



# AMERICAN ACADEMY OF NURSING

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Dear President-elect Obama:

As leading nurse experts in women's health within the American Academy of Nursing (Academy), we are committed to the support and advancement of women and girls and their families. We congratulate you on your election and stand ready to work with you to push forward an agenda in support of women's issues.

The Academy's mission is to serve the public and nursing profession by advancing health policy and practice through the generation, synthesis, and dissemination of nursing knowledge. The Academy was established to anticipate national and international trends in health care, and address resulting issues of health care knowledge and policy. Not only is the invitation to Fellowship recognition of one's accomplishments within the nursing profession, but also affords an opportunity to work with other leaders in health care in addressing the issues of the day. The Academy, through its expert panels, provides the opportunity for the nation's nurse leaders to come together and put forward cutting-edge, evidence based recommendations for public policy.

We were pleased to see the appointments of highly-qualified women to key administration positions, including, most recently, Melody Barnes, Christina Romer and Ellen Moran. With these and other pending appointments and nominations, you have shown your willingness to name women to important White House posts. We applaud and thank you for these efforts and hope to see continued appointments of qualified women and in particular, nurse leaders in your Administration.

As you know, achieving gender equity is critical for our nation. One key aspect in achieving this goal is to put into place policies and regulations that will confront these problems and establish long-lasting solutions. One key step in this direction is to reinstate the two offices that were eliminated or downgraded by the current administration: the White House Office for Women's Initiatives and Outreach and the President's Interagency Council on Women. These offices served as important advocates for women's issues throughout the agencies. They promoted interagency collaboration to address critical issues, and furthered policy initiatives that advanced women's progress. Re-establishing these two offices would send a strong signal of support to women's issues and provide a mechanism for the development and implementation of new ideas. Women are an important part of our nation and their role as bread winners and health care consumers is often over looked. As the economy worsens, many women will have to work harder to balance their role as caretaker and may also need to take on additional employment to help their families cope. This economic crisis has hit women hard as they are more likely than men to be single heads of households and more likely than men to live in poverty. And as



women constitute the largest group of consumers of health care they will face the difficult and expensive choices about their families' health care coverage.

One critical priority we must address is access to health care. Nearly 50 million Americans do not have health insurance, while another 25 million are underinsured. The amount people pay for health insurance increased 30 percent from 2001 to 2005, while income for the same period of time only increased 3 percent, as reported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Many are anticipating that the growing cost of health care insurance coupled with the faltering economy will result in many more individuals and families making choices to go without health insurance. This is a complex problem that requires comprehensive and well-planned solutions. One important approach is to provide improved access and reimbursement to proven high-quality, cost-effective health care providers. Nurse providers are one of the solutions. AAN supports the appropriate reimbursement of primary and preventive health care provided by nurse clinicians, certified nurse midwives, women's health or family nurse practitioners.

The Academy is concerned with many health care policies that are specific to women. We urge you to consider federal policies and legislation that support pressing issues such as:

- Restoration of funding for testing and evaluating innovative models of health care delivery, which are applicable broadly across the lifespan;
- Creation of workplaces within businesses that support maternal and infant health, this would include provision for lactating mothers and attention to toxic-free, healthy workplaces; and
- More extensive provision of family planning services. For example, funding Medicaid programs at the parity income level for pregnancy care could prevent approximately 500,000 unintended pregnancies and provide services to approximately 3 million women; and
- Provision of funding for smoking cessation, nutrition and weight loss, and drug treatment programs as part of health care service coverage.

Nurses around the nation are ready to work with you and your administration to improve the health of women and girls. Healthy women are critical to ensuring a growing economy. We look forward to working with you to implement these important policy recommendations.

Sincerely,

Pamela Mitchell, PhD, RN, FAHA, FAAN  
President, American Academy of Nursing

Ellen Olshansky, DNSc, RNC, FAAN  
Chair, Women's Health Expert Panel

Cc: D. Singiser