



Georgia Increases Penalties for Assault Against Emergency Nurses

Emergency Nurses Association commends lawmakers for acknowledging that violence is not 'part of the job'

(May 4, 2016) – The [Emergency Nurses Association](#) applauds Georgia for becoming the latest state to enhance penalties for assaulting emergency nurses. Gov. Nathan Deal signed legislation yesterday that increases punishments to five to 20 years for aggravated assault and aggravated battery when committed against hospital emergency department personnel and emergency medical services personnel.

Georgia ENA State Council Government Affairs Chair Terri Sullivan, RN, and colleagues worked tirelessly to advocate for stiffer penalties. State Reps. Johnnie Caldwell, Sharon Cooper, Rich Golick, Alex Atwood, Jodi Lott, Debbie Buckner and State Sen. Renee Unterman sponsored and were instrumental in passing this important legislation. The bill received overwhelming support in the Georgia legislature, passing 147 to 6 in the House of Representatives and 51 to 2 in the Senate.

“Standing at the front line of emergency care, we are grateful for these increased protections,” said ENA President Kathleen E. Carlson, MSN, RN, CEN, FAEN. “The 24/7 accessibility of EDs, overcrowding, long wait times, and patients under the influence are just some of the factors contributing to the epidemic of violence in healthcare. This legislation goes a long way toward ensuring those offenders are held responsible.”

In March, Utah joined the ranks of states that have enhanced criminal penalties for attacking emergency nurses. Utah Gov. Gary Herbert signed a bill increasing the term of imprisonment for assault against healthcare providers or emergency medical workers when the assault causes substantial bodily injury.

A [2014 study](#) published in the [Journal of Emergency Nursing](#) shows an underlying normalization of violence against healthcare professionals in both the healthcare and law enforcement systems, preventing effective interventions.

State-specific laws related to workplace violence can be found here: <https://www.ena.org/government/State/Pages/Default.aspx>.

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About the Emergency Nurses Association

The Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) is the premier professional nursing association dedicated to defining the future of emergency nursing through advocacy, education, research, innovation, and leadership. Founded in 1970, ENA has proven to be an indispensable resource to the global emergency nursing community. With more than 41,000 members worldwide, ENA advocates for patient safety, develops industry-leading practice standards and guidelines, and guides emergency healthcare public policy. ENA members have expertise in triage, patient care, disaster preparedness, and all aspects of emergency care. Additional information is available at www.ena.org.