

## **A National Nurse for America**

We have a surgeon general. Why not a National Nurse? In March of this year, California Representative Lois Capps introduced House Resolution 4903, a bill that would amend the Public Health Service Act to create an Office of the National Nurse.

The idea of a National Nurse came from Teri Mills, an Oregon nurse who wrote an editorial last year for the New York Times. She pointed out that nurses, the most trusted health professionals, are in the best position to take action to improve the nation's health through education. A National Nurse could involve all Americans in preventive health care practices, as well as focus national attention on the nursing shortage and promote the profession of nursing.

HR 4903 lists the following duties of the National Nurse:

- 1) Carry out activities to encourage individuals to enter the nursing profession, including providing education on the distinct role of nurses in the health professions and examining nursing issues that would increase public safety, such as issues relating to staff levels, working conditions, and patient input;
- 2) Carry out activities to encourage nurses to become educators in schools of nursing;
- 3) Carry out activities to promote the public health, including encouraging nurses to be volunteers to projects that educate the public on achieving better health; and

- 4) Conduct media campaigns and make personal appearances for purposes of paragraphs (1) through (3).

The bill further states that each fiscal year, the National Nurse will designate four annual health priorities, or methods of achieving better health that will be given priority by the National Nurse. Community based projects for the purpose of educating the public on annual health priorities will take place in settings such as schools, senior centers, and libraries, and will be carried out by teams of nurse volunteers in individual states and communities.

To learn about the history or progress of HR 4903 and ways to help, please go to <http://www.nationalnurse.blogspot.com>. There you will find information about how to contact elected representatives to voice your support for HR 4903, to request their co-sponsorship of the bill, sign a petition in support of the Office of the National Nurse, or sign up to receive the National Nurse newsletter.