



empowering civic engagement

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When Nurses Lead, Communities Thrive

Nurses4Nurses is an ANA-Illinois initiative grounded in a simple truth: when nurses serve in elected office, policy becomes more practical, compassionate, and effective. Nurses bring bedside clarity to boardrooms and legislative chambers. They understand how systems work in real life, where policy meets patients and families. With the visibility created through NREO, the importance of nurses stepping into public leadership has never been clearer, and the moment to accelerate this movement is now.

In 2018, with the support of then ANA-Illinois President Dan Fraczkowski, MS, RN-BC, ANA-Illinois committed to spotlighting nurses from across our state who are running for national, statewide, and local offices. We continued that commitment in 2020 and saw multiple nurse candidates win their races. The lesson is unmistakable. When we inform, amplify, and organize, nurses win. When nurses win, communities benefit.

Why Nurses4Nurses matters

Illinois faces pressing challenges in access to care, behavioral health, maternal and child health, long-term care, and the workforce pipeline. Nurses see these challenges up close and bring solutions forged in practice, quality improvement, and ethics. They are trusted by the public and trained to weigh evidence, anticipate risk, and communicate clearly. Electing nurses is not only about representation. It is about better outcomes.

Meet nurse leaders stepping up to serve

Jennifer Levin, BSN, TCRN, TNS, PHRN, is a trauma nurse from Advocate Sherman Hospital and a lifelong Palatine resident. Pronounced “le-van,” Jennifer is running for State Representative in the 51st District. She brings front-line experience in emergency and trauma care, community leadership through the Palatine Jaycees, and a commitment to pragmatic, evidence-informed policy that improves access, safety, and outcomes for families across the district. Her campaign is building momentum with public kickoff events and organizing through official channels. Petition signing officially begins tomorrow, so watch for signature-gathering opportunities, additional ways to help, and virtual fundraisers. Nurses4Nurses is about nurses supporting nurses, and every hour you invest accelerates her momentum.

Jaclyn Rodriguez, MSN, RN, is running for the Lake County Board and lives in Libertyville. A former Statewide SANE Coordinator for the Illinois Attorney General's Office and a nationally certified SANE-A and SANE-P, Jaclyn understands trauma-informed care, public safety partnerships, and the critical link between county services and community wellbeing. Her experience equips her to bridge health, safety, and social supports for families across Lake County.

Karen Battaglia, DNP, RN, CEN, TCRN, TNS, is running for State Senate in the 32nd District. Karen is the Trauma Program Coordinator at Northwestern Medicine McHenry Hospital and serves in leadership with the Illinois Emergency Nurses Association. She has been politically active for several years and was Congresswoman Lauren Underwood's guest at the 2020 State of the Union, bringing frontline nursing perspective to the national stage. She will challenge the incumbent in District 32.

Danielle Penman, MSN, BS, RN, is a labor and delivery nurse with more than two decades of high-risk obstetrics experience and serves as the Obstetric Bereavement Coordinator at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge, a role she has held since 2013. She co-chairs the Advocate Perinatal and Pediatric Bereavement Council, is a PLIDA member who has presented on implementing system-wide perinatal bereavement programs, and completed her MSN in executive nurse leadership with high distinction in 2022, where she developed a supportive program to reduce compassion fatigue and burnout now in use at her hospital. She also advocates statewide as a Stop The Bleed instructor and supported the successful passage of SR401 in 2019. Building on this record of compassionate, evidence-informed leadership, Penman is running for the Illinois Senate in the 33rd District.

Supporting Congresswoman Lauren Underwood's reelection

Nurses4Nurses proudly stands with Congresswoman **Lauren Underwood, RN**, as she seeks reelection to continue serving Illinois' 14th District. Congresswoman Underwood brings the rigor of nursing practice to national policy, including leadership of the Black Maternal Health Caucus and the Momnibus initiative to address maternal mortality and morbidity. Every nurse matters, and together we must keep every nurse elected in office so that evidence, compassion, and community perspective remain central in Congress. We will share volunteer dates, virtual opportunities, and district-wide mobilizations as they are posted.

How you can help right now

Campaigns succeed when communities show up. You can make a difference by contributing to nurse-led campaigns, volunteering to walk precincts, joining parade teams, attending fundraising events, and supporting scheduling and digital outreach. If you prefer to help behind the scenes, there is always a need for data entry, phone banking, and event logistics. Petition signing begins tomorrow, and this is a tangible way to move candidates onto the ballot. Stay tuned for more campaign information as filings, endorsements, and

community events are confirmed. Watch for additional ways to help and for virtual fundraisers that make participation easy regardless of your schedule.

What's next for Nurses4Nurses

We will continue to feature nurse candidates from across Illinois and share timely updates as campaigns progress. Our goal is to connect candidates with advocates, volunteers, and donors who believe that pragmatic, values-centered leadership improves health for all. We welcome stories from the field, whether you are a bedside nurse who has joined a local campaign, an APRN leading a community coalition, or a retired nurse mentoring the next generation of public servants. Together, we can build a durable pipeline of nurse leaders at every level of government.

Call to action

If you are a nurse running for office or considering a run in a future cycle, reach out to ANA-Illinois so we can highlight your campaign through Nurses4Nurses and connect you with advocates statewide. If you know a nurse who is running locally or statewide, please ask them to contact us so we can share their information with our community.

Illinois needs leaders who listen, translate evidence into action, and keep patients at the center of decisions. Nurses do this every day. Let us carry that same commitment into our councils, boards, and capitols. Nurses4Nurses is how we move from recognition to representation, from advocacy to actionable policy. Join us.

For additional information or to provide us with details about your campaign, contact Dr. Swart at execdirector@ana-illinois.org.

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