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**Gov. Blagojevich signs Nurse Practice Act into law
SB 360 updates Nursing Act, recognizes changes in profession**

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today signed a law that updates and extends the Nurse Practice Act until 2018. Recognizing the increasingly large role played by nurses in providing quality healthcare, the new law clarifies the responsibilities and requirements for Advance Practice Nurses (APN), Registered Nurses (RN) and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN). **Senate Bill 360** was sponsored by State Senator Carol Ronen (D-Chicago) and State Representative Angelo “Skip” Saviano (R-River Grove). The current Nurse Practice Act sunsets January 1, 2008.

“Nurses are the backbone of the healthcare system. This law moves us toward a better appreciation of the work Illinois nurses do to protect and care for the people of our state,” said Gov. Blagojevich. “Working with healthcare professionals across the state, we have modernized and streamlined this law, giving men and women who are considering careers in nursing a better understanding of what is expected of them and what they can expect of their careers.”

The historic rewrite of the Nurse Practice Act streamlines the law into three distinct sections targeted to the three categories of licensed nurses. Each section outlines licensure requirements, education requirements and a specific scope of practice for each category. Further, the law includes a whistle-blower clause that prohibits retaliation against a licensed nurse who reports unsafe, unethical, or illegal healthcare practices or conditions.

“Nurses are a distinct and independent part of the healthcare network. The changes in this Act reflect the critical nature of nurses’ work and clarify the expanding opportunities and responsibilities of licensed nurses,” said Sen. Ronen.

“Nurses work tirelessly to ensure the comfort and well-being of the people they care for,” said Rep. Saviano. “By clarifying their responsibilities, we are making it easier for them to continue doing their jobs and treating their patients.”

The Act changes the statutory relationship between physicians and nurses, recognizing the ongoing changes in the treatment of patients and where patients are treated. The Act expands the scope of practice for APNs working at hospitals and Ambulatory Surgical Treatment Centers (ASTC), allowing them to practice through the use of privileging and credentialing without the need for a written collaborative agreement with a licensed physician. The law also expands the types and dosages of drugs that an APN may prescribe so long as there is a collaborative agreement or the treatment is at a hospital or ASTC. Finally, the Act creates a new procedure for future expansions and changes to the credentialing of APNs and requires the collaboration of the Medical Licensing Board for further practice expansions.

“APNs have advanced in the past ten years, and this Act reflects the changes in our profession. The two major changes in the Nurse Practice Act are the elimination of the collaborative agreement for APNs in a hospital or ambulatory care center and the ability to prescribe some additional medications. We took a step in the right direction and hope this leads to bigger and better steps in the future,” said Bridget A. Cahill, PhD Candidate, ANP, CNP, Government Relations Chairperson for ISAPN, and a Member of the Advisory Board for the Illinois Center for Nursing.

“We would like to thank Governor Blagojevich for his action today. The signing of this act represents two years of work by the nursing community. The central goal was to provide for patient protection through nursing regulation. We are proud this goal was accomplished, and the scope of nursing practice was improved at all levels,” said Pam Robbins, RN, Second Vice President, Illinois Nurses Association

Work on this Act was initiated in 2006 and focused on streamlining the Act and making clear what is expected of all healthcare providers. The work was accomplished by combining the efforts of the Illinois

State Medical Society, Illinois Hospital Association, Illinois Nurses Association, Illinois Society of Advanced Practice Nursing, Illinois Association of Nurse Anesthetists, and a committee of 155 nurses representing LPNs, RNs and APNs. The stakeholders' first priority was patient safety and protecting the public. The protection of nursing practice and organizational priorities were also considered.

SB 360 becomes effective immediately.