



UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-4000

PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

DEC 2 2011

The Honorable C.W. Bill Young
Chairman, Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The enclosed report responds to Conference language regarding section 955 in House Report 110-477, to accompany H.R. 1585, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, which requested the Secretary conduct a study to determine whether a program to provide incentives to retired military nurse corps officers to serve as faculty at civilian nursing schools, referred to as the "Retired Troops to Nurse Teachers," could help alleviate current and projected nursing shortages in the military Services. The report was due by March 1, 2008. Four interim reports were submitted to Congress between May 2008 and October 2010, promising a final report by September 2011. This issue falls under my purview, and I apologize for the delay in submitting this response.

This final report responds to the six elements in the report language on the feasibility of a program to provide incentives to retired military nurse corps officers to serve as faculty at civilian nursing schools to alleviate existing and projected shortages of professional nurses. The report addresses the number of military nurse corps officers who would be eligible to participate in the program; the likelihood that colleges or universities would award and fund scholarships to military nurse corps candidates in the program; the recourse available in the event that a student fails access into the Armed Forces as a military nurse; whether the military nurse corps officer instructor should be paid comparably to other university faculty; whether the instructor should be reimbursed for any difference in pay; and other relevant factors as determined by the Secretary.

Thank you for your interest in the health and well-being of our Service members, veterans, and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jo Ann Rooney".

Jo Ann Rooney
Acting

Enclosure:
As stated

cc:
The Honorable Norman D. Dicks
Ranking Member



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DEC 2 2011

The Honorable Joe Wilson
Chairman, Subcommittee on Military Personnel
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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The Honorable Susan A. Davis
Ranking Member



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The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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Vice Chairman



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DEC 2 2011

The Honorable Jim Webb
Chairman, Subcommittee on Personnel
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510


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The Honorable Lindsey O. Graham
Ranking Member



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The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
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The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
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The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member



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The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
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The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member



Report for the

Committees on Armed Services

of the

Senate and the House of Representatives:

“Retired Troops to Nurse Teachers” Study

Preparation of this study/report cost the
Department of Defense a total of approximately
\$1,720 in Fiscal Year 2011

Report for the Committees on Armed Services of the

Senate and the House of Representatives

“Retired Troops to Nurse Teachers”

August 2011

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REPORT REQUIREMENTS

The Conference Report (House Report 110-477) to accompany H.R. 1585, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2008 (FY08), contains conferee language concerning section 995, and requests the Secretary of Defense conduct a study to determine whether a program to provide incentives to retired military nurse corps officers to serve as faculty at civilian nursing schools, sometimes referred to as “Retired Troops to Nurse Teachers,” could help to alleviate existing, and projected, shortages of professional nurses. The conferees believed that an essential part of any such program should ensure the Department would receive a tangible benefit in exchange for partially funding the program. They request that the study include the following elements: (1) the number of retired military nurse corps officers who have at least 20 years of active federal commissioned service who would be eligible to participate in such a program; (2) whether colleges or universities at which retired military nurse instructors would serve would award and fund at least two full scholarships per academic year to military nurse corps candidates in return for a commitment to serve in the Armed Forces as a military nurse corps officer; (3) for each nursing student awarded such a scholarship that fails to access into the Armed Forces as a military nurse, the recourse that would be available to the Department of Defense (DoD); (4) whether the retired military nurse corps officer instructor should be paid by the college or university at a comparable rate, as determined by the Secretary, to other faculty at the school based upon their skills, experience, and certification(s); (5) when the sum of the comparable salary offered to the retired military nurse corps officer instructor and the instructor's retired pay is less than the amount that the member's base pay (based on grade and time in

service) would be if the member was still on active duty, should the Secretary reimburse the retired military nurse corps officer for any difference; and (6) any other relevant factors, as determined by the Secretary. The Secretary is to submit a report on the findings and recommendations of this study to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives by March 1, 2008. Four interim reports were submitted to Congress between May 2008 and October 2010. This final report responds to the conferee language concerning section 955.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Conference Report (House Report 110-477) to accompany H.R. 1585, the NDAA for FY08, directs the Secretary to conduct a study to determine whether a program to provide incentives to retired military nurse corps officers to serve as faculty at civilian nursing schools, sometimes referred to as “Retired Troops to Nurse Teachers,” could help to alleviate the existing and projected shortage of professional nurses. The conferees believed a program of this type should provide tangible benefits to the DoD in exchange for any funding provided. Specific elements of the study, which will be addressed in this report, were identified to create a win-win situation for both the DoD and academic programs offering accredited educational programs for registered nurses.

This final report provides information from a study to answer the six specific questions posed in the report language addressing the feasibility of a program to provide incentives to retired military nurse corps officers to serve as faculty at civilian nursing schools, sometimes

referred to as “Retired Troops to Nurse Teachers,” in order to alleviate existing and projected shortages of professional nurses.

INTRODUCTION

When the NDAA for FY08 was enacted, interest expressed by the conferees to support the DoD in identifying measures to ensure an adequate supply of fully-qualified nurses to serve in the Armed Forces was well founded. A review of historical data reveals that for the period of FY01 – FY06, the DoD was meeting only 75% of its identified recruitment goals for nurses.

BACKGROUND

In April 2011, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) reported the United States is projected to experience a nursing shortage that is expected to intensify as baby boomers age and the need for health care grows.¹ The fact that nursing colleges and universities across the country are struggling to expand enrollment levels to meet the rising demand for nursing care compounds the problem. The AACN also reports that nursing school enrollment is not growing fast enough to meet the projected demand for registered nurses (RNs). Though AACN reported a 5.7% enrollment increase in entry-level baccalaureate programs in nursing in 2010, this increase is not sufficient to meet the projected demand for nursing services. With the passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in 2010, more than 32 million Americans will soon gain access to health care services, including those provided by RNs and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs). It is noteworthy that RNs may be licensed

¹ American Association of Colleges of Nursing, Fact Sheet, April 2011
(<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/media/factsheets/nursingshortage.htm>)

through either an associates or a Bachelor of Science (BS) degree program at accredited institutions. However, nurses commissioned in all military Services must have BS degrees.

Additionally, in April 2011, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported that the health care sector of the economy continues to grow, despite significant job losses in recent months in nearly all major industries. Hospitals, long-term care facilities, and other ambulatory care settings added 37,000 new jobs in March 2011, the biggest monthly increase recorded by any employment sector. As the largest segment of the health care workforce, RNs likely will be recruited to fill many of these new positions. The BLS confirmed that 283,000 jobs have been added in the health care sector within the last year.

According to AACN's report on 2010–2011 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing, U.S. nursing schools turned away 67,563 qualified applicants from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2010 due to insufficient number of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, clinical preceptors, and budget constraints. Almost two-thirds of the nursing schools responding to the survey pointed to faculty shortages as a reason for not accepting all qualified applicants into their programs. The next section of this report addresses specific questions regarding actions that may be considered by the DoD to ameliorate the shortage of nursing faculty.

STUDY FINDINGS

This section of the report addresses each of the six specific elements requested in the report language.

1. The conferees requested the study identify the number of retired military nurse corps officers who have at least 20 years of active federal commissioned service who would be eligible to participate in such a program. The DoD does not maintain a repository containing this specific information on retired military personnel. Data collected by the Health Manpower and Personnel Data System (HMPDS) reflects that 9,510 nurses separated from the Armed Forces during the past decade. It is not possible to determine how many of those nurses had served for 20 years or longer. To determine the number of nurses who would meet education eligibility requirements to serve as faculty members at schools of nursing, data from the Medical Expense and Performance Reporting System (MEPRS) was analyzed for FY10. During that year, there were approximately 10,000 nurses serving in the Armed Forces. By sorting military nurses (officers) categorized as Direct Care Professionals (Skill Type 2, e.g., nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, etc.) it may be determined that approximately half (4,934) of the active duty nurses had advanced nursing degrees that minimally would qualify them to serve as faculty members for nursing schools.
2. The report language asked whether colleges or universities at which retired military nurse instructors would serve would award and fund at least two full scholarships per academic year to military nurse corps candidates in return for a commitment to serve in the Armed Forces as a military nurse corps officer. It is unlikely that colleges or universities at which retired military nurse instructors would serve would award and fund at least two full scholarships per academic year to military nurse corps candidates in return for a commitment to serve in the Armed Forces as a military nurse corps officer. Most accredited nursing schools are governed at the state level,

and the award of scholarships at the state or local level allows academic institutions to address, and meet, unique community or individual state needs. It may be very difficult to encourage academic institutions to use their limited scholarship resources to meet specific military needs in lieu of other state or local priorities (e.g., increasing the availability of nursing services in rural or underserved areas). Each year, numerous scholarships are awarded through the military Services' Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs; however, faculty for these programs are not salaried through the host universities. These programs are directed toward students who express an interest in serving in the Armed Forces, and recruiters "target" that unique niche of nursing students. Currently, ROTC scholarships are available to nurse program applicants (the number of scholarships awarded annually varies by individual military Service requirements).

3. The report language questioned the recourse available to the DoD for each nursing student awarded a scholarship that fails to access into the Armed Forces as a military nurse (in the theoretical program defined in this language). One recourse could be to mirror requirements from national ROTC scholarship programs. For example, Army ROTC offers two-, three-, and four-year nursing scholarships to qualified individuals at a "Partnership in Nursing Education" program. This scholarship guarantees service in the Army Nurse Corps upon graduation and commissioning. Students are required to sign a contract with the Department of the Army. The contract contains a requirement to repay the U.S. Government for all financial aid received if the student fails to comply with the terms of the contract (for a four-year scholarship, the obligation is incurred at the start of the sophomore year). This repayment may be

either monetary or in the form of enlisted service, and the choice rests with the Army, as opposed to the scholarship cadet.

4. The report language asked that this study address whether the retired military nurse corps officer instructors should be paid by the college or university at a comparable rate, as determined by the Secretary, to other faculty at the school based upon their skills, experience, and certification(s). The Secretary of Defense has no means to compel the administration of private or public academic institutions to set salaries, or direct the required credentials, of their faculty members. Therefore, there would be no basis, without introducing federal statutes, to achieve the conferees' implied intent.
5. The fifth element that the report language wanted addressed is whether the Secretary should reimburse the retired nurse corps officer for any difference in pay resulting from situations whereby the sum of a comparable salary offered to the retired military nurse corps officer instructor and his or her instructor's retired pay would be less than the amount that the member's base pay (based on grade and time in Service) would be if the member was still on active duty. According to a report produced by the AACN, salary was identified as an influential factor in the employment decisions of those with graduate education.² In a comparison of responsibilities and salaries associated with various employment opportunities, faculty positions may not be as appealing as other offers. Any retired military nurse may elect to pursue a faculty position with intent to continue to contributing his or her professional skills to the medical profession in keeping with a career of public service. However, subject to

² American Association of Colleges of Nursing, Faculty Shortages In Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Programs: Scope of the Problem and Strategies for Expanding the Supply, June 2005.

“proof of concept,” it would be inappropriate for the DoD to set aside additional funding that exceeds fair-market salaries as determined by each academic institution.

6. The report language asked that the study address any other relevant factors, as determined by the Secretary. Several are worthy of discussion as pertinent to affecting the decision of a retired military nurse to seek employment as a faculty member at an academic institution. Three major factors, identified by the AACN report, contributing to the shortage are:
 - a. an insufficient pool of potential educators;
 - b. faculty age and retirement; and,
 - c. faculty compensation.

While it is estimated that approximately one-half of retired nurses have the minimal required credentials (i.e., they are master’s or doctoral prepared) to seek employment as faculty members, the other two factors may be considered as relevant to their decision-making process. According to the AACN report previously cited, the average age of doctoral-prepared nurse faculty is currently 55.3 years, and the average age of nurse faculty at retirement 62.5 years. Additionally, according to the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP), the annual average salary of a master’s-prepared *nurse practitioner* is \$81,060. By contrast, AACN’s data show that master’s-prepared *faculty* earned an annual average salary of \$69,489, about 15% less than nurse practitioners.

Retired military nurses, who may be younger than the average nurse faculty member at the time of military retirement, are entitled to a guaranteed retirement pay, which includes cost-of-living-allowance (COLA) increases. Therefore, it may be

considered that economic incentives may not be the best means by which to recruit retired military nurses to become faculty members.

CONCLUSION

The DoD is a competitive employer for fully-qualified Bachelor of Science in Nursing-prepared nurses, and it also must be an active partner in addressing the projected national shortage by providing solutions that make sense for both the Nation and the DoD. It is crucial, however, that this partnering be accomplished in the context of clearly defined and mandated departmental mission space. The DoD is responsible for providing the military forces needed to deter war and protect the security of our country. Ensuring sufficient nurses are available to serve in the Armed Forces by increasing the number of qualified faculty members may be a topic of interest and concern. However, given the recent guidance by the previous Secretary and continued initiatives to find DoD's efficiencies, establishing a program to incentivize retired military nurses to serve as faculty members is outside the scope.

Therefore, the nursing leadership of the DoD, at all levels, including installations across the nation, continues to address this issue through open dialogue with other federal, state, and local partners (e.g., the Federal Nurses Association, the American Nurses Association, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, etc.). This supports the position set forth by the AACN in its October 2006 Bulletin that reported, "resolving the U.S. nursing shortage will require the collective effort of stakeholders at the national, state, and local levels." The report further identified that federal legislators demonstrated a commitment to addressing this health care crisis by nearly doubling the amount of funding for Nursing Workforce Development programs (Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act) from \$78.8 million in FY01 to \$149.7

million in FY06. With the nursing community struggling to maintain funding levels in the current fiscal year, future increases in federal programs promising nursing shortage relief may not be realized. Many state initiatives are underway to increase the number of new nurses entering the workforce and pursuing faculty careers. These efforts generally center on the creation of new legislation to remove financial barriers to pursuing a nursing degree, mostly at the graduate level, and often result from a collaborative push by representatives from both the education and practice communities. The AACN reports that over recent years, the number of new statewide legislative initiatives to address the nursing shortage seems to be multiplying.

Retired military nurses have much to offer the next generation of nurses and academic institutions. They bring robust varied career-long histories and a systems approach to putting patients first—and many of their patients are the most critically and severely wounded or injured. They understand the difficulties of inspiring and supporting young nurses to commit to a career field that can be extremely challenging, and their military leadership training positions them to support nursing students through the academic process. Academic institutions must lead initiatives at the state or local levels required to increase faculty for nursing schools. DoD nurse leadership, through ongoing discussions and partnerships with these institutions, can develop innovative strategies designed to target the retired military nurse as the “exceptional” addition to the faculty. These academic institution initiatives should be achieved without financial support from the DoD.