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Evaluation of the Impact of American Association of Nurse Practitioners' Health Policy Conference Participation on Self-Assessment of Political Astuteness

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Despite representing the largest segment of the United States' health care system, nurses remain far removed from the level of political engagement required to efficiently influence health policy at institutional, local, state, and federal levels in the United States (NAS, 2015). The lack of political engagement among the nursing profession has resulted in the profession's inability to form a united voice and lead movements within health policy. To address these monumental issues, it is imperative to perform further research on effective methods to increase political engagement within the nursing profession. The term political astuteness is a more comprehensive term than political engagement, as it also entails political awareness and political knowledge. Despite the term's increased complexity, in this project, the two terms may be used interchangeably. The purpose of this project is to provide additional understanding of the effectiveness attendance of a health policy conference, combined with legislative meetings, has as a potential method to increase nurses' political engagement (AANP, 2017, n.d.; NCSBN, 2016).

Increasing political engagement is vital for the advancement of both the nursing profession and the United States' health care system. Despite the essential need for the implementation of proven methods to increase political engagement among members of the nursing profession, a significant literature gap continues to exist on viable options. The overarching goal of this project is to decrease the current gap in the literature by measuring the impact conference participation and face-to-face meetings with Federal House and or Senate Representatives, or their respective legislative staff, has on attendees of the 2018 American Association of Nurse Practitioners' Health Policy Conference and their perceptions of their political astuteness. A convenience pre and post descriptive survey using the Political Astuteness Inventory tool, with the author's permission, will be used to measure the attendees' perception of their political astuteness.

Title:

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Abstract Summary:

Increasing political engagement is vital for the advancement of the nursing profession. The goal of this project is to measure how attendance at the 2018 American Association of Nurse Practitioners' Health Policy Conference and face-to-face meetings with U.S. Federal Congressional Representatives has on attendees' perceptions of their political astuteness.

Content Outline:**1. Introduction**

1. Despite representing the largest segment of the United States' health care system, nurses remain far removed from the level of political engagement required to efficiently influence health policy at institutional, local, state, and federal levels (NAS, 2015). The lack of political engagement among nurses has resulted in the profession's inability to form a united voice and lead movements within health policy. To address these monumental issues, it is imperative to perform further research on effective methods to increase political engagement within the nursing profession. The purpose of this project is to complete a convenience research study to measure the impact health policy conference participation and face-to-face meetings with United States Federal House and or Senate Representatives, or their respective legislative staff, have on attendees of the 2018 American Association of Nurse Practitioners' Health Policy Conference and their perceptions of their political astuteness. The term political astuteness is a more comprehensive term than political engagement, as it also entails political awareness and political knowledge. Despite the term's increased complexity, in this project the two terms may be used interchangeably. The purpose of this project is to provide additional understanding of the effectiveness attendance of a health policy conference, combined with legislative meetings, has as a potential method to increase nurses' political engagement (AANP, 2017, n.d.; NCSBN, 2016).

2. Body

1. Main Point #1: Nurses have a civil duty not only to actively participate in the formation of health policy at the institutional, local, state, and federal levels, but also to spearhead these changes as leaders.
 1. Supporting point #1: This civil duty has been documented since the formation of the profession's governing bodies and professional organizations such as the American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP), the American Association of the Colleges of Nursing (AACN), and the American Nurses Association (ANA). Evidence of this documentation lies in seventh provision of the ANA's *Code of Ethics*, which states "the nurse, in all roles and settings, advances the profession through research and scholarly inquiry, professional standards development, and the generation of both nursing and health policy" (ANA, 2015, p. 27). Further evidence is illustrated by the AACN's *Essentials Series*, which lists health policy as an educational requirement for not only doctoral and masters prepared nurses, but also baccalaureate prepared nurses (AACN, 2006, 2008, 2011).
 2. Supporting point #2: Most recently, the National Academy of Medicine, formerly known as the Institute of Medicine, partnered with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to release *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* report. The report's eight recommendations were intended to create an actionable plan for the advancement of the nursing profession, and ultimately the United States' health care system. The seventh recommendation is to "prepare and enable nurses to lead change to advance health" (IOM, 2010, p. 7). The report advised for increasing nurses' leadership, not only within private and public institutes, but specifically within government institutions. The intent of implementing provisions such as these within nursing's governing bodies and professional organizations was to instill this civil obligation within all members of the nursing profession.

2. Main Point #2: Regardless of the substantial numerical advantage nurses hold, the most populous workforce in the United States' health care system has struggled to form cohesive and influential movements within health policy.
 1. Supporting point #1: Accumulatively, there is an estimated 5.5 million-members of the nursing profession in the United States, making it the largest profession within the United States' health care system. In June of 2015 the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) reported 4,378,273 Registered Nurses and 1,030,080 Licensed Practical Nurses or vocation nurses held active licenses nationally (NCSBN, 2016). Furthermore, over 234,000 nurse practitioners are nationally certified with over 80,000 holding membership with AANP (AANP, 2017, n.d.). Regardless of the substantial numerical advantage nurses hold, the most populous workforce in the United States' health care system has struggled to form cohesive and influential movements within health policy. The nursing profession must continue its endeavor to fulfill its civil obligations, to not only patriciate in the formation of health policy, but also to champion the lead in reforming the United States' health care system.
3. Main Point #3: Nurses have a myriad of opportunities available to improve their political engagement.
 1. Supporting point #1: Nurses are considered *Politically Alienated*
 1. O'Rourke et al. (2017) surveyed over 630 members of the AANP. Based upon Sharoni's (2013) *Political Efficacy and Trust in Government Typology*, the group was considered *Politically Alienated*. Sharoni (2013) defines *Politically Alienated* populations as those having low trust in government and low political efficacy.
 2. Supporting point #2: Nurses must increase their political engagement
 1. O'Rourke et al. (2017) found 84% of respondents surveyed reported never having worked to advance a political agenda at either the state or national level and rarely participated in political activities outside of voting or contacting legislators.
 2. O'Rourke et al. found less than 25% of Nurse Pracitioners reported ever meeting with legislative representatives, engaging in campaigns, or attending fundraisers or town hall meetings. Given the consistently limited methods nurses report as means of political engagement, nurses have a myriad of opportunities available to improve their political engagement.
 3. Primomo and Björling (2013) surveyed nurses ($N = 113$, $n = 80$, $n = 34$) who participated in a state nursing legislative day with the Political Astuteness Inventory tool to measure the affects the legislative day had on attendees' Political Astuteness and found participation in legislative days increased nurses' Political Astuteness.
3. Conclusion
 1. The significance of the nursing profession's potential to influence and improve the United States' health care system cannot be overstated. Despite representing the largest and most respected profession within the United States' health care system, nurses remain far removed from effective levels of political engagement and perceived leadership in the evolution of health policy. This potential of nursing's impact on the United States' health care system will only come to fruition once the nursing profession increases its political engagement and nurses address their civil duty to strive for the safest and most affordable patient care possible. This requires not only participating in the formation of health policy, but championing changes through leadership. This project's overarching goal to measure the impact attendance at the 2018 AANP's Health Policy Conference and face-to-face meetings with Federal House and or Senate Representatives, or their respective legislative staff, has on conference attendees' perceptions of their political astuteness and will directly result in decreasing the current gap in literature on effective methods to increase political engagement among the nursing profession. Without further investigation into methods to increase political engagement among nurses, the

profession faces continued strife in its endeavor for autonomy and influence over the care provided to every patient nurses encounter.

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Author Summary: Crystal Williams is a University of South Florida Doctorate of Nursing Practice student certifying in both Family and Pediatric Primary Care. She has a passion for increasing political engagement of her fellow nurses. She exemplifies this passion by focusing her doctoral project on measuring political astuteness among attendees of the American Association of Nurse Practitioner's 2018 Health Policy Conference.