At our June 6 session, your bargaining team expressed their concerns to the employer’s team about their slight movement around our on-call proposals. In previous sessions, we conveyed the unified voices of nurses in supporting the on-call positions. However, their counterproposal—an hourly on-call flat rate—suggested we failed to express the gravity and sustainability of the on-call nurses positions.

We asked the employer to creatively imagine ways to break the stalemate. They responded that the part-time on-call position was a non-starter, because it was too expensive. We asked them to caucus to brainstorm a solution that would enhance the quality of life for the on-call positions.

After a lengthy break, the employer’s team returned and responded more positively to our proposal for earned leave for the on-call positions. They did not have a formal counterproposal prepared, but conceptually acceded to our proposal that on-call positions earn leave like other benefited positions.

They also took our invitation to heart, striving to find other solutions to enrich the quality of life for the on-
call positions. They reported that in their caucus they discussed a work reassignment, where incoming evening and weekend calls be directed to the hospice house nurses, when it has two RNs on duty. This “triage” function would relieve the on-call nurses from constant interruptions in their night and would allow them to focus on home visits. Since the hospice house is not open yet, they could not assure us this arrangement would work. Moreover, it would not be a formal contractual proposal, but a change in assigned duties.

Your bargaining team was glad to see this movement by the employer. They will discuss the proposals with nurses and prepare a response for our June 15 bargaining session.

At the session, we also reached a tentative agreement (TA) on a number of minor issues and arranged for two additional bargaining sessions June 22 and 29, if needed. Our TAs now total three dozen items. However, two dozen proposals remain unsettled, including differences in important issues around wages, differentials, earned leave, fair share, bargaining team pay and insurance. See the bargaining tracker online by clicking here.

Oregon’s Nonprofit Hospitals Need to Invest in Patient Care

ONA President Katy Cooper, BSN, RN, CCRN

A recent report on hospital profits revealed one of the major faults in our current health care system. Simply put, profits are not always used for their intended purpose. Hospitals exist to provide care to their patients and their communities. But while Oregonians turn to them for care, there is no guarantee hospital administrators share the public’s priorities.

Seven of the 10 most profitable hospitals in the United States are nonprofits. Each made more than $160 million a year from patient care alone. PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at Riverbend in Springfield is No. 9. It raked in more than $170 million in profits from patient care in 2013.

Sacred Heart Medical Center at Riverbend is just one of 60 nonprofit hospitals in Oregon. Despite skyrocketing earnings at nonprofit hospitals, hospital administrators continue to argue they can’t afford to hire enough staff to care for the patients they bill. Refusing to invest in patient care compromises patients’ health and leads to errors. Since 2013, nurses have filed more than 4000 reports of insufficient or unsafe staffing at Oregon’s hospitals; identifying instances when there is not enough staff or the right staff isn’t available to care for patients.

When hospitals aren’t staffed appropriately, patients don’t receive their medications on time, they don’t get the information they need about follow-up care and they can’t get help with basic needs like walking or personal hygiene.

For hospitals, investing in patient care isn’t a luxury, it’s a necessity. Hospitals must prioritize patient care and fund it before paying executives’ six-figure salaries or building new facilities ready-made for magazine covers instead of for patients.

Years of research have shown investing in nurses and other health care providers prevents medical errors, helps patients recover more quickly and ultimately saves lives. Hospitals need to invest excess profits in the staff, technology and equipment that make patient care safer and more cost efficient.
Sacred Heart

Hospitalists at Sacred Heart are organizing an informational picket Thursday, June 23, from noon to 1:30 p.m. outside the Riverbend facility in Springfield. In a recent letter to the editor of the Register-Guard, David Schwartz expressed his frustration with the lack of movement by Sacred Heart medical centers. As president of the Pacific Northwest Hospital Medicine Association, AFT Local 6552, Schwartz and his team have been bargaining with their employer for more than 18 months without an end in sight. He writes, “we are dangerously understaffed, and recruiting has been slow and arduous. We continue to seek resolution of all outstanding issues and prompt settlement of our first contract so we can get back to the business of building the premier hospitalist group in the Pacific Northwest.” We extend our support to healthcare workers in their efforts to improve working conditions.

Meanwhile, nurses continue to bargain with Sacred Heart over a range of issues, most recently discussing workplace violence and scheduling to take required education. In their fantastic June 1 newsletter, the ONA bargaining team at Sacred Heart highlight their priorities in their current bargaining round. We strongly urge you to read the news yourself here. The bargaining team focuses on improved staffing by ensuring meals and breaks are not missed, increased compensation for extra shifts, improved orientation, and a cap on mandatory call of 60 hours per cycle. In home care services, they propose to address workplace violence, improve safety and support for injured nurses. Other unresolved issues include insurance, pay and the employer’s proposal on PTO. They have met with the employer several times in the last few weeks and have several more bargaining sessions scheduled for June. Learn more by clicking here.

On June 9, 2016, the Register Guard reports that Sacred Heart has reached a tentative agreement with the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 701, who represent 60 facilities maintenance and biomed technicians. Members will vote shortly on a four-year contract.

McKenzie Willamette Nurses Sticker Up for SEIU

Also in Springfield, SEIU Local 49, which represents 350 CNAs, technicians and other workers at McKenzie Willamette Medical Center is working through difficult negotiations with their employer. On June 7, ONA nurses throughout the facility wore stickers in support of SEIU, as they met with the employer in their third bargaining session.
At Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center in Corvallis, nurses held a “Black Thursday” job action. Nurses in each unit and shift wore black scrubs to support their bargaining team. At Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital, ONA nurses are bargaining with their employer to eliminate a two-tiered benefit system and for parental leave.

Nurses continue to bargain with Mercy Medical Center in Roseburg, where both sides have made a commitment to clean up language so that the contract will be followed once negotiations are concluded. After three bargaining sessions, they remain apart on issues around orientation, floating, PTO, holidays and minimum shifts required of per diem nurses.

The ONA collective bargaining agreement with Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria expired May 31. Federal law requires employers to maintain the status quo as long as negotiations are progressing forward. The parties have met only twice with disagreements on education benefits, low-census requirements, limits for on-call and wages.

Last month, nurses employed by the Klamath County Public Health Department ratified a three-year agreement that includes a new classification for BSN nurses, who will receive a 5% wage increase. The employer also agreed to a 20% increase in the County’s contribution to the employee’s premium for medical plans and a 20% increase in on-call pay.

Silverton Hospital was recently purchased by the Legacy Health, which bills itself as the largest nonprofit, locally owned health system in the Portland-Vancouver area. The 48-bed hospital based in Silverton includes a Level IV trauma center, a 24-hour emergency room, and a birth center. Nurses at Silverton Hospital have been and continue to be represented by ONA. However, with the change in ownership, nurses will soon begin to negotiate a new collective bargaining agreement with Legacy.

UPCOMING EVENTS IN EUGENE

OSV Summit, July 29. Oregon Strong Voice is a statewide network of regional alliances between labor unions and community-based organizations.

UO Labor Education and Research Center, Summer School, July 29 – 31, Eugene, OR. Together We Rise! Building strength, equity and strategies for a workers’ justice agenda.

STAY CONNECTED with Oregon AFL-CIO. Sign up for weekly updates and alert actions by clicking here.
Is The Stewardship Of Nature A Task Of Labor?

PSU conference examines “red-green” alliances; film debut celebrates NW labor leader

Speakers at the 48th Pacific Northwest Labor History Association (PNLHA), which was held May 20 – 22 at Portland State University, addressed whether labor should be involved in environmental issues. Tom Lux, PNLHA President, set the tone for the conference by asserting that labor should be at the forefront of eco-policy. He continued, “only labor can talk about the process of adapting to climate change. Communities should not be sacrifice zones for good jobs. Labor needs to be at the table” when policy discussions focus on replacing fossil-fuel industries with a greener economy. “If you are not at the table, you are probably on the menu! Clean energy can create tens of thousands of more good jobs” than the nonrenewable energy industry currently employs.

The conference’s theme, “Labor, Justice and the Environment: Historical Insights, Alliances and Challenges,” brought together academics, union members, environmental activists (“enviros”), and other progressives. The opening plenary panel featured Barbara Dudley, Senior Policy Adviser with Oregon Working Families Party, and George Heyman, a member of the British Columbia (BC) legislature. Dudley identified examples of the “red-green alliance,” where unions collaborate with “enviros,” e.g., Earth Firsters cooperated with United Steelworkers to foster sustainable logging a generation ago. Heyman described efforts by “enviros,” labor, and First Nations in the BC logging industry to “create the most jobs per cubic meter of wood,” including value-added production.

On Saturday, many attendees viewed Goodwin’s Way, the U.S. premiere of Neil Vokey’s documentary film. Albert “Ginger” Goodwin organized mineworkers and smelters on Vancouver Island, BC, where he led several strikes. In 1918, a police constable, pursuing Goodwin for draft evasion deep in the BC backcountry, shot him dead. In the 1990s, a stretch of BC highway was named Ginger Goodwin Way, but the official signs quietly and mysteriously disappeared courtesy of the right-wing government in 2001. In his honor, homemade signs emblazoned Goodwin’s Way sporadically crop up along the highway. The film features interviews and accounts of his life and times that continue to inspire others in the labor movement. For more information, click here to go to the Pacific NW Labor History Association website or click here to go to the Goodwin’s Way website.

Tom Getts, a member of Laborers International Union of North America - Local 737, asks a timely question.

Lovejoy Fountain gushes forth near Portland State University on an overcast Saturday afternoon, where a recent conference explored labor and the environment.

Photo by Leola Jewett-Verzuh/PNLHA

Goodwin photo courtesy of Cumberland Museum & Archives C110-002 and provided by Neil Vokey
ONA Bargaining Unit Leadership Conference

Sept. 30 - Oct. 1, 2016 • Portland, OR

Upgrade your nurse leadership skills at ONA’s Bargaining Unit Leadership Conference Friday, Sept. 30 to Saturday, Oct. 1 at the Portland Hilton and Executive Towers in downtown Portland.

▸ Solve local issues through concentrated actions
▸ Build strength with issue-based organizing
▸ Identify and develop new nurse leaders
▸ Use Oregon’s hospital nurse staffing law to improve your workplace

Join ONA nurses and staff from across Oregon to discover new ways to engage your coworkers, build nurse strength and create a community of committed advocates who can lead changes in your facility.

This leadership development event is free for ONA members and student affiliates.

Visit the ONA website for more information. Registration will open Summer 2016.

www.OregonRN.org

Together we can make sure everyone is involved and stays informed!

Please update your contact information, especially your address and personal email, as soon as possible. Your team is encouraging all nurses go to www.OregonRN.org and click on Update Your Information under the green Membership tab at near the top of ONA's home page to provide ONA with updated information and ensure all messages get through in a timely manner.

Not a member? Click here to download a membership application and join ONA today!