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ANA Statement on Registered Nurses' Rights as Public Employees to Advocate for Themselves and Patients

The American Nurses Association (ANA), the largest professional nurses' organization in the United States, stands with its member state nurses associations that advocate for the health care rights of all and the rights of registered nurses employed by the state or local government agencies to negotiate on issues related to working conditions.

The *Code of Ethics for Nurses* (2001) calls on the nursing profession to promote the health, welfare and safety of all people and to maintain a health care environment and employment conditions that are conducive to the provision of quality health care. Support for nurses' rights to advocate through individual or collective action for improved working conditions and optimal patient care is consistent with the values of the profession. Central to this commitment is a well-established system of checks and balances. It is this system that must be preserved. Turning back the clock on established workplace rights will not solve the budget crisis faced by many states. ANA is very concerned that this erosion of a balanced system of rights and obligations will impact the current and future rights of nurses – as health care professionals and employees – to advocate on behalf of their patients, families, communities, as well as themselves.

ANA recognizes that the nation and states have to make difficult budget choices at this time. ANA encourages elected officials to be cautious about budget decisions that could adversely impact the health and welfare of our most vulnerable populations. While in the short term these budget cuts may seem financially prudent, in the long run they may end up costing the state more in resources, productivity and quality of life.

ANA and its member state associations are concerned about political actions taken to address state budgets that weaken the ability of all registered nurses, including publicly employed registered nurses, to freely advocate for the best work environment to deliver nursing services.

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