

Chapter 7

Key Congressional Committees for Nurses, Research and Other Healthcare Issues

Like most large organizations, Congress does much of its work by committee. Both the Senate and House have numerous standing committees; members receive committee assignments at the start of each "new Congress." Unless something unusual happens (such as the death or midterm retirement of a member), Members' committee assignments last an entire Congress (two years). Committee assignments are made by the leadership of each respective party and the committee ratios (i.e., number of Majority Members to Minority Members) are determined by the overall make up of Majority to Minority Members in the chamber as a whole. Each committee has two key leaders: a "chairperson," who is a member of the Majority party, and a "ranking member," who is the most senior member of the Minority party on the committee.

Key Committees for Nurses and Healthcare Issues	
Senate	House of Representatives
Appropriations Committee: the committee that controls the federal purse strings and determines federal funding for all government functions, from defense to biomedical research	Appropriations Committee: the committee that controls the federal purse strings and determines federal funding for all government functions, from defense to biomedical research
Labor, Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations Subcommittee (LHHS): the specialized subcommittee that determines federal funding for federal agencies, including the Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, and Education and all of their subagencies (e.g., National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Health Resources and Services Administration, which administers the Nursing Workforce Development Programs)	Labor, Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations Subcommittee (LHHS): the specialized subcommittee that determines federal funding for several federal agencies, including the Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, and Education and all of their subagencies (e.g., National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Health Resources and Services Administration, which administers the Nursing Workforce Development Programs)
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: the authorizing committee with jurisdiction over all non-Medicare and non-Medicaid healthcare policy issues.	Energy and Commerce Committee and its Health Subcommittee: the authorizing committee with policy jurisdiction over the Medicaid program, Part B (outpatient services) of the Medicare program, and all non-Medicare and non-Medicaid healthcare issues.
Finance Committee and its Health Subcommittee: the authorizing committee and subcommittee with policy jurisdiction over the Medicare and Medicaid programs	Ways and Means Committee and its Health Subcommittee: the authorizing committee with policy jurisdiction over the Medicare program (shares jurisdiction over certain parts of Medicare with the House Energy and Commerce Committee)

If your representative or either of your senators sits on one of these key committees, your participation in advocacy is even more important because these members play a key role in crafting, advancing, or defeating legislative proposals of concern to ARN. To learn which

committees your Members of Congress serve on, visit the Congress websites (thomas.loc.gov), www.senate.gov, or www.house.gov.

Chapter 8

How to Get Involved in Health Policy Advocacy

If you can write a letter, send an e-mail or leave a brief phone message - just like you do for your patients, friends or family - you can "do" health policy advocacy. It's that easy. Being involved in advocacy is important - if elected officials do not hear from rehabilitation nurses - they and their staff will not be aware of our issues or concerns. With a brief phone call, e-mail note, or letter, rehabilitation nurses can educate Congress about the issues impacting the nursing community and people with disabilities that have rehabilitation needs.

The first step to get connected to ARN's health policy activities is to find out who represents you in Congress as well as to familiarize yourself with ARN's Health Policy Agenda, which can be found at www.rehabnurse.org. While there, you have the opportunity to click on links that connect you to the latest health policy information, electronic newsletters, e-mail action alerts, and helpful advocacy tips.

Also, the ARN website links you to important Action Alerts, which can help you become engaged in ARN health policy advocacy efforts. For additional health policy resources, visit www.rehabnurse.org.

If you are not registered to vote, the League of Women Voters Web site allows men or women to register online at [Online Voter Registration-Click Here](#) or check out the Health Policy Tool Kit Resources www.rehabnurse.org for additional links.