

Expansion to help address Vermont's nursing shortage

Washington, DC - Rep. Peter Welch has secured \$200,000 for Norwich University's Nursing Program, allowing the program to expand by fifty-percent.

The House-passed 2008 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill, H.R. 3043, provides additional funding to help the University increase its Nursing Program from 65 to 120 new students each year.

"Vermont faces a critical shortage of nurses in the near future. Norwich University is doing exceptional work in training Vermont's future nurses and this project will help alleviate that shortage and have a positive impact throughout our community for years to come," said Welch.

Norwich University President Richard Schneider said, "We greatly appreciate all of Congressman Welch's work and support for this program. This funding will help us fill the critical need for educated nurses both right here in Vermont, and throughout the nation."

A recent report found that the average age of Vermont's nurses is 48, and 79 percent of all working nurses in the state are older than 40. The Vermont Department of Labor projects 272 openings a year thorough 2014 for registered nurses - 155 from growth in demand, and another 117 to replace those leaving the workforce, according to the *Times Argus* (5.14.07).

With many graduates remaining in Vermont, this increase will help to meet the projected shortfall in trained nurses.

The funding will be used to help build ten new nursing station labs that will provide a variety of scenarios to meet the many challenges that nurses will face after graduation. The project equips thirteen new classrooms and clinical areas, six human training simulators, and one distance-learning classroom. The Norwich nurses will do their practical training at the Central Vermont Medical Center, Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, Woodridge Nursing Home,

Central Vermont Home Health and Hospice, and several other nearby health care facilities.

The goal is to have the construction work completed to permit the class expansion for the entering class of the fall of 2008. The Army has certified Norwich University as a Partnership in Nursing Excellence School, just one of 17 such programs in the nation.

The legislation now awaits Senate consideration.