

## February 2009 Legislative Update

Dear ISPN Colleagues:

### **President Obama has appointed Mary Wakefield as the new head of HRSA.**

Please see the notice below. This is wonderful recognition of Mary's work and the nursing profession.

AACN is pleased to report that Mary Wakefield, PhD, RN, FAAN, has been named the new head of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (see the notice below). AACN and the nursing community at large supported Dr. Wakefield as a candidate for the HRSA position, and we are so pleased to see a nurse advance into this important role within the Obama Administration.

Dr. Wakefield has been a strong advocate for professional nursing education and a leading voice for nursing on the national and state level. She currently serves as associate dean for rural health at the School of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of North Dakota (UND) and is also the director of UND's Center for Rural Health. In a nomination letter prepared by the Tri-Council for Nursing (AACN, ANA, AONE and NLN), Dr. Wakefield's impressive background is summarized as follows:

“Dr. Wakefield has expertise in quality and patient safety, rural health care, Medicare payment policy, workforce issues, and the public policy process. During her extensive career, she has cultivated relationships and knowledge that would benefit the mission of HRSA. Dr. Wakefield has served on the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission; chaired the Catholic Health Initiatives Board of Trustees; chaired the National Advisory Council for the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; served on President Clinton's Advisory Commission on Consumer Protection and Quality in the Health Care Industry; the National Advisory Committee to the federal Office of Rural Health Policy; and co-chaired the Hospital Performance Measures Committee of the National Quality Forum. Additionally, Dr. Wakefield served as a member of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) committee that produced the landmark reports *To Err is Human* and *Crossing the Quality Chasm* and co-chaired the IOM committees that produced the report *Health Professions Education and Quality through Collaboration: Health Care in Rural America*.

She has also served as Chief of Staff for two United States Senators.”

Please join us in congratulating Dr. Wakefield and celebrating this "big win" on behalf of the nursing profession.

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary  
For Immediate Release  
February 20, 2009

## **President Obama Selects Top Rural Health Care Advocate to Oversee Key HHS Agency Dr. Mary Wakefield will be the next Administrator of HRSA**

President Obama today announced the appointment of one of the nation's top rural health care professionals as Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Dr. Mary Wakefield, Director of the Center for Rural Health at the University of North Dakota, will oversee this critical agency, which helps to deliver health care to those who are uninsured and underserved by our current health care system.

"As a nurse, a Ph.D., and a leading rural healthcare advocate, Mary Wakefield brings expertise that will be instrumental in expanding and improving services for those who are currently uninsured or underserved," President Obama said. "Under her leadership we will be able to expand and improve the care provided at the Community Health Centers which serve millions of uninsured Americans and address severe provider shortages across the country."

In addition to Community Health Centers across the country upon which millions of uninsured Americans depend for coverage, HRSA oversees many programs that the federal government runs to bring health care providers to underserved areas throughout the nation. In addition, HRSA will administer \$2.5 billion allocated in the Recovery Act to invest in our health care infrastructure and train health care professionals.

### *Dr. Wakefield's Bio:*

Dr. Mary Wakefield was most recently the Associate Dean for Rural Health at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences, where she was a tenured professor and Director of the Center for Rural Health. Dr. Wakefield has expertise in rural health care, quality and patient safety, Medicare payment policy, workforce issues, and public policy. She has authored many articles and columns on health policy and is on the editorial board of a number of professional journals.

Dr. Wakefield previously served as director of the Center for Health Policy, Research, and Ethics at George Mason University in Fairfax, VA. She also served as the Chief of Staff for United States Senator Kent Conrad (D-ND) from January 1993 to January 1996 and as Legislative Assistant and Chief of Staff to Senator Quentin Burdick (D-ND).

Dr. Wakefield has served as a member of the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission and the Department of Veteran's Affairs' Special Medical Advisory Group. She served as Chair of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) Committee on Health Care Quality for Rural America and of the Catholic Health Initiatives Board of Trustees, and was a subcommittee chair for President Clinton's Advisory Commission on Consumer Protection and Quality in the Health Care Industry.

Dr. Wakefield received her M.S. in nursing and her Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Texas at Austin and her B.S. in nursing from the University of Mary at Bismarck, ND. She is a fellow in the American Academy of Nursing, and is a recipient of numerous awards including the American

Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE) 2006 Nurse Research Award and the 2008 Nursing Economics Margaret D. Sovie Writer's Award.

THE WHITE HOUSE, February 20, 2009.