American Counseling Association Public Policy and Legislative Agenda
for the First Session of the 112th Congress, 2011
(approved by ACA Governing Council, March, 2011)

MISSION: Increase support for professional counselors and their clients in all appropriate Federal and State laws, regulations, and legislation.

Mental Health, Substance Abuse Treatment and Related Services
A. Increase recognition of Professional Counselors as qualified providers, and beneficiary access to quality behavioral health services, within health care and social services bills and programs, including:
   1. Medicare
   2. TRICARE
   3. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and other programs administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
   4. Federal Employee Health Benefits program
   5. Substance abuse treatment programs
   6. Department of Veterans’ Affairs
B. Monitor and support implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to promote extension of health insurance coverage to all Americans, and to increase access to counselors’ services
C. Promote confidentiality of client information
D. Promote full implementation of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, establishing parity of insurance coverage for behavioral health (including substance abuse) treatment
E. Support public investments in health care services and research, particularly in the area of mental health and substance abuse treatment
F. Promote Medicaid coverage of mental illness and services needed by persons with disabilities

Education, Rehabilitation and Workforce Development
A. Increase access to school counseling services within reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)
B. Promote adequate appropriations for the Elementary & Secondary School Counseling Program and other counseling-related programs
C. Monitor and address counseling issues in reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
D. Address counseling issues within reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act
E. Address counseling issues within reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA)
F. Monitor and address counseling issues in federal higher education programs
G. Promote and raise awareness of school-based mental health professionals (i.e., school counselors)
H. Promote loan forgiveness for counselors
I. Support anti-bullying legislation

Social Advocacy and Human Rights Issues
A. Support universal access to health care services and health insurance coverage
B. Support recognition of civil unions that are structured, committed relationships, regardless of sex, gender, or sexuality
C. Support programs and services that promote public health, wellness, prevention, and consumer protection
D. Oppose efforts to address federal deficits solely or primarily through cuts in health, education, and social services spending which will disproportionately impact less fortunate Americans.

State Counselor Legislation
A. Provide assistance regarding licensure laws and regulations
B. Provide assistance regarding professional school counseling issues
C. Provide assistance for Freedom of Choice/third party reimbursement of counselors legislation
D. Support Medicaid advocacy for counselors
E. Support portability of counselor licensure and credentials
F. Monitor discrimination between national teacher and school counselor certification
G. Support efforts to define when counselors are obligated to break confidentiality in order to protect clients or identified others from serious and foreseeable harm