

RESOLUTION 3

TWELVE HOUR SHIFTS

WHEREAS, Twelve (12) hour shifts originated without the benefit of evidence-based research in the early 1980s as a temporary solution to a growing nursing shortage as well as the desire by practicing nurses to address work schedules and quality of life, and

WHEREAS, Over the past 30 years, twelve hour shifts have been implemented extensively in acute and critical care areas where patient care needs are extremely complex and patients are at a higher risk for complications and are now the norm throughout all patient-care areas rather than the exception, and

WHEREAS, Nursing is a profession requiring continuous high-level critical cognitive synthesis and physical exertion and the current demographics show an aging nursing workforce more prone to personal chronic conditions and workplace injury, and

WHEREAS, All nurses, regardless of age, are affected by fatigue and long shifts, including mental and physical exhaustion, injuries and accidents and difficulty maintaining a reasonable work-life balance, and

WHEREAS, A growing body of research shows increasing evidence that twelve hour shifts may be a significant contributing cause to nurse fatigue and medical errors and/or nurse injury, and

WHEREAS, Industries such as railroad, aviation, trucking, and medical resident practice have identified long shifts and consecutive hours worked beyond ten as a source of accidents and error and worker injury resulting in these industries subsequently placing restrictions on shift length, consecutive hours of work and the numbers of days worked consecutively, and

WHEREAS, The healthcare industry has been slow to acknowledge the potential danger of long shifts, requiring legislative solutions to stop mandatory overtime and other fatigue related causes, and

WHEREAS A severe nursing shortage is predicted for the upcoming years constituting a need to retain a healthy nursing workforce,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, That WSNA continue to provide education to nurses, employers, policy makers and the general public on the topic of twelve hour shifts and the relationship to patient and nurse safety, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That nurses participating in staffing committees be encouraged to explore staffing options to minimize the number of twelve hour shifts and number of twelve hour shift days worked in a row, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That WSNA continue to broadly disseminate research outcome data associated with twelve hour shifts, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the WSNA Professional Nursing and Health Care Council, the Cabinet on Economic and General Welfare and the Legislative and Health Policy Council begin a collaborative dialogue to strategize potential solutions that may be needed in contract language, legislation, and practice / policy statements supporting the eventual elimination of twelve hour shifts.

CONTACT: Ed Dolle, Chair, Occupational and Environmental Health and Safety Committee (catspawz000@msn.com)

APPROVED: Bylaws / Resolutions Committee 1/21/11

APPROVED: Board of Directors Executive Committee 2/18/11

APPROVED: Board of Directors 3/25/11

ADOPTED: General Assembly 4/28/11