


SECOND EDITION

POLICY AND POLITICS FOR NURSES



**Action and Change in the
Workplace, Government,
Organizations and Community**

**Diana J. Mason
Susan W. Talbott
Judith K. Leavitt**

Policy and Politics for Nurses

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Workplace, Government,
Organizations and Community*

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FOREWORD

As recently as 1985, when Senator Edward Kennedy penned the foreword for this book's first edition, the nursing profession's political influence was just beginning to receive recognition, with only a few nurses realizing their leadership potential in politics.

Today, nurses are on the political front lines, combatting such problems as increasing health care costs, an unacceptably high infant mortality rate, and an inadequate immunization policy. Since 97 percent of nurses are female they are a strong voice for women's health issues. The nursing community has been instrumental in supporting my efforts to ensure that federally funded research meets the special needs of women and ethnic minorities. In addition, nurses' daily contacts with children, the poor, and the elderly allow them to approach policy making with a first-hand perspective that legislators need, but often lack.

Nurses have used their talents not just to point out new research priorities or criticize current programs, but to initiate legislation. For instance, I have enlisted school nurses' help in drafting a bill that would set up an elementary school-based immunization program for pre-elementary age children. With elementary schools often serving as community focal points, school nurses will also play a primary role in implementing this legislation by, for example, identifying and immunizing those young children who the current system has ignored.

This edition includes nurses' personal accounts of their political involvement outside of government. Whether on the job, in professional organizations, or in the community their efforts have helped improve the state of American health care.

Still, progress has been slow since many politicians—out of apathy or ignorance—have neglected health-related issues. For this reason, it is crucial that more nurses lend their talents in dispelling myths, setting national goals, and creating effective legislation. This book provides valuable inspiration and instruction for those wishing to confront this challenge.

Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder

INTRODUCTION

At no other time in our nation's recent history has there been a greater need for nurses to get involved in the political process. This book addresses the two questions of why and how.

The *why* is set in the current debate over health care in our country. No one knows the issues better than you, the nurses. You deal with health care policy in your daily lives, not only at your places of employment but in your home communities, and in your professional organizations. You can supply the solutions that can shape a national program guaranteeing affordable access to health care for every American. You know what works and what doesn't. But that's not all.

I have spent a good deal of time over the last several years with nurses. In 1982, as a member of Congress, representatives of the ANA testified before my committee on the issue of pay comparability. In 1984, the ANA was the first group to endorse my candidacy for Vice President. In my 1992 race for the U.S. Senate, I reached out to a nurse, Judy Leavitt, not only to work with me on health policy but also to head my upstate office. She mobilized nurse volunteers throughout the state. Wherever I campaigned, nurses were there to mobilize, organize, and provide me with the facts, the ideas, and the perspectives to improve our health care system.

I don't know one politician who would not welcome your support. You know the issues. You have the skills to motivate others to action. You have the commitment to effect change. And you work hard.

This book conveys the information, the encouragement, and the *how-tos* to help you get involved in the political and policy making processes. For those of you who have already had some experience in these areas, it provides a context to analyze some of the more complex questions that might arise. Can politics and policy—whether in the workplace, government, organizations, or community be different if more women and nurses are involved? How can we as women and you as nurses provide the leadership to transform our health care system?

The nineties will be the decade when national health care policy is set for our country. If we are serious about finding a way to provide affordable access to health care for every American, nurses must be part of the debate.

Geraldine A. Ferraro

PREFACE

This book is going to press as President Bill Clinton takes office. For the first time, a president was elected with nursing's endorsement. This achievement brings hope that nurses will play a more instrumental and visible role in federal policy making during a time when health care reform is at the top of the nation's policy agenda.

The 1992 elections heralded some important firsts for women and nursing. More women than ever before ran for Congress and now account for 10 percent of its 535 members. Six of these women are in the U.S. Senate, with two from California—Barbara Boxer, author of this book's *Endnote*, and Diane Feinstein. The first African-American woman, Carol Moseley Braun (IL), was elected to the Senate; and the first Puerto Rican woman, Nadia Velasquez (NY), was elected to the House of Representatives. Of great importance to nursing and health care, Eddie Bernice Johnson, R.N. (TX), became the first nurse to be elected to the House. She was one of an unprecedented nine nurses who ran for the 103rd Congress. Women now make up 20 percent of state legislatures, up from 5 percent in 1971, and more nurses ran for state and local offices than ever before.

Yet more needs to be done to advance the influence and priorities of women and nurses in policy arenas. Ten percent of the membership of the major federal policy making body of this nation, although an improvement, does not constitute parity for women. One of the primary premises of this book is that women's and nurses' parity at policy tables can transform public, health, and institutional policies, and thus our world. The goal of *Policy and Politics for Nurses: Action and Change in the Workplace, Government, Organizations and Community* is to increase nurses' participation and leadership in this transformation.

The first edition of this book was entitled the *Political Action Handbook for Nurses: Changing the Workplace, Government, Organizations and Community*. The change in the title of the second edition reflects the increased attention that the nursing profession is giving to policy. Since the first edition was written, nurses have embraced politics in remarkable ways and have run for office in unprecedented numbers. There is a growing awareness among us that policy and politics affect every aspect of our lives. We have come to realize that we must not just react politically to proposed policy, we must initiate, develop, and evaluate it. To do so we must understand what policy is and how it is made.

The first edition broke new ground in nursing literature. Prior to its publication, most of nursing's attention to politics was focused on government. The *Political Action Handbook for Nurses* was the first to explicitly include the workplace, professional organizations, and the community as three of the four spheres of nurses' political action. Similarly, in the present

6. Chapter vignettes and unit case studies have been revised to reflect current issues and trends. All of the chapters have been updated with contemporary references and examples. The Unit II case study on rationing health care describes the creation of the Oregon Basic Health Act. Subsequently, the federal government denied the state a Medicaid waiver to implement it, but resubmission is likely at this writing. Regardless of the ultimate status of the Act, the case illustrates a new approach to developing health policy in a time of increasing competition for limited health care dollars.
7. The power and importance of nursing's voice in policy debates can be seen in the profession's coalescing around Nursing's Agenda for Health Care Reform, which has been endorsed by over 60 nursing organizations and was noted publicly and positively by President Clinton during his campaign. This important document is discussed or referred to in several chapters and the Agenda's Executive Summary appears in Appendix F.
8. While the first edition included a list of national nursing organizations to encourage nurses to participate in that sphere, the list was omitted from this edition. Readers who would like such information should refer to the most recent April issue of the *American Journal of Nursing*. For this edition, we invited many of the national nursing organizations to submit vignettes illustrating their involvement in policy and politics. As nurses who closely follow the political efforts of nursing organizations, we knew that some were actively influencing health policy but were amazed at the nature and extent of their involvement in policy development. The stories in Chapter 36 are examples of what some organizations are doing; indeed, after the deadline, other remarkable examples of organizations in action were brought to our attention but could not be included. We urge nurses to examine what their professional organizations are doing in the policy arena and for these organizations to share their stories whenever possible—they are exciting and encouraging. The transformation that nursing organizations have undergone with regard to embracing their roles in policy development and politics is reflected in the following anecdote: For the first edition, national nursing organizations were invited to submit their names and contact information for inclusion in the book. One organization replied that it did not want to be listed because it did not engage in "political activity." That same organization has a vignette in this edition describing its actions to influence national health policy!

USING THE BOOK

As with the first edition, this book is designed for nurses at all levels of political savvy—from novice to expert. We did not ask the authors to write with one level in mind. As with the first edition, we wanted a book that

expertise to further nurses' political development. Over 100 nurses participated in writing this edition. They are all very busy people yet graciously responded to our pressures for meeting tight deadlines and collaborating with us to shape the book into a progressive contribution to the nursing literature. Their commitment and encouragement were remarkable; indeed, this edition could not have been produced without them. In recognition of the contributions of authors to the first edition of the book, the editors donated a portion of the royalties to the American Nurses Association Political Action Committee (ANA-PAC). For the second edition, we will contribute a portion of the royalties to political and policy internships for nurses, two examples of which are highlighted in this edition.

We also want to acknowledge the contributors to the first edition who were unable to participate a second time. Their writing helped to create the fine reputation this book developed among grassroots nurses as well as among nursing students and nurse leaders. We hope that they will be pleased with the development of this edition.

Because nurses repeatedly approached us with "When are you going to revise the book?" we developed a proposal but were disappointed when the original publisher was not interested in a second edition of an award-winning book. We are thus indebted to W. B. Saunders Company for its vision and support in publishing this edition. We feel particularly fortunate to have Thomas Eoyang as our editor. He believed in this project and supported it wholeheartedly. He knows nursing, publishing, and how to work with authors to produce quality works. Beverly Miller had a special hand in this project as the copy editor. Her green pencil gave greater meaning (and accuracy) to our words. All of the personnel at Saunders and at Editorial Services of New England have demonstrated competence and commitment to this project. We thank them, especially Gerri McGowan.

There are also several nurses who merit special attention. Carole Chentitz wrote the chapter on the politics of nursing research for the first edition of the book. When asked to revise this chapter, she said she wanted very much to be a part of the book, but wanted to write something else. She had been diagnosed with AIDS and wanted to write a vignette on the politics of AIDS. She died before completing the first draft. Carole was a courageous and creative nurse. We and nursing will miss her. Julie Sochalski provided support, thoughtful and gentle criticism, ideas, and connections throughout the project. She is truly one of nursing's best and brightest experts on health policy. Connie Vance was an early supporter of the first edition of the book, lending her intellect to the shaping of the framework and her encouragement when the going got rough. For this edition, she again provided her expert reflections on the book and her continued support. Often this support came during collaborative working sessions with Diana, Barbara Backer, and Donna Costello-Nickitas, as they wrote the chapter on feminist perspectives on policy and politics. These sessions were filled with creativity, critical dialogue, and support—and

often with good food and drink—while discussing our personal and professional trials, tribulations, and excitements. Judy wishes to give special recognition to Jackie Perley, a loving muse, who enabled Judy to become free to write. Her willingness to listen, explore, and critique new ideas enhanced their growth as friends and nurses.

A heartfelt acknowledgment goes to James Ware, Diana's husband, for his continued support of her work, and for his recognition of the importance of the work that nurses and women do and the special perspectives that they have on life and living. Special recognition also goes to Judy's husband, Dick, and sons Noah and David. Their encouraging hugs, meals, phone calls, and acceptance of limited time together confirmed their commitment to furthering the political power and expertise of nurses through the production of this book. Diana also acknowledges her gratitude to Dick Leavitt, whose gourmet cooking and exceptional dinner discussions made the final throes of putting the book together much less painful. Sue thanks her husband, John and children, Sieglinde and Alexandra, for their assistance and forbearance during the editing process.

For the editors, producing this book was a struggle in the midst of very demanding professional lives. The hours, days, and months of collaboration, discussion, editing, and writing enabled us to produce a book of which we are very proud. But even more than the tangible product, the process provided us with wonderful hours of stimulating political analyses, professional and personal sharing, and a special bonding with each other.

Finally, to our foremothers who left us with a rich legacy of political action and to our contemporary nurse colleagues who are continuing to develop policies that will strengthen the health of individuals and communities, we thank you. A recent biography of Margaret Sanger* illustrates the extent to which some of nursing's heroines developed remarkable political skills and strategies to further the public's health. Their stories should be read by all nurses who want to change public, institutional, and organizational policies that fail to support the nation's health and well-being. We hope that this book will pave the way for novices to join in this important effort and for expert nurse politicians to follow in our foremothers' footsteps in transforming our worlds.

D.J.M.

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S.W.T.

*E. Chesler, *Woman of Valor: Margaret Sanger and the Birth Control Movement in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992).

nursing students and bedside staff nurses would enjoy reading while learning the basics of political action. We also wanted to include critical analyses of policy and political issues that would stimulate those with more expertise in these areas. We knew it would be difficult to speak to so many levels at once, but we believe the book succeeds in doing so. We hope it will challenge the traditional thinking of the veteran nurse “politico” and encourage all nurses to continue to explore new ways and goals for action and change in the four spheres.

The book is organized to provide the reader with a context for exploring policy and politics, generic strategies for policy development and political action, and the application of these strategies in the four spheres. Unit I provides the context. The introductory chapter gives an organizing framework, followed by feminist and historical perspectives, and suggestions for learning how to be effective at politics and policy development.

Unit II explores generic concepts, beginning with policy analysis and the dynamics of the policy process. Power, politics, political analysis, conflict management, collective strategies, public relations as a political tool, and ethics are explored in chapters that richly illustrate these concepts.

Unit III begins the application of these generic concepts to the specific spheres of political action. The workplace is the first sphere discussed to emphasize the importance of nurses recognizing the political nature of their everyday work. Unit IV explores the sphere of government; Unit V, professional organizations; and Unit VI, the community. Every unit (except for Unit I) contains a case study illustrating the various concepts presented and the End Case Study illustrates the interplay among the four spheres in relation to HIV/AIDS.

The reader should note that although these units are separated according to sphere, the four spheres overlap. Indeed, for nurses to be effective in one sphere, this interplay must be recognized and developed.

The book concludes with six appendixes that include the executive summary of Nursing’s Agenda for Health Care Reform, an important review of the Hatch Act for nurses who are employees of federal organizations and institutions, a sample script for telephone canvassing for political campaigns, guidelines for conducting a voter registration drive, a list of internships and fellowships in health and public policy, and a sample syllabus for courses on policy and politics. The syllabus is one example of how the book can be used. Those who are not reading the book for a course in policy and politics may prefer to first scan the book and then proceed to sections of primary interest.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As with the first edition, one of the remarkable features of this book is the large number of contributors who donated their time, energy, and

edition, policy development is emphasized as it occurs in all four spheres and not just in government. The importance of policy and politics in the workplace is emphasized. This is the sphere in which nurses spend most of their time and have the opportunity to significantly affect the lives of individuals, families, and communities. The nursing shortage of the late 1980s spotlighted the relatively limited role that nurses played in defining workplace policies. This attention provided the impetus for some of the structural and process changes in health care organizations that nurses have long advocated. But not all health care organizations have embraced such changes. Much more needs to be done.

We have attempted to continue to build upon the strengths of the first edition in a variety of ways:

1. *Policy* is defined as a political and value-laden process that includes decisions about what gets on the policy agenda, which policy is adopted, and how and by whom the policy will be evaluated. *Politics* is portrayed as a necessary and integral part of the policy process when people with diverse values and interests are involved. Chapters 5 and 6, devoted to policy analysis and the policy process, set the stage for the emphasis on policy and the interplay between policy and politics that are evident throughout the book. In addition, a new chapter on legislative and regulatory processes in government provides a basis for subsequent chapters discussing policy development in local, state, and federal governments.
2. The feminist focus on policy and politics is enhanced. This focus is relevant to both women and men in nursing. It is consistent with the profession's renewed commitment to caring as an essential concept that can and must inform our beliefs, attitudes, goals, and actions. In addition to Chapter 2, *Feminist Perspectives on Policy and Politics*, many of the contributors to this edition have incorporated feminist perspectives into their discussions. It is a theme that is evident throughout this book.
3. Health care financing is increasingly dominating policy discussions and is addressed in many chapters. Chapter 23, a new chapter, is devoted to this topic and will help nurses enter into debates on the financial aspects of health policy.
4. Since the first edition, the pandemic of HIV/AIDS has influenced policy and politics in all four spheres. The End Case Study vividly portrays the politics of HIV/AIDS policy development in this country, and the topic is discussed in several other chapters, reflecting its prominence in our lives and our world.
5. A new chapter on the role of the courts in the development of policy completes the picture of public mechanisms for policy development. It is a particularly important chapter as the character of the highest court in the land has changed to the point where longstanding decisions adjudicated by prior Supreme Courts are being overturned.