



## **American Association of Nurse Anesthetists**

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### **President's 2004 Budget Cuts Nurse Anesthetist Education *In Time of Shortage, A Pain for Patients, Rural Health & the Military***

PARK RIDGE, Ill. – Rodney Lester, CRNA PhD, of Houston, Texas, President of the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, released the following statement regarding the President's FY 2004 budget issued today.

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“There's a severe and growing national shortage of nurse anesthetists, who provide two-thirds of U.S. anesthetics and the lion's share in rural and medically underserved America and the U.S. Armed Forces. But the President's FY 2004 budget cuts the one Federal resource for strengthening nurse anesthesia education. Relying on the unwise recommendation of an 'expert panel' held over from the previous Administration, the HHS budget cuts Title VIII Advanced Education Nursing by 56 percent.

“This cut jeopardizes the availability of federal funding to expand education of nurse anesthetists. It means that in a time of nursing shortage, federal money will not be available to start new accredited nurse anesthetist schools, or to expand the 85 that already exist – each of which turned away an average of 23 qualified applicants in 2002.

“Nurse anesthesia education is extremely cost-effective. Compared with other anesthesia providers in the marketplace, a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNAs) can be educated at one-tenth the cost as the training of physician anesthesiologist. And while the average number of nurse anesthetist job vacancies increased 250 percent from 1998 to 2001, investment in nurse anesthetist education is more critical than ever to our aging population of Americans.

“And CRNAs are safe, high-quality anesthesia providers. Nurse anesthetists meet the toughest continuing education and recertification requirements in anesthesia

care, turning difficult cases into research, education and practice. With anesthesia provided by nurse anesthetists solely in 60 percent of U.S. rural hospitals, and serving the U.S. military's forward-deployed ships and posts around the world, the *Institute of Medicine* reported in 1999 that anesthesia is 50 times safer today than 20 years ago.

"We will work in Congress and with the Administration to make the case: Cutting nurse anesthetist education is a pain for patients, for rural healthcare, and for our U.S. Armed Forces. An investment of just \$10 million a year in nurse anesthetist education pays dividends in better health, and better access to health, for patients and taxpayers alike."

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**About the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists:** *Founded in 1931 and located in Park Ridge, Ill., the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) is the professional organization for more than 30,000 Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs). As advanced practice nurses, CRNAs administer approximately 65 percent of the 26 million anesthetics delivered in the United States each year. CRNAs practice in every setting where anesthesia is available and are the sole anesthesia providers in more than two-thirds of all rural hospitals.*