



advancing quality anesthesia care, serving our members, promoting the nurse anesthesia profession



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Jim Henderson, Editor

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Samford University Names New Department Chair Mary Karlet, CRNA, PhD

The Department of Nurse Anesthesia, Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing at Samford University is proud to announce that Dr. Mary Karlet, CRNA, PhD, has assumed the role of Department Chair as of November 2006.

Dr. Karlet comes to Samford most recently from Western Carolina University, where she was a consultant and interim program director for a newly formed nurse anesthesia program and just prior to that she had been the program director at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina for six years. She has served as a consultant in the development of three other nurse anesthesia programs.

She is a native of Detroit, Michigan and obtained her Baccalaureate degree in Nursing from Michigan State University. She received a Masters degree in nurse anesthesia at Wayne State University and subsequently completed a doctoral program at Wayne State with the awarding of a PhD in physiology.

Dr. Karlet has been published in several refereed and non-refereed journals, written numerous book chapters, and is the editor for Nurse Anesthesia Secrets, published by Elsevier Science. She also brings to the Department of Nurse Anesthesia a remarkable record of grant application and successful funding.

The Department of Nurse Anesthesia is very fortunate to have a Department Chair with the expertise and experience of Dr. Karlet and extend her a warm and gracious welcome to the nurse anesthesia community of Alabama.

Dr. Karlet will be a featured speaker at the ALANA Spring Meeting. Don't miss this opportunity to hear her speak and welcome her to the ALANA!

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From the Office of the ALANA President *Jim Henderson, CRNA*

Dear Members,

The resignation of Joe Knight as the Executive Director of ALANA is the big news of the day. The success of Joe's law practice, particularly since joining Bohanan and Knight, and the demands of this success on his time make Joe's resignation bittersweet: we will miss him greatly but are happy for his success. His contributions to the success of ALANA are far too many to mention in this brief article. He is the founder of the ALA-CRNA PAC; he established the annual ALANA Legislative Day; he is the "face of nurse anesthesia in Alabama."

My first contact with the ALANA was meeting Joe Knight at an ALANA Spring Meeting in Destin many years ago. He encouraged me to get more involved, which ultimately led me to run for a Director seat on the ALANA Board of Directors. He has been my mentor, advisor and friend throughout that term and two terms as ALANA President. Rarely has a week gone by that Joe and I don't have an hour or longer phone conversation. Perhaps more than anyone else, I will miss Joe's active participation in the ALANA. That said, he can resign as the Executive Director, but he can't resign as mentor, advisor and friend!

The ALANA Spring Meeting will be a fitting venue for Joe to give his farewell Executive Director's Report. We will all have an opportunity to send Joe off in style and honor him for his years of service. This is just another good reason to make sure you don't miss the 2007 Annual ALANA Spring Meeting!

In the meantime, we are busy trying to fill Joe's big shoes with a new lobbyist. We have a full day of appointments scheduled tomorrow in Montgomery with the top lobbying groups and individuals, all ready to serve our worthy cause. Wish us luck!

As always, don't hesitate to contact me or any member of the ALANA Board of Directors if you have questions, suggestions or concerns about your profession, your practice, or your state association. Since we are all so busy with clinical anesthesia during the day, I am available most evenings at my home from 7PM through 11PM. My phone number is listed in each issue of the NewsBulletin and is available on the website. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Jim Henderson, CRNA



From the Office of the Executive Director

Joe Knight, CRNA, JD

My Dear Friends:

It is with a heavy heart that I write my last Executive Director's report on behalf of the Alabama Association of Nurse Anesthetists. After much thought and deliberation, I have submitted my resignation to President Jim Henderson and the ALANA Board of Directors. I have assured them that I will do everything in my power to ensure a smooth transition. A new lobbyist should be in place by the time you receive this bulletin and the ALANA will be in good shape with the present administration.

As many of you know, I formed a law partnership with a former CRNA, Ralph Bohanan. Ralph and I graduated together from the UAB School of Nurse Anesthesia in 1980. Our firm is Bohanan & Knight, P.C. and our practice covers the entire state of Alabama. We primarily handle automobile accident cases, truck and train wrecks, workers compensation cases, defective products cases and death cases. We are off to a tremendous start and one of the things that sets Ralph apart is his willingness and ability to take cases to trial. This makes a huge difference when attempting to negotiate a settlement for someone who has been injured. My work at Bohanan & Knight has allowed me an opportunity to practice law in a way that I have always dreamed of and imagined. For me to try to continue to do both would be unfair to the ALANA and to Bohanan & Knight and thus, I must go to where my name is on the door.

As I look back over my career with the ALANA, I am reminded of a time back in 1993 when the Alabama Board of Medical Examiners (BME) promulgated rules that allowed AAs to practice in Alabama. The ALANA did an excellent job of presenting evidence at a public hearing in opposition to this new fangled idea. The BME passed the rules in spite of opposition by other physicians, nurses and other groups that ran

20:1 against implementing or adopting the rules.

After that, the ALANA committed to a course that would help CRNAs have a hand in their own destiny in Alabama. I was hired as the lobbyist for the association and ALA-CRNA PAC was born. I went to Montgomery not knowing a soul and I had no clue as to what to do or how to do it. In short order, we were up and running. Since that time, we have come a long way in understanding, participating in and being a part of the legislative process. Having been a CRNA for 12 years, I understood the issues facing CRNAs and was able to effectively educate the legislators as to who we were and what we did. We have incurred many challenges to the practice of nurse anesthesia along the way and have dealt with them in a professional responsible manner. I am proud to have been a part of it and am proud of the things we have accomplished working together.

The most difficult part of all of this for me will be not seeing my friends each year from Alabama and from all over the country at the meetings in SanDestin, Birmingham and Washington, D.C. I will attend the spring meeting this year in SanDestin to give my farewell address and my last report and I hope to see you there.

I wish to thank the twelve ALANA Presidents under whom I have served as well as the many board members who have served their association so admirably. Your support has meant so much to me and to my family. I take my leave with my head held high, my spirits bright and with the satisfaction that I have done my very best to represent the ALANA and the profession of nurse anesthesia.

Your pal,

Joe Knight

2006 Outstanding Clinical Preceptor Awards

For the past three years, the highlight of the ALANA observance of National Nurse Anesthesia Week has been the announcement of the Outstanding Clinical Preceptor Awards. These awards were developed to recognize those individuals who consistently provide our nurse anesthesia students with excellent clinical experiences and create an environment that is conducive to learning the science and art that is nurse anesthesia.

Based upon recommendations from students and faculty, each nurse anesthesia program can name up to five individual recipients. The recipients are awarded a Certificate of Appreciation and given a \$100.00 tuition grant to attend an ALANA Educational Meeting. Recipients are honored at the Business Meeting of the ALANA Annual Spring Meeting in San Destin, to be held April 27 – 29, 2007.

On behalf of the students and members of the ALANA, it gives me great pleasure to announce this year's Outstanding Clinical Preceptor recipients:

Jennifer Wilborn, Marshall Medical Center

Karen Fischer, Medical Center East, Birmingham

Rance Wiggins, Baptist South, Montgomery

John Peeden, Gadsden Regional

John Morris, The Surgery Center, Oxford

Trish Tatum, Brookwood Hospital

Terry Wendell, Huntsville Hospital

Martha Blatchford, Lebonheur Hospital

Rex England, St Vincent's Hospital

Carol Johnson, Children's Hospital

Please join me in extending a warm word of congratulations to each of these fine members.



Rance Wiggins, CRNA
with his chief
Maria Rinehart, CRNA



Jennifer Wilborn, CRNA
with student
Shawn Sears, SRNA



Karen Fischer, CRNA
with chief
Scott Summers



John Peeden, CRNA
with chief
Randy Holmes, CRNA



John Morris, CRNA
with
Resa Culpepper, CRNA

In Memoriam

Audra Elizabeth Lalian

I first met Audra, in 2002, a few weeks before we began UAB's Nurse Anesthesia Program. Audra had graduated from UAB with her BSN in 1990. She then received her advanced practice degree from the UAB Nurse Practitioner program in 1994. She worked independently in the Regional Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at UAB where she excelled. Audra was well respected as a nurse practitioner and known for her skill and compassion in dealing with her patients and their family members. It was Audra's desire to fulfill her potential and better the lives of her children that motivated her to advance her career in Nurse Anesthesia.

With our lives about to be consumed by 27 months of studying and temporarily living at poverty level, we discussed the challenges facing us. Audra shared with me that she was a single mother of three young children and she planned to work while in school. She didn't feel it would be impossible. Her determination was inspiring. At the end of the first week, she quietly admitted that although the program was difficult, it would not be impossible. For the next 9 months, we sat next to each other in class and then had the opportunity to share some clinical rotations.

A few months into the program, my husband was deployed to Iraq. It was supposed to be

his job to cheer me through school. Audra immediately picked up the pom-poms. For a year, I became a single mom too. She motivated me to keep up. She had so much energy and charisma in such a small 5'2" frame. Audra always believed that we would make it. If those close to her had a problem, battled an illness or needed someone to talk to, she would champion their cause. I watched her pray for others and with others. Her faith carried her.

To know Audra, was to know of her deep love for her parents, brother, sister and her beautiful children. Audra's children Alex, Abby, and Anna Grace are beautiful, loving, intelligent examples of her life. Each trip we



took together, whether for a review course, or to the spring meeting was filled with discussions of what was new with the children, what they did that made us laugh, and their future. We both agreed that although motherhood could be the toughest job of all, it was without a doubt the most rewarding.

While in the anesthesia program, her father battled cancer. Audra's father was able to see her graduate and settle into her job before his death. Audra's father passed on to her a resilient attitude and strong work ethic. Audra's hard work and integrity were evident every day in class and at clinical sites. She treated each patient

with respect as if they were family. Because of her father's experience, she had a tender spot in her heart for those who were balding due to chemo or radiation and would offer her scrub hat to them.

After graduating, Audra chose to work at UAB Medical West. She spoke highly of her co-workers and the environment there for nurse anesthetists. The schedule allowed her to spend quality time with her children at the ball park, their school, or for taking trips to the beach.

On the morning of January 14, 2007, while on her way home from a call weekend, Audra was involved in a car accident that claimed her life. She is survived by her son and two daughters, her mother, brother, sister, niece and nephews. At the wake and

funeral many of her friends from the nurse anesthesia community were present to pay their respects.

My family and I loved Audra as so many others did. Audra was full of life. She gave out the biggest hugs for such a little lady. She will be greatly missed.

Given the tremendous sacrifices that Audra made to put herself through school, those close to her felt it would be a fitting tribute to establish a memorial scholarship in her name. We are raising money for a scholarship that would benefit a student of an Alabama Nurse Anesthesia Program. We know that Audra would want to help anyone with financial needs that may be struggling to improve themselves as she did.

Dawn Holsombeck, CRNA

Dawn & Audra



Please help by donating to the **Audra Lalisan Memorial Scholarship Fund**. The AANA Foundation will establish and administer the Scholarship in her name. Make your tax deductible donation payable to the AANA Foundation and include in the memo section the Audra Lalisan Scholarship.

AANA Foundation
222 S. Prospect Avenue
Park Ridge, IL 60068



Student Representatives to the ALANA Board of Directors

Angie Cox & Andrew Morris



To All CRNAs and Peer Classmates,

Hold on tight to your A-Lines as the New Year comes into full circulation!!! We are all growing in anticipation and excitement of the challenges and opportunities ahead of us in 2007. As for the students, important dates are fast approaching.

First, the ALANA is gearing up for the State Legislative Day on April 17th in Montgomery. This is a unique line-of-sight for the ALANA board into the “who’s and why’s” of many of the legislative efforts surrounding our field’s future growth and evolution. It promises to be an interesting insight into Montgomery politics. Several members of the ALANA Board will be there, and we encourage all students who are able to attend. Every bright smiling face will be welcome! The following week brings the AANA Mid-Year Assembly in Washington, DC, and the ALANA Spring meeting at the Sandestin Hilton in Destin, FL. The AANA Mid-Year Assembly is our opportunity to speak directly with our US Senators and Congressmen from Alabama in our quest to advance the nurse anesthesia profession. And as for the Spring Meeting in Destin? Find out for yourself why this is one of the top ten nurse anesthesia meetings in the country! Hey, it’s a weekend at the beach! We encourage all who can to come to the Destin meeting. It can be said, without question, that it’s an excellent meeting for students! We are very excited for the opportunity to recap the year’s events to all who attend. In addition, we will be sharing the future plan of growth for our board and state members to focus on promoting and enhancing the nurse anesthesia profession. We continue to value all the support we have received from the two programs and our peer classmates. And did we mention it’s a weekend at the beach? We could all use that! Visit the AANA and ALANA websites for details on both meetings.

Also, as members of the class of 2007, we are elated to see the finish of our academic session fast approaching. Our long hours and hard work have been challenging, but well worth

every moment. Getting to know our anesthetist peers has been a true privilege. As announced, several Alabama CRNAs have been recognized as outstanding clinical educators. Samford and UAB students offer a round of applause to these special people. However, we would also like to take this opportunity to thank all CRNAs who have allowed us to work beside them in the clinical area. We thank you for your words of encouragement and wisdom as you have shared your professional experiences and counsel with us. All of you are highly appreciated and we look forward to continuing our education as time leads up to graduation.

Finally, we would like to offer some veteran encouragement the class of 2008 as their first year is nearing completion. Clinical education will soon be in full swing and new adjustments must be made in your schedules and time priorities in order to develop a new balance of academic responsibility. We urge all seniors to make time to mentor and guide our fellow students as they face these inevitable changes. Although clinical assignments will be heavy, we recommend that you continue to follow the activities of the AANA and ALANA. Additionally, please participate as much as your schedule will allow you this year. All participation is welcome and your experiences will certainly be beneficial to you as students and future CRNAs.

So Spring is busy for all, but it’s bringing wonderful things for Alabama anesthesia students!

Once again, please take advantage of Andrew or Angie’s email link by visiting the ALANA website located at www.ala-crna.org. We look forward to fielding any questions or concerns you may need addressed.

Sincerely,
Angie and Andrew

News from Alabama's Nurse Anesthesia Programs

UAB Nurse Anesthesia Program News

- **Degree Completion Program for CRNAs**
The UAB Nurse Anesthesia Program has developed a Degree Completion Program for practicing CRNAs wishing to obtain a Masters Degree in Anesthesia. This program has been accredited by the AANA and has a 34 credit hour requirement and is offered in an online format. If interested, contact Laura Wright at wrightel@uab.edu
- **Simulator**
The UAB Nurse Anesthesia Program is anticipating the delivery of a simulator. This will enhance student skills through problem-based learning and hands on experience.
- **Article for Publication**
Dr. Joe Williams, Program Director has had an article titled "Cost Differences Between Academic and Non-Academic Hospitals: A Study of Surgical Procedures in Twelve Hospitals" accepted in Hospital Topics, winter 07.
- **Working Towards a PhD**
Laura Wright, MNA, CRNA, has been accepted into the PhD program at UAB in the School of Nursing. Her research interest includes the effect of pre-operative anxiety on post-operative pain and she is very excited to be back in school.
- **Donated Anesthesia Machine**
The UAB Nurse Anesthesia Program would like to recognize the GE Healthcare Corporation for their generous donation of an updated anesthesia machine and end-tidal gas monitor. This new equipment will provide our students pre clinical experience on machines they are likely to see when they begin their clinical portion of their education.

Samford University Nurse Anesthesia Program News

- **Capstone Projects**
The Samford University Nurse Anesthesia Program senior nurse anesthesia students formally presented their capstone projects to fellow students, university faculty, and the public on Scholarship Days in February. All in attendance benefited from the time and energy that the students devoted to this important project.
- **Student Participates in Assembly of School Faculty**
Cyndi Bass, a junior student in the Samford program, represented the program as a student representative at the Assembly of School Faculty in Orlando, Florida. The opportunity to interact with educators and students from across the country was tremendously enriching for Cyndi and she represented our program.
- **Change in Program Start Date**
Please share with prospective applicants that the program start date has been moved from the summer to the spring of each year. Applications are being accepted now for the January 2008 admission date.
- **Outstanding Clinical Preceptors**
Our continued thanks and gratitude to all of the CRNAs who mentor our students day-in and day-out. Your contribution to the program is appreciated by Samford faculty and students. The program is especially proud of the five clinical preceptors who were voted by our students as "Outstanding Preceptors of the Year." John Morris, CRNA - The Surgery Center, Oxford, AL; Jennifer Wilbourne, CRNA - Marshall Medical Center, Boaz, AL; John Peeden, CRNA - Gadsden Regional Medical Center, Gadsden, AL; Rance Wiggins, CRNA - Baptist Medical Center South, Montgomery, AL; and Karen Fischer, CRNA - Medical Center East, Birmingham, AL.



From the Office of the Federal Political Director

John Morris, CRNA

House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health - Recommendations for 110th Congress

On Wednesday (January 17th), the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health announced it will examine oversight of the Medicare prescription drug benefit among other priorities for the 110th Congress. The Health Subcommittee, along with the Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on Health, are the two major House of Representatives panels with authority over Medicare payment and policy important to CRNAs.

The Chair of the Ways & Means Committee Rep. Charlie Rangel (D-NY) and ranking member Jim McCrery (R-LA) wrote in a letter to leaders of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee and the House Administration Committee that the subcommittee will examine prices for medications under the Medicare prescription drug benefit, as well as proposals to establish a "Medicare-sponsored drug option" and "negotiated price mechanisms," according to the letter. In addition, the subcommittee will examine the relationship between Medicare reimbursement policies and workforce concerns, the adequacy of benefits and competitive bidding for durable medical equipment. The subcommittee also will examine oversight of the Medicare "trigger," the point at which federal revenue contributions account for 45% of total Medicare spending and set off additional automatic Medicare budget cuts in the future. The panel will also conduct oversight of "budget and staffing, contracting activities" and accountability at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

Medical Liability Reform Introduced In Senate

Senator John Ensign (R-NV) has introduced the *Medical Care Access Protection (MCAP) Act of 2007* (S 243) into the new Congress. Currently, CRNAs have not seen a dramatic rise in medical liability coverage premiums. However, AANA has long welcomed legislation that aims to ensure patients' access to healthcare.

The legislation is the same he sponsored in the 109th Congress that would limit non-economic damages in medical malpractice lawsuits to \$750,000. Senator Ensign said that the bill would cap non-economic damages for a single healthcare provider at \$250,000 with a total limit of \$750,000. The legislation would not limit economic damages, but it would limit attorneys' fees. According to Ensign, the bill is modeled after a Texas law that has helped reduce medical malpractice insurance premiums in that state. In a statement the American Medical Association (AMA) said the Texas law has kept physicians' malpractice premiums down and improved patients' access to care. Ensign in a news release said, "Medical liability reform works, and it's turning the tide against frivolous lawsuits and outrageous jury awards."

Medicare Reimbursement to Decrease 10% by 2008

Though Congress just adopted and the President just signed into law a major bill providing some relief from Medicare payment cuts for 2007, out comes another government agency with a harsh reminder that Medicare payment relief isn't lasting long.

On Thursday (December 28th), the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released a report stating Medicare physician reimbursements will decrease by 10% in 2008 following the one year's relief provided under a tax, trade and healthcare law signed by President Bush on December 20th. The law includes a provision that will reverse a 5.1% reduction in Medicare physician reimbursements scheduled for 2007. However, Medicare physician "payment rates will revert to the prior-law level in 2008," CBO states, adding, "Assuming that occurs, CBO estimates that payment rates for

physicians' services will be reduced by 10% in 2008." By "physicians," the CBO refers to CRNAs as well, as CRNAs also bill Medicare Part B.

The law includes a "Physician Assistance Quality Initiative Fund," which places \$1.35 billion under the authority of the HHS secretary to help offset the cost of the decrease in Medicare physician reimbursements in 2008. The "funds will remain available until spent, but (the legislation) instructs the Secretary to obligate those funds for physicians' services furnished during calendar year 2008 to the maximum extent feasible," according to the CBO. The CBO estimates that the Health and Human Services (HHS) secretary will spend 90% of the fund in 2008 and 10% in 2009. The law also includes a provision that will provide a 1.5% increase in Medicare reimbursements in 2007 to physicians who agree to report data on certain quality-of-care measures. According to the CBO, Medicare will pay about \$300 million in additional reimbursements under the provision.

MedPAC Says Medicare's New Payment Method Reduces Spending

Medicare's new payment method for reimbursing physicians for prescription drugs under Part B has saved Medicare nearly \$1 billion, according to a report to Congress prepared by the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC). The new payment method, known as the Average Sales Price system, reimburses physicians for drugs covered under Part B, which include intravenous drugs that generally cannot be administered by patients themselves. The MedPAC report stated that spending on Part B drugs fell from \$10.9 billion in 2004 to \$10.1 billion in 2005 with the new policy.

Medicare Contractor Provider Satisfaction Survey Released

In January 2007, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid services (CMS) will begin dissemination of the Medicare Contractor Provider Satisfaction Survey (MCPSS) to a new sample of Medicare providers. The survey is designed to garner quantifiable data on provider satisfaction levels with key services performed by the fee-for-service contractors (FFS) that process and pay more than \$280 billion in Medicare claims each year.

Providers selected to participate in the survey will be notified by mail during the first week of January 2007. The survey is designed so that it can be completed in about 15 minutes and providers can submit their responses via a secure Website, mail, fax, or over the telephone. CMS will ask providers to respond by February 2007.

The views of each provider in the survey are important because they represent many other organizations

similar in size, practice type and geographical location. If you are one of the 35,000 providers randomly chosen to participate in the 2007 MCPSS implementation, you have an opportunity to help CMS improve service to all providers.

The MCPSS focuses on seven major aspects of the provider-contractor relationship -- **provider communications, provider inquiries, claims processing, appeals, provider enrollment, medical review, and provider audit and reimbursement.** Respondents are asked to rate their experience working with contractors using a scale of 1 to 6, with "1" representing "not at all satisfied" and "6" representing "completely satisfied."

Have You Got Your NPI? It's Important

The compliance date, May 23, 2007, is only five months away. It's every provider's responsibility to make sure that an NPI is obtained if the provider is required to do so. If you're not sure, it's time to investigate. Get your NPI now so you have time to prepare before the compliance date. This includes sharing your NPI and appropriately testing it with payers to avoid a disruption in cash flow.

MedPAC Urges Congress to Increase Physician Reimbursement 1.7% in 2008

On Wednesday (January 10th), the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) voted unanimously to approve a recommendation to Congress to increase reimbursements to doctors by an estimated 1.7% in 2008. Without action from Congress, physician reimbursements in 2008, including reimbursements for CRNAs, would decrease by 10% under the current payment formula starting next January 1st. MedPAC calculated the new figure using expected 2008 "input prices," or the expenses that go into providing physician services, and expected increases in physician productivity.

Commissioners also agreed that a \$1.35 billion "Physician Assistance and Quality Initiative Fund" created by Congress late last year should be used to fund a portion of the 2008 payment update. However, relief from the 10% cut in 2008 alone is anticipated to cost billions of dollars, which Congress must find either from increasing revenues or from spending cuts elsewhere.

House Energy and Commerce Committee Announces Health Subcommittee Members

The House Energy and Commerce (E&C) Committee has announced the congressional members of the Health Subcommittee for the 110th Congress. The Energy and Commerce Committee is one of the two major committees (the other being Ways & Means) with



From the Office of the Federal Political Director

John Morris, CRNA

jurisdiction over healthcare issues pertaining to CRNAs.

House Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee

Frank Pallone, D-NJ, Chair	Nathan Deal, R-GA, Ranking Member
Henry Waxman, CA	Ralph Hall, TX
Ed Towns, NY	Charlie Norwood, GA
Bart Gordon, TN	Barbara Cubin, WY
Anna Eshoo, CA	John Shadegg, AZ
Gene Green, TX	Steve Buyer, IN
Diana DeGette, CO	Joseph Pitts, PA
Lois Capps, CA	Mary Bono, CA
Tom Allen, ME	Mike Ferguson, NJ
Tammy Baldwin, WI	Mike Rogers, MI
Eliot Engel, NY	Sue Myrick, NC
Jan Schakowsky, IL	John Sullivan, OK
Hilda Solis, CA	Tim Murphy, PA
Mike Ross, AR	Michael Burgess, TX
Darlene Hooley, OR	Joe Barton, TX (Ex officio member)
Anthony Weiner, NY	
Jim Matheson, UT	
John Dingell, MI	

Universal Coverage Back on the Forefront

Universal health insurance is an elusive goal that has tantalized presidents and governors for decades and is roaring back this year with ambitious proposals in a handful of prominent states. With CRNAs eligible to bill Medicare, other government plans, and private payors directly, insurance reforms are a trend worth watching.

In recent weeks, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) announced a proposal, based on a Massachusetts law enacted last year, that would require all state residents to obtain health insurance, and Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell (D) announced a similar proposal. More than six additional states also are “actively debating the idea”. Governors in Colorado, Illinois and Kansas recently have called for universal health insurance for residents, and governors in Arizona, Indiana, New Mexico and New York have called for expanded coverage. A coalition of 16 organizations last week announced a proposal that would provide health insurance to more than half of uninsured US residents, and a bipartisan group of lawmakers last week introduced legislation that would provide grants to states to test healthcare reform proposals. In addition, Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Representative John Dingell (D-MI) also have said they will seek to pass legislation that would extend Medicare to all residents and allow them to select from health plans offered to federal lawmakers.

Primary Care Physicians Propose Payment on Coordination of Care

On Monday (January 22nd), the American College of Physicians (ACP) proposed revisions to the US healthcare system that would pay primary care physicians based on their coordination of care for patients. It is unclear how the ACP’s proposal might impact demand for or reimbursement of

healthcare services involving CRNAs.

Pay-for-Performance Program Boosts Quality at Hospitals

According to the latest results from a Medicare pay-for-performance pilot program that rewards hospitals based on quality has “steadily improved the quality of patient care”. The AANA has continued to work in Washington to ensure that CRNAs have a seat at the table in the creation and implementation of any pay-for-performance designed around patient care. The demonstration project, which launched in October 2003, includes about 260 hospitals in 38 states. Under the program, hospitals can earn bonuses if they rank among the top 20% in providing specified treatments in at least one of five areas of patient care: joint replacement, coronary artery bypass graft, heart attack, heart failure and pneumonia. According to the data, participating hospitals overall experienced nearly 1,300 fewer deaths in treating heart attack patients, and they generally have scored higher on quality measures than other US hospitals. On Friday (January 26th), officials from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced performance bonuses of \$8.7 million to 115 hospitals that were the top performers based on 30 quality measures in the second year of the project. Premier, a not-for-profit hospital alliance, is managing the program. CMS and Premier have begun discussions about whether to extend the project as “Congress has also asked Medicare to look into developing a new payment system that would put more emphasis on rewarding the best care.”

House Passes FY 2007 Omnibus Appropriations Bill

On Wednesday (January 31st), the House voted 286-140 to approve a \$463.5 billion FY 2007 omnibus appropriations bill that includes increased funds for the National Institute for Health (NIH), healthcare for veterans and other health programs. The package includes the same level funding for nursing education in 2007 as in the previous fiscal year, about \$150 million.

The 109th Congress last year approved two of 11 FY 2007 appropriations bills and passed a continuing resolution to fund most federal agencies at FY 2006 levels until February 15th, 2007. Late last year, incoming House Appropriations Committee Chair David Obey (D-WI) and incoming Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Robert Byrd (D-WV) said that they would complete the other FY 2007 appropriations bills through an omnibus appropriations bill and focus on FY 2008 appropriations bills. The omnibus appropriations bill would fund most federal agencies until September 30th, 2007, (the end of FY 2007). More than 25% of Republican lawmakers voted in favor of the continuing resolution, although some Republicans protested that the bill was not entirely stripped of special-interest funding, or earmarks, as the Democratic leaders asserted, and that they were denied

the opportunity to offer amendments. The Senate must pass the legislation by February 15th to avoid a partial shutdown of the federal government.

Bush Delivers FY 2008 Budget to Congress; Medicare Payments, Advanced Education Nursing Funds Cut

On Monday (February 5th), President Bush proposed his 2008 federal budget, which includes more than \$70 billion in cuts from projected Medicare and Medicaid spending over the next five years, including reductions in Medicare Part B physician and CRNA payments for 2008, and makes reductions in health professions education spending important for CRNAs. Out of the total \$2.8 trillion budget, the President’s 2008 budget recommends implementing Medicare physician and CRNA payment cuts of about 8% effective January 2008, on top of anesthesia payment cuts that went into effect in 2007. The budget also eliminates \$57 million in annual funding for advanced education nursing in 2008, about \$3 million of which is awarded competitively to strengthen nurse anesthesia educational programs, and to provide nurse anesthetist traineeships funding particularly for those intending to practice in rural and medically underserved America.

“We can only hope that this budget and its healthcare cuts are ‘dead on arrival’ on Capitol Hill,” said Frank Purcell, AANA Senior Director Federal Government Affairs. “But the government is running huge deficits. Medicare is going broke just as more seniors are coming eligible for the program. The financial challenges facing Washington are all too real. With a new Congress on Capitol Hill, AANA and CRNAs must speak strongly and clearly that the nurse anesthesia profession, and funding to strengthen CRNA educational programs, is vital to patients’ safe and affordable access to healthcare.”

Committees of Congress begin hearings on the President’s budget shortly, with the House Ways & Means Committee holding a hearing February 7th. The President’s budget is a proposal, not a law – Congress through its budget, appropriations, and legislating processes determines the money that comes into the government through taxes and other revenues, and then flows out through spending. The proposed cuts are part of President Bush’s plan to balance the budget by 2012. Under the President’s proposal, a greater percentage of Medicare beneficiaries with relatively high incomes would be required to pay more than the standard monthly premium, which currently is \$93.50. The budget is also expected to propose freezing Medicare payments to home health agencies and reducing inflation allowance paid to hospitals, nursing homes and other provider.

John Morris, CRNA
ALANA Federal Political Director

ALANA Annual Spring Meeting Information

Welcome

Mark your calendars and complete the registration form for the Annual Spring Meeting of the ALANA to be held in beautiful Destin, Florida at the Sandestin Hilton Beach Resort, April 27 - 29, 2007. Every year the attendance at this meeting grows bigger and bigger. Is this growth due to the outstanding faculty assembled at this meeting to present the state-of-the-art in anesthesia continuing education? Is it the fabulous accommodations and resort amenities offered at the Sandestin Hilton? Is it the time of year, held at a time when we all need a spring break? Whatever the reason, find out for yourself why the Annual Spring Meeting of the ALANA is consistently rated as one of the top ten anesthesia meetings in the nation!

Faculty

This year's meeting highlights an "all-star" cast of speakers, each selected for their expertise and reputation in providing the absolute best in nurse anesthesia continuing education. Faculty include Wanda Wilson, AANA President-elect; Jackie Rowles, AANA Vice President; Jim Walker, AANA Region Seven Director; Julie Lowery, NCANA President; Michael Fiedler, ALANA Director; Steven Sertich, NVANA FPD; and Henry Talley, Director, Michigan State University Nurse Anesthesia Program. Our special guest speaker is Mary Karlet, CRNA, PhD, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Nurse Anesthesia, Ida V. Moffet School of Nursing, Samford University. This "all-star" faculty has been carefully selected to offer you the best in nurse anesthesia continuing education.

Special Features

Your registration fees include all of the meeting's special features, including: printed syllabus, complimentary continental breakfast, snacks, and a box lunch. Also included is your invitation to the Beach Party.

Continuing Education Units

This educational program has been approved by the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists for 20 CEUs (prior approval number 38399). The program includes 6 hours of designated pharmacology content.

The Sandestin Hilton Beach Resort

This is Northwest Florida's premier luxury Gulf-front hotel. Located along Florida's Emerald Coast, the Hilton Sandestin is situated on a 2,400-acre playground overlooking the most beautiful beaches in the world. The hotel boasts a heated indoor pool, two outdoor pools, two whirlpools, private beach, a full-service spa, salon and fitness center, and the finest dining options, from elegant to casual. Resort amenities include fourteen tennis courts, four championship golf courses, and a full-service marina and bicycle rental. Children's recreational programs and beach equipment rentals are also available.

Beach Party

Saturday, April 28, 2007, 3:30PM

This event has made the ALANA Spring Meeting famous! This is the time to relax at the beach and enjoy seafood treats with a cold beverage. Chat with your friends, classmates, speakers, exhibitors and board members at this fun-filled event.

An ALANA Meeting of Distinction

The ALANA Program Committee and Program Directors know what it takes to provide you, our members and guests with the very best in Nurse Anesthesia Continuing Education. It is the attention to details that separates us from other providers. We are not satisfied with just holding the meeting at a world-class resort and assembling the best faculty possible. We offer table seating, complete syllabus, breakfast buffet, continuous coffee and drinks, box lunches, and state-of-the-art exhibit hall ~ all just an elevator ride from your deluxe guest room.

Why do we go to so much trouble? Because this is YOUR meeting and you deserve it. At ALANA we recognize and appreciate that each of you advances the profession every day at work. This is our opportunity to show our appreciation!



ALANA Annual Spring Meeting Information & Registration

Accommodations

Reservations should be made directly with the Sandestin Hilton to assure you get the group rate. Rooms blocked for the ALANA are at a discounted group rate of \$199 per night, excluding tax and fees. Check in time is 4PM and checkout is 11AM. Deadline for receiving rooms at this special pricing is March 28, 2007. Contact the hotel directly to make your reservations and use Group Code ANS to secure the group discount.

 **1-800-367-1271**

Meeting Fees

AANA Members:

	Before 4-15	After 4-15
3 Days:	\$300.00	\$350.00
1 Day:	\$125.00	\$150.00

Non-AANA Members:

	Before 4-15	After 4-15
3 Days:	\$375.00	\$425.00
1 Day:	\$175.00	\$200.00

No Charge for nurse anesthesia students
and our Emeritus Members

On-line Registration

If paying by credit card, you can register on-line on the ALANA web site at www.ala-crna.org. Credit card transactions are managed through the PayPal Merchant Account.

Sponsor-A-Student Program

This year the ALANA is offering each of you an opportunity to show your support for the future of our profession by sponsoring a student to attend the Spring Meeting. The ALANA does not charge a fee for attendance by students, so all of your contributions will be combined to offer additional hotel rooms for the students to share. A ribbon will be added to your nametag designating you as a Sponsor-A-Student Donor and a Group Photo will be taken for publication in the ALANA NewsBulletin. Wear it proudly!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Place of Employment: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Home Phone: _____

AANA Member: Yes No

AANA Number: _____

I will attend all three days.

AANA Member \$300/ Non-member \$375 _____

I will attend one day only.

AANA Member \$125/ Non-member \$175 _____

Friday Saturday Sunday

I will attend two days only.

AANA Member \$250/ Non-member \$350 _____

Friday & Saturday Saturday & Sunday

Reserve me a box lunch: Friday Saturday

I will be staying at the Sandestin Hilton

I want to Sponsor-A-Student (enter \$50.00) _____

Optional ALA-CRNA PAC contribution _____

Total _____

My check to ALANA is enclosed

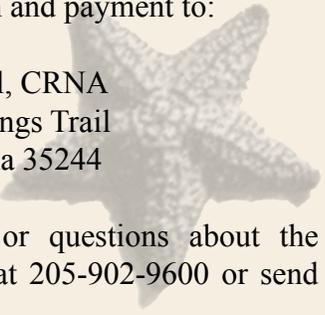
Charge to my credit card: MC VISA

Card Number: _____

Expiration date: _____

Name as appears on card: _____

Send completed registration form and payment to:


Bruce Von Hagel, CRNA
613 Trace Crossings Trail
Hoover, Alabama 35244

For those with special needs or questions about the meeting, call Bruce Von Hagel at 205-902-9600 or send e-mail to: vons205@aol.com

Refund policy: Refunds on tuition will be honored upon receipt of a written request prior to April 15, 2007, subject to a \$50.00 cancellation fee.

ALANA Spring Meeting Sandestin Hilton

this is
YOUR
meeting

APRIL 27 - 29, 2007

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