a letter thanking Chairman G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery of the House Veterans Affairs Committee for his continuing interest and support for VA nurse pay issues, recommending an amendment to require extension of steps in each pay grade from 133 to 157 percent, and expressing concern regarding resumption of smoking in VA medical centers. NOVA also said farewell to Senator Alan Cranston, former Chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee.

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

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

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

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	Simone Guenette (Providence VAMC)
	Barbara Hamilton (Little Rock VAMC)
	Louise L. Knight (Augusta VAMC)
	Maura Farrell Miller (Miami VAMC)
	Margaret I. Kruckemeyer (VAMC Dayton)

1993

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

NOVA's legislative priorities for 1993 include

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

Jesse Brown, former Executive Director of the Disabled American Veterans, is named the new Secretary of Veterans Affairs. He has been a friend to NOVA for many years and shares NOVA's concerns about the direction of veterans policies and resources devoted to caring for those who have served our country in the military.

NOVA's Thirteenth Annual Meeting was held at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C. from April 15 – 17, 1993, with 184 registered attendees. Speaker Mary Wakefield, Ph.D., R.N., Chief of Staff for Senator Kent Conrad (D-ND), provided an overview of the importance of nurses influencing health care policy, and offered guidance and information that assisted attendees to be more comfortable talking with legislators and staff. A panel, moderated by Legislative Chair Simone Guenette, provided more legislative information. Janet Coffman, Legislative Aid from the Senate VA Committee, presented some of Senator Rockefeller's concerns and issues for DVA. Other panel members included Frank Buxton, Deputy Director VA and Rehab, The

American Legion; Susan Edgerton, Health Policy Analyst, Paralyzed Veterans of America; and Dave Gorman, Assistant National Legislative Director for Medical Affairs, Disabled American Veterans.

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

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

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

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

On April 27, 1993, NOVA presented Congressional testimony for the sixth time within one year. This time, Senator Rockefeller, Chairman of the U.S. Senate VA

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

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

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

1. S. 1030 DVA Sexual Trauma Services: discussed the elimination of the time limits in sexual trauma reporting, eligibility priority for care, supporting the 800 number telephone service program to have a designated full time trained staff in providing initial crisis intervention, and referring to appropriate resources for veterans needing sexual counseling, and Women Veterans Coordinators Program.
2. Draft Legislation of Women Veterans Health Care Act of 1993: discussed the spectrum of women veterans' needs in research.
3. S.1122 VA Health Professionals Education Debt Reduction Act: discussed the need for advanced practice nurses and incentives for education to attract staff to the VA. NOVA requested this legislation be expanded to include master degree-prepared nurses.
4. S.454 Rural Health Care Clinic Program: discussed NOVA's support for the rural health care clinic initiative, particularly the mobile health care services to eligible veterans living in rural and remote areas. NOVA recommended that

VA expand this program to include veterans currently eligible for inpatient care as well as for outpatient care.

5. S.583 Adult Day Health Care in State Homes: discussed NOVA's support for the adult day health care program which would extend VA's authority to provide per diem payment to States for eligible veterans who receive services in State Veterans' Homes.
6. S.1094 Veterans' Hospice Service Act of 1993: discussed extending the aspects of the VA Hospice Program already operational and assisting the implementation of plans for improving services.

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

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

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

The officers for 1993-1994 were:

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

1994

NOVA President Davis presented oral and written testimony on H.R. 4013 (formerly H.R. 3808), Legislation to Preserve VA's Flexibility in Meeting its Medical Workforce Needs and draft legislation to authorize a pilot program for VA participation

in state health reform plans before the VA's House Subcommittee on Hospitals and Health Care Hearing on March 8, 1994, strongly endorsing the need for House passage. The passage of H.R. 4013 by the House on 4/28/94 in a 282 to 118 vote that cut across party lines if approved by the Senate would exempt VHA from personnel reductions for five years beginning 10/1/94. The bill represents a serious setback to the Clinton administration's plan to downsize government.

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

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

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

Richard Benner, Ph.D., described his "Clinical Excellence Model," stating that most organizations train for and reward a minimal standard level of performance. He described stages of skill acquisition, from advanced beginner to expert and disengaged, incompetent performance. In his second presentation, "Implications for Organizational

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

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

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

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

Lynna C. Smith became NOVA’s sixth President following the annual meeting. The board initiated strategic planning the areas of finance, communication, and membership, established a task force to continue monitoring locality pay issues, established a task force to review the draft of changes in the qualifications standards, and established a task force of Advanced Practice Nurses to offer assistance to VACO staff in the development of guidelines addressing the role, function, and privileging of Advanced

Practice Nurses within the VA. This task force, Chaired by Janice Therien, M.H.S.A., R.N., Salem VAMC, worked to prepare guidelines for NOVA's position on the scope of practice, practice agreements, prescriptive authority, salary differential, and qualification standards for APNs within the DVA. The agenda for the board this year includes: the legislative priorities for 1994; strategic plans for membership development, communication, and fiscal management; development of special interest groups as councils, establishment of the NOVA Foundation for the purpose of education, scholarship, and research.

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

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

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

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

simplified requirements for reporting. Finally, the law reduced DVA's contribution to the Federal Work Force Restructuring Act from 27,000 to 10,000 job cuts.

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

The officers for 1994-1995 were:

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

1995

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

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

NOVA's legislative priorities for 1995 included

- ❖ supporting a combination of appropriations and revenues to fund VA health care to compete in Health Care Reform;
- ❖ ensuring access to comprehensive health care for all veterans;
- ❖ providing primary/preventive care, wellness programs, and expansion of health services into ambulatory, community, rural, and home settings;
- ❖ ensuring women veterans access to comprehensive, quality, and timely health care;

- ❖ promoting utilization of advanced practice nurses as cost-effective, qualified health care providers;
- ❖ supporting adequate VA educational and research funding to provide quality health care through research and education;
- ❖ supporting the concept of veterans and dependents utilizing the VA health plan;
- ❖ ensuring accurate implementation of the VA Nurse Locality Pay System as intended by law;
- ❖ providing RN FTTE to eliminate mandatory shift rotation and improve the nurse-patient ratio on off-tours;
- ❖ employing sufficient numbers of ancillary personnel for clinical and non-clinical tasks to support patient centered care;
- ❖ supporting educational preparation and promotion of VA nurses for key leadership positions;
- ❖ ensuring educational funding for nursing scholarships, tuition assistance, career development, and cross training programs;
- ❖ supporting removal of restrictions on outside employment to full time RNs, and providing modern technological support for patient care.

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

The Fifteenth Annual Meeting was held at the Quality Hotel, Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C., April 27 – 29, 1995. The theme of the meeting, "Health Care Reform: The VA Agenda," provided methods for turning health care advocacy words into actions. Keynote speaker Sheila Burke, R.N., Chief of Staff, Office of Robert Dole, Senate Majority Leader, described the importance of communicating with legislators. Kenneth W. Kizer, M.D., M.P.H., Undersecretary for Health, VHA, DVA, spoke on restructuring VA Health Care. A panel of experts provided experiences and views on current veterans health care issues. Panel participants included: Tom Harvey, Majority Staff Director, U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs; JoAnn Webb, Majority Staff Director, Subcommittee on Hospitals and Health Care, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Veterans Affairs; Susan Edgerton, Director for Health Policy Analysis, Paralyzed Veterans of America; and David Gorman, Deputy Legislative Director, Disabled American Veterans. Topics discussed included eligibility reform for veterans, the 1996 Independent Budget proposed by the Veterans Service Organizations, Veterans Health Administration's Reorganization Proposal, H.R. 1384 bill to exempt certain full time health care professionals of the DVA from restrictions on remunerated outside professional activities.

Terri Gaffney, R.N., Staff Specialist with ANA, shared her knowledge and expertise in preparing NOVA Nurses in Action volunteers for their afternoon assault onto "the Hill." NOVA held an evening reception in the Russell Senate Office Building for legislators and staff which was well attended. Leah Curtin gave the keynote address, "Nurses in Management of Health Care," describing a health care system of the future that would likely be in worse shape than our current system. Joan Furey spoke on "Women Veterans Health Care Issues: An Agenda for Change," describing eloquently the need to tailor the health care system to many different populations. Sue Hudek, Chief Nurse of the Washington, D.C. VAMC spoke on "The Changing Role of Nurse

Leadership in the VA.” Suzanne Gordon, author, spoke on “The News Media: Nurses’ Voice in Health Care.” Her message of being more media savvy and using the media to present nursing to the public was enthusiastically received.

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

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

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

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

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

The officers for 1995-1996 were:

President:	Lynna Smith (American Lake VAMC)
President-Elect:	Maura Farrell Miller (West Palm Beach VAMC)
Vice President:	Margaret I. Kruckemeyer (VAMC Dayton)
Secretary:	Carol Watt (Topeka VAMC)
Membership Secretary:	Shaun Kelly (Topeka VAMC)
Treasurer:	Marcia Kiernan (New Orleans VAMC)
Directors:	Vincent Elliott (Palo Alto VAMC)
	Dollie Lewis Alexander (Lakeside Chicago VAMC)
	Cecelia McVey (Boston VAMC)
	Sarah V. Myers (Atlanta VAMC)
	Jan Therien (Salem VAMC)

1996

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

NOVA’s sixteenth Annual Meeting was held April 17 – 20, 1996 at the Park Plaza Hotel in Boston, Massachusetts. The theme of the meeting was “VA Nursing: Transforming and Managing Change.” Joyce Clifford, M.S.N., R.N., F.A.A.N., Vice President for Nursing and Nurse-in-Chief, Beth Israel Hospital, Boston, spoke on “Nurses in the Management of Organizational Change.” Ann Hurley, D.N.Sc., R.N., Director, Geriatric, Research, Education and Clinical Center, Bedford, MA, presented “Research Directions for the Future.” “Transformations in Health Care: The Leadership Challenge” was presented by Maura Mitchell, M.A., R.N., M.Ed., Vice President for Nursing, Boston University Medical Center, Boston. Audrey Drake, M.S.N., R.N., C.N.A.A., Program Director for Nursing Programs, CVA, spoke on “Re-engineering: What Works and What Doesn’t.”

Break-out sessions included: “Long Term Care Innovations” by Diana Cox, M.S.N., R.N.C., H.A., Associate Chief, Nursing Service/Acute and Long Term Care, White River Junction VAMC; “Re-engineering and Computer Applications” by Anne Marie Brogan, M.S.N., R.N., QM/MIS Coordinator, Boston VAMC; “Product Line Innovations” by Linda Stout, M.S.N., R.N., Acting Chief, Nursing Service, Wilkes Barre

VAMC; “Patient Centered Care Model: The Salem Experience” by Mary Raymer, M.A., R.N., C.N.A.A, and a panel of nurses from Salem VAMC; “Job Redesign: Women’s Health Clinic” by Susan Frayne, M.D., Director of Women’s Health Programs and staff from Boston VAMC; and “Inpatient Care Models” by Nova Chapuis, B.S.N., R.N., Head Nurse and Maxine Crawley, M.S.N., R.N., F.N.P, Coordinator of Managed Care, New Orleans VAMC.

Noted author Suzanne Gordon spoke on “Economic Forces Driving Re-engineering.” “Expert Panel-Based Staffing and Resource Management System” was presented by Marianne Dunn, R.N., C.N.A.A., Chief, Nursing Service, Buffalo VAMC, and Paulette Cournoyer, D.N.Sc., R.N., C.S., Program Director, VHA. Pat Sutherland, M.S., R.N., spoke on “Strategic Planning for Organizational Change.” Dr. Nancy Valentine closed the program, speaking on “VA Nursing: What Will the Future Demand?”

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

NOVA’s legislative priorities for 1996 include:

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

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

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

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

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

Two major issues confronting DVA registered nurses prompted a visit to DVA headquarters, the impact of Title 38 staffing adjustments and the role of professional nursing in the restructuring DVA. These issues formed the theme of the December 1996 Legislative Summit. On December 5, 1996, NOVA President Dr. Maura F. Miller, Legislative Committee Chairperson Dr. Sarah V. Myers, and Executive Director Deborah Beck met with Drs. Kenneth Kizer and Nancy Valentine to discuss the VA registered nurse's leadership role in reinventing the Department of Veterans Affairs. Dr. Miller questioned Dr. Kizer regarding the minimal amount nursing was mentioned in his "Prescription for Change." Dr. Kizer stated that he was informed that VA professional

nurses “were only concerned about keeping their jobs and getting raises.” Dr. Miller informed Dr. Kizer of the roles of proactive change agents taken on by NOVA nurses during the past seventeen years, advancing DVA health care via legislative and regulatory reforms. NOVA requested Dr. Kizer to appoint a NOVA member to the Innovations in Nursing Task Force. As a positive outcome of the meeting, Dr. Kizer invited NOVA to attend the next VISN Directors/Clinical Managers meeting.

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

The officers for 1996-1997 were:

President:	Maura Farrell Miller (West Palm Beach VAMC)
Vice President:	Margaret I. Kruckemeyer (VAMC Dayton)
Secretary:	Anne Zipp (Erie VAMC)
Membership Secretary:	Dollie Lewis Alexander (Lakeside Chicago VAMC)
Treasurer:	Vincent Elliott (Palo Alto VAMC)
Directors:	Cecelia McVey (Boston VAMC)
	Sarah V. Myers (Atlanta VAMC)
	Jan Therien (Salem VAMC)
	Barbara Zicafoose (Salem VAMC)

1997

January 23, 1997 marked the date of the VISN Directors and Clinical Managers meeting in Portland, Oregon. Dr. Kenneth Kizer, USH, DVA, invited NOVA to this meeting to assist DVA healthcare reorganization by enhancing field communications. President Miller introduced NOVA as a professional nursing organization of VA registered nurses who are advocates of veteran patients and the DVA health care system, clarified NOVA’s mission, and offered NOVA’s assistance to the VISN Directors by enhancing communication between and within VISNs using existing networks of NOVA nurses. President Miller also shared a brief synopsis of NOVA’s legislative and regulatory reforms that have improved VA healthcare, including lifting the ban on remuneration for outside professional activities, eligibility reform, rural health care, women’s health care, locality pay, elevation of DVA to cabinet status, and elevation of the Chief Nurse Executive to medical center leadership status. She clarified NOVA’s

status as a professional nursing organization whose focus is on improving VA healthcare. As the voice of VA nurses, NOVA makes its issues known to Congress, with legislatively focused efforts. President Miller also invited the VISN Directors and Clinical Managers to attend NOVA's 17th Annual Meeting.

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

NOVA's legislative priorities for 1997 include:

- ❖ supporting a combination of appropriations and revenues to fund VA health care to compete in the health care environment;
- ❖ promoting nursing's role in providing specialized veterans' health care services;
- ❖ enhancing access to coordinated and comprehensive health care for all veterans and their dependants, including primary/preventive care, wellness programs, and expansion of health services into ambulatory, community, rural and home settings;
- ❖ promoting optimal utilization of advanced practice nurses as cost-effective providers of quality health care;
- ❖ supporting educational and research funding to provide quality VA health care;
- ❖ ensuring nursing executive leadership throughout the top decision-making levels at National Headquarters, VISNs, Medical Centers, and affiliated health care centers;
- ❖ assuring the presence of organized professional nursing in the overall management of health care programs within the DVA;
- ❖ supporting, strengthening, and increasing innovative partnerships and coalitions with VSOs and other professional organizations supportive of NOVA's mission;
- ❖ and supporting educational funding cross training and career development to assist the DVA in meeting its primary health care needs.

Dr. Kenneth Kizer appointed NOVA Board Member Cecelia McVey to the *Innovations in Nursing Task Force*. The Task Force convened for the first time in Washington D.C., in March 1997 and met twice a month for the remainder of that year. This group reviewed current examples of innovations in nursing that could be implemented system-wide in the VA. Another NOVA Board Member, Dr. Sarah V. Myers, was appointed to the *Long Term Care Task Force* by Dr. Kizer.

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

Nancy Sharp, M.S.N., R.N., President, Sharp Legislative Resources, talked about the political process in a presentation titled "Political Savvy: A Nursing Skill," hammering home a message for nurses to be actively involved in decision making, every

single day. Her presentation was followed by Patti Rager, R.N., President and Publisher of *Nursing Spectrum*. She talked about "Career Fitness: Exercising Your Nursing Options." There were breakout sessions for administration, advanced practice, clinical/staff, education/research, and informatics. Brenda Lyons, D.N.S., R.N., F.A.A.N., discussed stress management in her nationally recognized, award winning presentation. Ann Marie Brooks, D.N.Sc., R.N., F.A.A.N., presented "Nursing's Agenda in the New Millennium: Making Every Moment Count." Dr. Nancy Valentine closed the program with "Simple Abundance Amidst the Chaos." The theme of the presentation was for VA nurses to recognize and be thankful for all the abundance in our lives in spite of the massive changes taking place in VA healthcare.

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

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

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

On April 17, 1997, President Dr. Maura Farrell Miller testified before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. She addressed the effectiveness of DVA's sexual harassment awareness programs and enforcement of DVA's zero tolerance policy. On May 22, 1997, National Board Member and Legislative Co-Chair Barbara Zicafoose presented the first testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Veterans Affairs, Subcommittee on Oversight

and Investigations that was prompted in part by the murder of a VA physician by a patient. The Subcommittee was investigating the feasibility of arming security police at VA hospitals. She expressed NOVA's concern about arming security guards, and pointed out that many patients have experienced emotional trauma associated with weapons. She outlined security measures that could be implemented which would greatly increase security in the VA without bringing guns into the facilities.

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

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

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

The American Federation of Government Employees filed an unfair labor practice against the DVA, alleging NOVA is given preferential treatment. NOVA retained a labor lawyer who met with the Federal Labor Relations Authority. Because NOVA is not a labor union, we cannot be the subject of an unfair labor practice. Because of this threat to NOVA's existence, a legal defense fund was established. In an issue of *News from NOVA*, President Miller shared Florence Nightingale's words that Past President Noreen Sommer shared with her when she left office in 1992. "There are two classes of people in the world. Those who take the best and enjoy it and those who wish for something better and try to create it. The world needs the appreciation of the first and the discontent

of the second.” The Women in Military Service for American Memorial was dedicated in the fall, 1997, honoring the 1.8 million women who have served in the country’s military. Bette Davis, Past President of NOVA, attended the dedication ceremony.

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

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

The officers for 1997-1998 were:

President:	Maura Farrell Miller (West Palm Beach VAMC)
President-Elect:	Margaret I. Kruckemeyer (VAMC Dayton)
Vice President:	Sarah V. Myers (Atlanta VAMC)
Secretary:	Anne Zipp (Erie VAMC)
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	Mary Haubold (Topeka VAMC)
	Cecelia McVey (Boston VAMC)
	Billie Jean Summers (Murfreesboro VAMC)
	Jan Therien (Salem VAMC)
	Barbara Zicafoose (Salem VAMC)

1998

NOVA’s legislative priorities for 1998 include:

- ❖ seeking alternative sources of revenue to fund VA health care research, and education;
- ❖ promoting nursing’s role in providing a seamless continuum of health care;
- ❖ enhancing access to coordinated and comprehensive health care for all veterans and their dependents;

- ❖ promoting optimal utilization of advanced practice nurses as cost-effective providers of quality health care;
- ❖ supporting the Consumer Health Care Bill of Rights, and the Patient Safety Act Legislation;
- ❖ ensuring professional nurse participation and leadership at all levels of practice, research, administration, and policy;
- ❖ supporting allocation of funding for nursing career development;
- ❖ strengthening and increasing innovative partnerships and coalitions with VSOs and other professional organizations supportive of NOVA's mission;
- ❖ and ensuring implementation of the recommendations of the Innovations in Nursing Committee by inclusion in the Director's performance standards.

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

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

Sarah Myers, NOVA's representative on the Long Term Care Task Force identified some of the issues facing the committee: the likely long term care needs of veterans through 2010, the portion of those long term care needs that should be met by the VA, and the importance to be given to construction of VA and state nursing homes. President Maura Farrell Miller testified in mid-March on quality of care within the DVA before the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Veterans Affairs, Subcommittee on Health.

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

"Writing for Publication" was presented by Patricia A. Beare, Ph.D., M.S.N., Louisiana State University. Martin P. Charns, DBA, Director, Management Decision &

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

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

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

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

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

NOVA was able to help the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) with language in a VA manual covering the practice of anesthesia. AANA was

unable to get their recommendations approved, and were advised by a staff member on the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee to enlist NOVA's help. Literally at the 11th hour, NOVA was able to make a difference, demonstrating the power of NOVA.

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

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

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

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

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

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Billie Jean Summers (Murfreesboro VAMC)
Jan Therien (Salem VAMC)
Barbara Zicafoose (Salem VAMC)

1999

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

of the veterans' service organizations and corporate communities participated in this event.

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

The NOVA Foundation Second Congressional Breakfast and Briefing Session was a huge success. The Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committee Staff Directors gave a legislative overview. The panel discussion was devoted to Hepatitis C. Participants included legislative aids responsible for veterans' issues, Veterans Service Organizations, and the corporate community. President Margaret Kruckemeyer, President-Elect Sarah Myers and members of the Richmond and DC chapters represented NOVA.

The VA Directive 5102.1, Registered Nurse Qualification Standard, was officially signed on November 10, 1999. The new standard went into effect for new hires on December 10, 1999. Currently employed RNs will receive their next proficiency under the old standards and will be educated about the new standards during the year. NOVA thanked Senator Michael DeWine and Congressman Steve LaTourette for introducing the VA Nurse Appreciation Act of 1999 into Congress, and encouraged them to pursue legislative as well as regulatory changes to the Locality Pay Statute for registered nurses employed by the DVA.

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

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

The officers for 1999-2000 were:

President:	Margaret I. Kruckemeyer (VAMC Dayton)
President-Elect:	Sarah V. Myers (Atlanta VAMC)
Vice President:	Vincent Elliott (Palo Alto VAMC)
Secretary:	Barbara Zicafoose (Salem VAMC)

Membership Secretary: Dianne Nelson (Tucson VAMC)
Treasurer: Cecelia McVey (Boston VAMC)
Directors: Denise Carey (Charleston VAMC)
Mary-Jo Doolan (Boston VAMC)
Veronica Kirchhofer (North Texas VAMC)
Billie Jean Summers (Murfreesboro VAMC)
Jan Therien (Salem VAMC)

2000

NOVA's legislative priorities for 2000 include:

- ❖ collaborating with Congress and National Headquarters to re-establish scholarships/monies to attract and retain quality VA health care providers;
- ❖ promoting nursing's role in providing a seamless continuum of health care;
- ❖ enhancing access to coordinated and comprehensive health care for veterans; promoting optimal utilization of advanced practice nurses as cost-effective providers of quality health care;
- ❖ supporting the Consumer Health Care Bill of Rights and Patient Safety Act Legislation; evaluating the impact of the Millennium Health Care Act;
- ❖ collaborating with other federal organizations to introduce legislation to revise the current sick leave policy as outlined in FERS;
- ❖ ensuring professional nurse participation and leadership at all levels of practice, research, administration, and policy;
- ❖ assuring Chief Nurse Executive in senior management quadrad locally and ensuring Nurse Executive leadership and VISN and national levels;
- ❖ following up on the Locality Pay Task Force Recommendations and Hay Report;
- ❖ monitoring progress of the VA Nurse Appreciation Act of 1999 and gathering testimony from VA nurses;
- ❖ strengthening and increasing innovative partnerships and coalitions with VSOs and other organizations supportive of NOVA's mission.

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

NOVA's Twentieth Annual Meeting was held April 27 – 29 at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Orlando, Florida. The theme of the meeting was "The New Millennium: Embracing Change Within the Circle of Life." After a warm welcome to Florida by Sandra Janzen, ACOS/Nursing at the Tampa VAMC, Vernice Ferguson R.N., M.A., F.A.A.N., F.R.C.N. delivered the opening keynote address, stressing the importance of remaining faithful to commitment, caring, constancy, and competence during these monumental chaotic times. Robert Roswell, M.D., Director of the Sunshine HealthCare VISN (8), spoke of his vision of healthcare in the new millennium. Mary Raymer, R.N., M.A., C.N.A.A., chairperson of the VA Nurse Qualification Standard Implementation

Committee, shared the history of the development and implementation of the new standard. Participants enjoyed the exhibits and posters session, entering the wonderful world of laughter with Donna Strickland, R.N., M.S., who looked at nursing from a different perspective. Charlotte Beason, R.N., Ed.D., C.N.A.A. spoke about best practice models and introduced the VHA Virtual Learning Center.

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

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

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

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

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

In early April, NOVA sent a letter to Secretary West expressing concern related to the unfilled position of Chief Consultant, NSHG. This letter was forwarded to veterans' service organizations, and PVA sent a letter to Secretary West stating PVA's concern about this vacancy. NOVA President Sarah Myers and Director Mary Raymer met with

Secretary Togo West on May 2, 2000. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the continuing vacancy in the position of Chief Consultant, NSHG, a position which had been vacant since July 1, 1998. The NOVA representatives also discussed the low morale of the nursing workforce and suggested staffing levels should be addressed. Secretary West suggested NOVA meet regularly with him at least quarterly. After the meeting, Secretary West named Catherine (Cathy) Rick R.N., M.S.N., C.H.E., C.N.A.A. the new Chief Consultant, NSHG. Ms. Rick came to Washington from the Milwaukee VAMC where she served as the Associate Chief of Staff/Nursing and Primary Care Division Manager since 1997, having joined the VA in 1992.

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

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

NOVA held its eighth Annual Legislative Roundtable December 1, 2000, in conjunction with the Board of Director's meeting at the DAV Headquarters in Washington, D.C. In its short history, this event has become an important and valuable forum for stakeholders to examine VHA. Participants included: NOVA Board of Directors; Thomas Garthwaite, M.D., Under Secretary for Health; Cathy Rick, R.N., M.S.N., C.H.E., C.N.A.A., Consultant, NSHG; Audrey Drake, R.N., M.S.N., Program Director, NSHG; Bill Wetmore, Esq., National Representative, National VA Council; Jacqueline Garrick, Deputy Director of Healthcare, American Legion; Dick Wannamacher, Legislative Director, DAV; Gordon Mansfield; Executive Director, PVA; Bill Cahill, Professional Staff, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs; John Bradley, Staff Director, Subcommittee on Health, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs; Susan Edgerton, Democratic Staff Director, Subcommittee on Health, House Committee on

Veterans' Affairs; J. David Cox, First Vice President, AFGE; Rose Gonzalez, Director, Department of Government Affairs; ANA; Ken Wetjen, CRNA, President, Wilkerson Philips, CRNA, President-Elect, and Tom Mines, CRNA, Past President, Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists; and Bill Booher, Executive Director, National Association of VA Physicians and Dentists.

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

The officers for 2000-2001 were:

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Secretary:	Barbara Zicafoose (Salem VAMC)
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Directors:	Denise Carey (Charleston VAMC) Mary-Jo Doolan (Boston VAMC) Veronica Kirchhofer (North Texas VAMC) William Martin (Northampton VAMC) Mary Raymer (Salem VAMC) Billie Jean Summers (Murfreesboro VAMC)
Immediate Past President:	Margaret I. Kruckemeyer (VAMC Dayton)

2001

NOVA's legislative priorities include:

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

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

The NOVA Foundation held its third annual Congressional Briefing on March 14, 2001, titled "Innovative Programs in the Department of Veterans Affairs: Agent Orange

and Type II Diabetes in the Vietnam Veteran.” Secretary Principi gave the Keynote Address and shared his vision for the DVA. Congressman Lane Evans also addressed the participants. Over 100 participants attended, including legislative aids/veterans issues, registered nurses from around the country; veterans service organization representatives; and members of the corporate community.

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

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

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

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

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

The first place Membership Award was given to Birmingham. Dallas was awarded second place, and third place was awarded to Connecticut.

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

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

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

NOVA maintains a presence on many committees dedicated to professional VA nursing issues. Veronica Kirchhofer was the NOVA Board representative on the VA Future Nursing Workforce Planning Group. Their final report, “A Call to Action—VA’s Response to the National Nursing Shortage,” addresses retention, recruitment, utilization of nursing staff, and outreach. Dianne Nelson is the NOVA Board member on the Nurse Qualification Standard Implementation Steering Committee. The current work of the committee is designing a crosswalk to link the Qualification Standard with the High Performance Development Model. Board Member Mary Raymer is the chair of the

group. NOVA continues to work with Partnership Council members to share our strengths and work collaboratively on issues of mutual concern. NOVA Board Members and National Office staff maintain contact with our Veterans Service Organizations to improve healthcare for our veteran patients.

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

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

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

The officers for 2001-2002 were:

President:	Sarah V. Myers (Atlanta VAMC)
President-Elect:	Vincent Elliott (Palo Alto VAMC)
Vice President:	Dianne Nelson (Tucson VAMC)
Secretary:	Barbara Zicafoose (Salem VAMC)
Membership Secretary:	Veronica Kirchhofer (North Texas VAMC)
Treasurer:	Cecelia McVey (Boston VAMC)
Directors:	Catherine Bailey (Baltimore VAMC) Marva Banks Fretheim (Richmond VAMC) Mary Raymer (Salem VAMC) Beverly Ross (Richmond VAMC)
Immediate Past President:	Margaret I. Kruckemeyer (VAMC Dayton)

2002

President Bush signed the Veterans Affairs Health Care Improvement Act of 2001 (PL 107-135) into law in January, 2002. The act permanently authorizes the Employee Incentive Scholarship Program (EISP) for nurses, reduces the time nurses need to work at VA before they are eligible to receive a scholarship, and removes limits to the amount of

money nurses can receive from VA for school, as long as that amount isn't more than the equivalent of three years of full time study. The act also permanently authorizes VA's Education Debt Reduction Program, which allows VA to help pay for nurse schooling, up to a total of \$44,000.00, with the Secretary able to adjust that amount if needed to coincide with federal pay increases. It also mandates that VA provide Saturday premium pay to Licensed Practical Nurses; gives VA nurses enrolled in the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) the same ability to use unused sick leave as part of their retirement calculations that nurses enrolled in the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) now have, and requires the Secretary and Under Secretary for Health to establish a nationwide policy on nurse staffing standards for VA medical facilities.

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

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

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

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

NOVA's Twenty-second Annual Meeting was held May 2-4, 2002, in Reno, Nevada. Dr. Robert Roswell, Under Secretary for Health, delivered the opening keynote

address, enthusiastically announcing that Cathy Rick, Chief Consultant, NSHG, DVA, now reports directly to him. He also applauded the NSHG's "Call for Action." Kris Davies, M.S.N., R.N., North Texas Health Care System, spoke about the challenges of the job of a nurse recruiter. Deborah Antai-Otong, M.S., P.M.H.N.P., C.S., R.N., North Texas Health Care System, presented tips for creative stress management and techniques for self-renewal. In an encore performance, Barbara Bancroft, M.S.N., P.N.P., R.N., gave a very insightful, humorous session "Shampoos, Tattoos, and Bar-B-Que: Clinical Immunology Simplified." Libby Lewis, R.N., Johnson & Johnson Healthcare, spoke about J & J's nursing recruitment campaign. Vincent Elliott became NOVA's 10th president.

Cathy Rick, M.S.N., R.N., C.N.A.A., C.H.E., Consultant, NSHG, DVA, reviewed the Nursing Strategic plan. Dianne Nelson, R.N., B.S.N., challenged everyone to "Celebrate What's Right with Nursing" by viewing the profession from a perspective of abundance. Gail Bentley, R.N., Ph.D., North Texas Health Care System, spoke on "Moving Up and Down the Ladder of Success: Who's in Charge?" Mary Raymer, R.N., M.A., C.N.A.A., discussed the Nurse Qualifications Standards, the NNEI, and EISP. Total NNEI expenditures to date is \$23 million. Mary Ann Bord-Hoffman, M.S.N., O.C.N., A.O.C.N., R.N., Palo Alto Health Care System, gave a review of risk factors, types and stages of breast cancer, and treatment options. Verdell Marsh, Ph.D., R.N., North Texas Health Care System, discussed spirituality in nursing.

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

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

NOVA's tenth Annual Legislative Roundtable was held November 22, 2002, in Washington DC, hosted by the DAV. This extremely successful forum generated

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

The officers for 2002-2003 were:

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

2003

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

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

The NOVA Distinguished Service Award was given to the Disabled American Veterans Organization for hosting the NOVA Legislative Roundtable and providing grants for regional seminars. The NOVA Professional Nurse Award for

ANNOUNCING!

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

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

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

NOVA's annual meeting was held Friday, March 28, 2003. Election results were announced as follows: President-Elect, Dianne Nelson; Vice President; Treasurer, Mary Raymer; Secretary, Nancy Claflin; Board of Directors, Linda-Dell Archuleta, Larry Lemos, and Beverly Ross. President Vince Elliott announced that he was appointing Catherine Bailey and Jeanette Siler to one-year terms on the Board of Directors to complete terms for Mary Raymer and Nancy Claflin. Membership increased by 100 last year to 2,766.

The National Commission on VA Nursing held hearings in four cities in April, hearing testimony from individuals and organizations. The Commission was established by Public Law 107-135, with a mission to consider legislative and organizational changes to enhance the recruitment and retention of nurses, and assess the future of the nursing profession in VA. The Commission invited organizations and key stakeholders, including NOVA, to present formal written testimony; and at the four cities, to present abbreviated public testimony, summarizing the formal written testimony. NOVA submitted formal written testimony at all four cities addressing these seven questions from a different focus each time. A representative of NOVA also formally spoke, summarizing the longer formal written testimony. NOVA's testimony focus and representatives were: April 3, New Orleans: focus-advanced practice nurses; testimony presented by Sarah Myers, NOVA's Immediate Past President, advanced practice nurse at the Atlanta VA; April 16, Philadelphia: focus-nurse executives; testimony presented by

Cecilia McVey, NOVA's Vice President, nurse executive at the Boston VA; April 24, Chicago: focus-nurse managers; testimony presented by NOVA member Connie Shiverdecker, nurse manager of the hospice unit at the Dayton VA; and April 30, Long Beach: focus-staff nurses; testimony presented by Dianne Nelson, NOVA's President-Elect, staff nurse at the Tucson VA. In addition to the invited formal testimony by NOVA, many individual NOVA nurses also requested time to testify, either scheduled or at the open forums.

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

NOVA was a sponsor for the reception 9/9/03 on Capitol Hill sponsored by the Americans for Nursing Shortage Relief honoring the uniformed services as well as the federal nurses of the VA and American Red Cross.

The third annual NOVA Foundation Gala was held September 16, 2003 in Washington, D.C. prior to the Nurse Leadership Conference.

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

The National Commission on VA Nursing convened in Washington D.C. on June 10th and 11th for it's fifth meeting and began preparing the final report in September.

Approximately 400 NOVA member letters had been received by the Commission by June 2003.

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

NOVA s NOVA held it's eleventh Annual Legislative Roundtable on November 22, 2003 at the DAV National Headquarters in Washington, DC. This forum again provided an opportunity for key stakeholders in veterans' issues to gather and share information. Senate Bill 1156 which had just passed the day before was discussed by the participants, along with legislative priorities for the next session of Congress. Participants included: NOVA Board of Directors; Margaret Kruckemeyer, MSN, CRNP, former NOVA President; Cathy Rick, RN, CHE, CNAA, Chief Nursing Officer Department of Veterans Affairs; Betsy Oliver, Executive Assistant, Office of Nursing Programs Department of Veterans Affairs; Oyweda Moorer, Executive Director, National Commission on VA Nursing; Chris Donnellan, Associate Director of Government Affairs, American Nurses Association; Carol Craig, CRNA, President, Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists; Ilona Mallon, RN, representing Association of VA Nurse Recruiters; Bill Booher, Executive Director, National Association of VA Physicians and Dentists; Bill Cahill, Majority Professional Staff, Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs; Don Mooney, Assistant Director of Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, American Legion; Thomas Miller, Executive Director, Blinded Veterans of America; Joy Ilem, Assistant Legislative Director for Medical Affairs, Disabled American Veterans; and Michael O'Rourke, Assistant Director of Veterans Health Policy, Veterans of Foreign Wars.

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

- ❖ Eliminates the 90 day requirement for former POWs to qualify for dental care and eliminates prescription drug copayments for all former POWs;
- ❖ Authorizes VA to provide health care to veterans who participated in chemical and biological testing known as Project 112/SHAD without the requirement to charge co-pays;
- ❖ Authorizes health care services to Filipino World War II veterans living in the U.S.;
- ❖ Allows VA to contract with smaller non-VA providers to provide nursing and extended care to aging veterans;

- ❖ Authorizes VA to appoint chiropractors as clinical providers;
- ❖ Increases funding for specialized mental health care services, including therapeutic employment services to patients in need of rehabilitation for mental health disorders, and allocates funds for direct grants to mental health programs, PTSD programs, and substance abuse programs;
- ❖ Extends VA's authority to transfer certain properties to community-based homeless veterans assistance providers;
- ❖ Extends the requirement to provide nursing home care to 70% or greater service connected veterans;
- ❖ Authorizes VA to carry out a pilot program of assisted living for veterans in one health care region;
- ❖ Increases the major medical facility construction projects threshold to \$7 million from the current \$4 million and streamline VA's enhanced use authority;
- ❖ Gives VA the authority to carry out major construction projects specified in the final report of the CARES Commission and approved by the Secretary 45 days after it submits to Congress a report describing the projects;
- ❖ Requires VA to notify Congress at least 60 days prior to undertaking any medical facility closures, consolidations, or staff realignments recommended by the CARES initiative;
- ❖ Requires VA to take steps to ensure that an appropriate mix of health care facilities and clinical staff is available for veterans residing in rural areas;
- ❖ Authorizes \$276.6 million to cover new major medical construction projects of long term care facilities in Lebanon, PA and Beckley, WV; a new bed tower to consolidate two inpatient sites at the West Side Division in Chicago, IL; seismic corrections to buildings in San Diego, CA; renovation of all inpatient wards and establishment of a research facility at West Haven, CT; and construction of a VA-Navy outpatient medical care facility on the grounds of the Pensacola Naval Air Station in Pensacola, FL;
- ❖ Authorizes funds for new VA outpatient clinic leases in Charlotte, NC and Boston, MA;
- ❖ Authorizes advance planning funds for major medical projects in Denver, CO; Pittsburgh, PA; Las Vegas, NV; Columbus, OH; and east central Florida.
- ❖ Requires VA to develop specific plans for meeting the future hospital care needs of veterans who reside in southern New Jersey, southern Texas, north central Washington, and certain counties of Alabama and Florida and submit to Congress by 4/15/05;
- ❖ Requires VA to conduct a feasibility study in coordination with the Medical University of South Carolina and DOD to consider establishing a joint health-care venture providing comprehensive health care services to veterans, active duty service members, and other beneficiaries in the Charleston, SC area;
- ❖ Authorizes VA to rename the following: Bob Stump VAMC in Prescott, AZ; Jesse Brown VAMC (Westside) in Chicago, IL; Michael E. DeBakey VAMC in Houston, TX; George E. Wahlen VAMC in Salt Lake City, UT; John J. McGuirk VA Outpatient Clinic in New London, CT; and the Victor J. Saracini VA Outpatient Clinic in Horsham, PA;

- ❖ Adds several new occupations to the list of hybrid occupations in Title 38 so the entire list includes: audiologists, speech pathologists, audiologists-speech pathologists, biomedical engineers, certified or registered respiratory therapists, dietitians, licensed physical therapists, licensed practical/vocational nurses, medical instrument technicians, medical & dental technologists, nuclear medicine technologists, occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, kinesiotherapists, orthotist-prosthetists, pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, physical therapy assistants, prosthetic representatives, psychologists, diagnostic radiologic technicians, therapeutic radiologic technicians, and social workers;
- ❖ Adds the above occupations and librarians to groups that VA may hire through temporary full time appointments, part time appointments, and without compensation appointments or fee basis; and may employ in temporary full time appointments in excess of 90 days;
- ❖ Provides that Title 5 employees providing direct care services (such as nursing assistants) or services incident to direct patient care services are entitled to Saturday premium pay;
- ❖ Permits Veterans Canteen Service employees to be considered for competitive service appointments in the VA the same as VA employees; and
- ❖ Establishes an Office of Research Oversight (ORO) to strengthen protections and safety for human subjects and VA employees;

The officers for 2003-2004 were:

President:	Vincent Elliott (Palo Alto VAMC)
President-Elect	Dianne Nelson (Tucson VAMC)
Vice President:	Cecelia McVey (Boston VAMC)
Secretary:	Nancy Claflin (Phoenix VAMC)
Membership Secretary:	Veronica Kirchhofer (North Texas VAMC)
Treasurer:	Mary Raymer (HCSDRO, New Orleans)
Directors:	Cindy Adamek (Denver VAMC)
	Linda-Dell Archuleta (Salem VAMC)
	Catherine Bailey (Baltimore VAMC)
	Larry Lemos (San Francisco VAMC)
	Beverly Ross (Richmond VAMC)
	Jeanette Siler (Miami VAMC)
Immediate Past President:	Sarah V. Myers (Atlanta VAMC)

2004

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

NOVA's 24th Annual Educational Program took place in Tucson April 21-24. Audrey Drake, RN, MSN, CNA, Program Director/Nursing Services, opened the program with a pre-conference seminar on professional practice. Wednesday evening,

over 60 members and guests took part in the NOVA Foundation Event, Discover Mexico in the Heart of Tucson, at a fabulous dinner outdoors at the home of Dianne and Bill Nelson. On Thursday morning, the keynote speaker, Debra Crumpton, electrified and challenged the conference participants with “Leadership in Health Care for a Diverse Nation.” Joan Ricard, RN, MHA, FACHE, who is in the Associate Director Traineeship Program, gave an enlightening presentation on “Leadership in the Department of Veterans Affairs.” Participants also heard about “Legislative Leadership and Healthcare” from Susan Bitter Smith, CAE, the Executive Director of the Arizona Cable Telecommunications Association. Barbara Zicafoose RN, MSN, ANP, from Salem, gave an excellent talk on fibromyalgia. Sarah Myers, PhD, RN C, from Atlanta, and Sharon Johnson, RN BC, MSN, from Baltimore, talked to participants about new topics in gerontology. Dr. Burt Strug gave a powerful and personal presentation of “The Handle and the Blade—Coronary Artery Disease.” Deborah Antai-Otong RN, MS, PMHNP, CS, ended the day with an outstanding presentation of “Current Trends in Mental Health Care.” Friday morning, the program was opened by Cathy Rick, RN, CNAA, FACHE, Chief Nursing Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs, who provided updates on Office of Nursing Services staff. Dr. Charlotte Beason has retired. New staff members joining Audrey Drake are Dr. Anna Alt-White, Becky Kellen, Oyweda Moorer, Karen Ott, and Rose Paradis.

Wlatka Peric-Knowlton RN, MS, ANP-BC, CDE, presented an excellent description of “Diabetes & Dysmetabolic Syndrome: What You Need to Know in 2004.” She was followed by Dr. Jeffrey C. Page, who gave participants an outstanding presentation on “Diabetes-Vascular Disease Outcomes: Maintaining Foot Health.” Linda-Dell Archuleta was the moderator for a panel discussion on Holistic Health Care Models. Brian Cabin, MD (H), PC, an MD and homeopathic physician, discussed his move from traditional to non-traditional medicine, and also discussed vitamins. Barbara Hunt, RN, CHTPL, discussed healing touch. Sunanda Harrell-Stokes, Lac, a licensed acupuncturist, gave an overview of Chinese medicine. Mary Nelson, LMT, gave a fascinating talk about the effects of heat and cold with massage. Gigi Brown presented an overview of Feng Shui.

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

Dianne Nelson became NOVA’s eleventh president. Election results were announced as follows: Membership secretary: Nancy Claflin; Board members: Joan

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

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

The NOVA Professional Nurse Award for Clinical Excellence was given to Barbara Zicafoose, an Advanced Practice Nurse in the Salem VAMC, the Women's Veterans Program Manager and the Women's Health Clinic Coordinator. Barbara initiated and developed a proposal for a Women's Health Clinic with goals of increasing health services, improving customer satisfaction, keeping the clinic on schedule, and patient advocacy. The NOVA Professional Nurse Award for Leadership was given to Carmen Oberg, RN, BSN from the Southern Arizona Health Care System. Carmen has held a number of positions during her nursing career, most recently Nursing Director of Surgical Services, where she supervised the Operating Room, Post-Anesthesia Care Unit, Ambulatory Surgery Center, Intensive Care Unit, Step-Down Unit, and the inpatient surgical ward. She is a past-president of both the local and national Hispanic Nurses Associations and is very active in recruiting young people into nursing. The NOVA Veteran's Award was given to Senator John McCain. Senator McCain is one of the most vocal and admired leaders in the United States Senate. Senator McCain is very supportive of legislative issues important to veterans. The NOVA Distinguished Service Award was given to GHLN Architects and Engineers for their support of NOVA and the NOVA Foundation. The President of GLHN, Bill Nelson, has donated his time and treasures to NOVA. The NOVA Barbara Chambers Award was given to Dr. Sarah Myers. Dr. Myers presented testimony to the National Commission on VA Nursing on Recruitment and Retention of Advanced Practice Nurses, and also presented testimony on Recruitment and Retention of VA Nursing Staff to the Oversight and Investigations Committee.

The National Commission on VA nursing publicly released its final report on May 12th, 2004 to a distinguished audience including leaders from health care, labor organizations, professional nursing organizations, veterans organizations and Veterans Health Administration. The report was presented by Dr. Linda Burnes Bolton, Commission Chairperson. Following the report presentation, the Honorable Anthony J. Principi recognized and presented awards to Commission Members and Advisors.

Dianne Nelson, NOVA president, represented NOVA at this event. The Secretary accepted the report, and concurred with the recommendations*. The Commission report recommends:

- Strengthening nursing leadership though all levels and ensuring nurse executive accountability and responsibility for nursing practice (*for this recommendation, Secretary Principi concurred in principle, with the following rationale: VA endorses, supports, and will ensure that the facility nurse executive is fully integrated into the senior management team and its decision-making process. Nurse executives' line authority, responsibility and accountability for nursing practice will be validated by VHA within six months. VHA supports local authority for determination of medical center organizational structures and does not believe that line authority for nursing personnel is necessary to fulfill the intent of the Commission's recommendations. Local authority for this determination overrides the Commission's recommendation for a request for waiver.)
- Establishing national guidelines to support nursing education comparable to medical education
- Creating nationwide staffing standards and adopting appropriate Institute of Medicine recommendations from *Keeping Patients Safe: Transforming the Work Environment*
- Expanding recognition of achievement and performance and creating a culture of value and mutual respect for nursing through all levels of VHA
- Ensuring locality pay policies are competitive, changing hiring compensation policies for LPN's and NA's and strengthening Human Resources support
- Engage experts to redesign nursing work processes, give priority to VA Nursing Outcomes Data Base project, and partner with other federal agencies to promote information systems and technology research
- Establishing a Center for Excellence in Quality Nursing Care

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

Gordon H. Mansfield was sworn in as deputy secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). He previously served as VA's assistant secretary for congressional affairs. The deputy secretary, VA's second-highest post, oversees the day-to-day operations of the department, which has a budget of about \$64 billion and 224,000 employees. Mr. Mansfield has served as VA's assistant secretary for congressional and legislative affairs since August 2001. Before coming to VA, Mr. Mansfield served as executive director of the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) since April 1993.

The NOVA Board appointed Jayma Hall as Chair and Margaret Krukemeyer as Vice Chair of the NOVA foundation, and appointed Joan Clifford and Larry Lemos as

members. Curtis (Jay) Purser was appointed to the Membership Committee, replacing Veronica Elliott. Providencia Cardona was also added to the Membership Committee, serving while Jeannette Siler is ill.

The board also approved revising the membership directory to be mailed to each member in the spring of 2005. The Membership Committee was revised to include all six directors and 5 other NOVA members. Each Membership Committee member serves as the contact for 13-15 NOVA chapters, so that all chapters are included. There were 52 new members from the 2004 membership campaign. The Member-Get-A-Member-Campaign for 2005 was approved. The board also approved revision of the NOVA web page, which was accomplished.

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

The NOVA Membership Committee approved a new award, the Silver Star Award and recommended the Palo Alto Chapter to be the first winner. The committee also approved reinstating membership awards by category. The chapter size for the membership awards is as follows: Small--up to 25; Medium--26-99; Large--100 or greater. The winners will have the largest increase in the number of members. The committee also approved awarding a certificate to chapters who get 25 new members for the NOVA's 25th anniversary. The Member-Get-A-Member Campaign began after the annual educational conference. Each member who recruits 5 new members through April 15 will receive a free membership. Each member who recruits 15 new members through April 15 will receive a free conference registration for 2005. Each member who recruits 25 new members through April 15 will receive three nights' hotel free. In addition, the Richmond NOVA chapter issued a challenge for each chapter to recruit 25 new members for NOVA's 25th anniversary.

The NOVA board of directors approved moving its Annual Legislative Roundtable to January, 2005, in order to enhance attendance from VA and Congressional representatives.

NOVA became aware that some stations were inappropriately removing NOVA members from payroll deduction if they became supervisors, due to an automatic message received from the PAID file. This information was published in each issue of News from NOVA to alert members.

NOVA scored another significant legislative victory with Senate Bill 2484, which was passed November 17, and sent to the President for signature. This bill will:

- Simplify pay provisions for physicians and dentists
- Authorize alternate work schedules (working three 12-hour tours of duty & be considered full time; working 9 months of the year and receiving 3 months off)
- Authorize executive pay for nurses (ranging from \$10,000 to \$25,000)

- Require the VA to certify to Congress that each VA has a policy designed to prevent nurses working more than 12 consecutive hours or more than 60 hours in a week

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

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

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

The officers for 2004-2005 were:

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