



American Academy of Nursing Honors Exceptional Leaders with Annual Organizational Tributes

Awardees will be recognized during the Academy's Health Policy Conference in October

Washington, DC (August 31, 2023) – The American Academy of Nursing (Academy) will honor **Eileen M. Sullivan-Marx, Representative Lauren Underwood, Kevin W. Sowers, Barbara Nichols, Jeri A. Milstead, and Winifred V. Quinn**, with the organization's prestigious annual awards during the [2023 Health Policy Conference](#), *Celebrating 50 Years of Leadership, Policy, and Partnerships*, being held October 5-7, 2023 in Washington, DC. Each awardee is being recognized for their invaluable contributions to improve care, advance health equity, change health policy, and promote the nursing profession.

"These individuals—all of them beloved colleagues in our community—have invested their talent wisely and generously to the benefit of our profession, our society, and our future," said Academy President Kenneth R. White, PhD, RN, AGACNP, ACHPN, FACHE, FAAN. "They show us what is possible and encourage us, by their example, to aim higher; they inspire us, as *nurses out loud*, to fulfill the promise of equitable healthcare. By recognizing their achievements, we not only honor them but also affirm what nurses and their partners can do. Now, in the Academy's 50th anniversary year, the glow of their leadership lights our way forward."

The **President's Award**, the highest individual achievement award given by the Academy, which recognizes a Fellow who has made extraordinary, lifelong contributions to improving the health of individuals, families, and communities, will be presented to **Eileen M. Sullivan-Marx, PhD, RN, FAAN**. Dr. Sullivan-Marx led New York University Rory Meyers College of Nursing as Dean for over a decade. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and national antiracist movements, she leveraged her perceptive and exceptional leadership skills, serving as President of the Academy. Throughout her career, Dr. Sullivan-Marx has driven state, national, and global policy in support of advanced practice nurses. Her research centers on core implementation issues and focuses on medical and nursing payment in Medicare and Medicaid policy. An expert in aging, she served as a Senior Policy Advisor to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, focused on expanding the Programs for All Inclusive Care for Elders (PACE), a Medicare/Medicaid funded comprehensive community program, beyond older adults to include veterans and adults with disabilities. Her ongoing dedication to promoting health access and equity by driving policy is inspiring.

The **Honorable Lauren Underwood**, MSN, MPH, RN, FAAN, who represents the 14th District of Illinois, will be presented with the Academy's **Civitas Award**. This award recognizes an individual who exemplifies extraordinary dedication to excellence in promoting quality care. Representative Underwood is the first woman, person of color, millennial, and nurse to represent her community in Congress. As a nurse, she has brought the profession's perspective to her policy work. Notably, Representative Underwood is the co-founder and co-chair of the Black Maternal Health Caucus, which aims to address the country's maternal health crisis through comprehensive policy solutions that will improve maternal health outcomes while eliminating health disparities. Prior to her election, she served as a Senior Advisor to the Department of Health and Human Services where she helped to implement the Affordable Care Act, prepared and responded to public health emergencies, and broadened access to care through Medicare and private insurance reform. Representative Underwood's commitment to advancing the nation's health is truly commendable.

The **Health Care Leader Award**, which recognizes an influential national leader dedicated to improving the health of the nation through contributions to organizational excellence, will be given to **Kevin W. Sowers**, MSN, RN, FAAN, President of the Johns Hopkins Health System and Executive Vice President of Johns Hopkins Medicine. In his role overseeing the health system's six hospitals, Mr. Sowers sets strategies to provide outstanding care, train the next generation of leaders, and advance innovative research and discovery. Prior to joining Hopkins, Mr. Sowers spent over 30 years at the Duke University Health System, the last eight of which he served as President and CEO of Duke University Hospital. There he oversaw the consolidation of Duke's clinical lab services, emergency and trauma services, and managed care and patient services. Starting his career as an oncology nurse, Mr. Sowers remains committed to advancing health and health equity among the communities he serves. He has spoken extensively nationally and abroad, offering his perspective on leadership, organizational change, and the importance of mentorship.

The Academy will present **Barbara Nichols**, DNSc (hon), MS, RN, FAAN, Executive Director, Wisconsin Center for Nursing, and **Jeri A. Milstead**, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN, Dean and Professor Emerita, University of Toledo College of Nursing, with the **Lifetime Legacy Award**. This award recognizes extraordinary individuals who have dedicated their life to advocating for positive health system changes.

Dr. Nichols' professional career spans five decades in leadership and policy-making positions. Dr. Nichols is the former Chief Executive Officer of CGFNS International, which provides expertise in credential validation, scope of practice standards, and licensure of nurses and health professionals globally. Throughout her career, she has been a champion for diversification and a leading advocate for ethnic minority inclusion in all aspects of the health professions. Dr. Nichols' commitment to diversity is exemplified in her work to implement National Academy of Medicine's "The Future of Nursing 2020-2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity" report through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and AARP. She has been a consultant on credentials assessment and diversity for the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health, Department of Labor, Department of State, and Department of Homeland Security. Dr. Nichols' lifetime of work to promote diversity within the nursing profession is remarkable.

Dr. Milstead has dedicated her life's work to advancing the nursing profession's understanding of health care policy and its link to practice. She has been a powerful advocate for encouraging nurses to bring their unique lens to policymakers to ensure the profession's voice is heard. Dr. Milstead's seminal publication, *Milstead's Health Politics and Policy: A Nurses Guide*, originally released in 1999, was the first textbook on nursing research and policy theory and continues to be used to educate graduate nursing students today. Her career was influenced by her role serving as a policy advisor on nursing and health policy to a prominent U.S. Senator, U.S. Congress persons, and state legislators. She has worked with nurses and academic institutions in several countries on accreditation and graduate education. Her industrious career and expertise in policy has had a lasting impact on nurses, students, and the broader health care community in the U.S. and abroad.

Winifred V. Quinn, PhD, FAANP(H), FAAN, Director, Advocacy & Consumer Affairs, the Center to Champion Nursing in America (CCNA), an initiative of AARP Foundation, AARP and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), will be presented with the **Outstanding Leadership Award**. This distinction recognizes Honorary Fellows of the Academy for exemplary service and perseverance as a champion of the nursing profession. Dr. Quinn is an expert in health care policy with a passion for improving the quality of life for older adults, their families, and people who lack equal access to care. Her work co-directing the Future of Nursing: *Campaign for Action* has advanced stakeholder engagement, access to care and services, and diversity and inclusivity within the nursing profession. She is also a staunch advocate for granting full practice authority to advanced practice registered nurses and has helped 14 states achieve this goal; another 16 states have updated their laws to allow registered nurses greater

flexibility through her work. Dr. Quinn's commitment to the profession and to the nation's health has improved access to care for tens of millions of Americans. The *Campaign for Action*, run by CCNA, is also an initiative of AARP Foundation, AARP and RWJF.

These incredible individuals will be recognized throughout the American Academy of Nursing's [Health Policy Conference](#) this October 5-7 in Washington, DC. [Learn more](#) about the Academy and [visit the policy conference website](#) for more details.

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About the American Academy of Nursing

[The American Academy of Nursing](#) serves the public by advancing health policy and practice through the generation, synthesis, and dissemination of nursing knowledge. Academy Fellows are inducted into the organization for their extraordinary contributions to improve health locally and globally. With more than 2,900 Fellows, the Academy represents nursing's most accomplished leaders in policy, research, administration, practice, and academia.

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