

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# Elections Have Consequences

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For positive and negative impact, elections have consequences. It has been reported by Callie Crossley, a well-accomplished and award-winning Boston-based radio and TV host and journalist, that President Barack Obama was the first known individual to say these famous words, "Elections have consequences." (Crossley, 2018). While speaking with Congressional members, President Obama espoused these three words after his first inauguration in 2009. He may have been the first but certainly he has not been the last person to share this sentiment of recent political times.

There is a universal understanding and concern about the significance and impact that election results can have on society. For example, during President Obama's first term, we witnessed the consequences of his election with the passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, informally known as Obamacare. This landmark federal legislation signed into law by President Obama is the most significant healthcare legislation since 1965 when the Medicare program was legislated by the Johnson administration.

Irrespective of the election outcome, there are always consequences. Since the November 2024 elections and the announcement of President Trump's cabinet selections, the potential consequences and impact on society are becoming increasingly clear and concerning. This is particularly true for federal agencies that oversee functions and activities that impact health and healthcare delivery programs. The issue of vaccines and mandatory vaccination, which falls under the mission and scope of the De-

partment of Health and Human Services (HHS) and some of its thirteen unique divisions, is just one example. The regulation, production, usage, and availability of vaccines are influenced by several HHS divisions' missions including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, and Food and Drug Administration. Other Departments with well-known health oversight and potential consequences reported in the media since the elections include the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Education, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Anticipating health related consequences during the president's term of office, I am confident that the nursing profession will play a major role. As healthcare professionals, nurses understand the healthcare needs of society and the profession. Nurses can influence health beyond the bedside. We appreciate the relationship between an individual's health and the various factors known as the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) that impact health, such as but not limited to environment and education. Nurses recognize that the social conditions that threaten the health of marginalized populations and health equity rest in the control of our elected officials, community leaders, and others.

Responding to actual or potential consequences that will negatively affect health must be our priority. The public and legislators trust nurses. We have an opportunity and obligation to educate and influence stakeholders about the

consequences and their impact. Our ethical responsibility is described in the American Nurses Association (ANA) Code of Ethics in Provision Two the "nurse's primary commitment is to the patient, whether an individual, family, group, community, or population" and compels us to embrace this duty and that of advocacy (ANA, 2015, p. 5).

As I reflect on my personal civic and professional responsibility, and yours, the words of a former ANA and ICN President resonate with me. It is a quote that I often share in class with students to inspire them to act. Dr. Margretta Madden Styles, often quoting Florence Nightingale, frequently declared, "No system shall endure that does not march" (Cipriano, 2009). Nurses have the answers for health and improved health policies. As a profession, we have demonstrated strength and success when we have worked together. I am confident that we will march. ■

## References

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