



Policy Opportunities in a Presidential Election Year Darlene J. Curley, MS, RN, FAAN

The goal of the [Institute for Nursing Leadership \(INL\)](#) at the American Academy of Nursing is to position nurses to lead change to improve health and healthcare and drive policy. This is the 6th web based coaching essay of 32. It discusses Policy opportunities in a presidential election year. What is your policy opportunity post-election? Where to start?

The 2016 election cycle has concluded. Our country has a new President. States have newly elected or re-elected Members of Congress, State Governors, State Legislators, and Municipal officials. Healthcare is always a top priority for voters; every candidate has discussed healthcare access, quality and cost on the campaign trail.

But, campaigning is over and governing must begin. What is your opportunity to affect health policy?

It may seem counterintuitive, but now is one of the best times in the policy/political timeline to participate in health policy at the local, State, and Federal level. Although, candidates began developing their health policy positions and identifying healthcare experts long before the election, they need to hit the ground running by Inauguration Day in January 2017.

Where to Start: Your Personal Political Assessment

Do you currently hold a political appointment?

If yes, and your candidate won re-election, now is the time reconfirm your current appointment, or seek a higher level appointment. If your candidate lost, utilize your Political Party connections to seek a leadership position in another administration. Challenges can turn into great opportunities! Always strive for a position where you can have the most impact on healthcare policy.

Are you actively seeking a political appointment for the 1st time?

Start today by connecting with the INL's State Initiative. The Academy has made a connection with Governor's offices in all 50 States to identify appointment opportunities for members. Take action by applying for an appointment. Consider positions where you can make a contribution. Think outside of the box. The Academy will assist with letters of support and provide guidance throughout the process.

Are you thinking about a policy role in the future?

Take some time to identify all of the newly elected officials who were on your November ballot at the municipal, State and Federal level. Review their websites and highlight health policy positions. Identify areas of agreement and expertise that will help the elected official meet his/her policy goal. Over the next year, monitor the news and attend their local events or briefings. Introduce yourself to their staff and offer your expertise on healthcare issue, if they need it.

Election years provide the opportunity for each of us to assess our impact on policy and identify next steps. Take action, think big and consider running for office in the next election cycle!

Darlene has been elected to Maine State Legislature, and ran for Congress in Maine's 1st District.