Oregon Nurses Association Voted to Affiliate with American Federation of Teachers

The Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) has approved a historic affiliation agreement with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). On Saturday, March 16, 2013, the ONA House of Delegates met in Portland and the delegates voted overwhelmingly to affiliate with AFT.

"This is a historic day for nurses and their patients in Oregon and throughout the nation," said AFT President Randi Weingarten, who spoke to the House of Delegates today, prior to the vote. "Educators and nurses share a mutual respect, mutual priorities and a mutual desire to provide our members with the tools and conditions they need to do their jobs. They need the power and the voice to advocate for their patients, whether it's in Salem or on Capitol Hill."

The ONA's action comes after the board of the National Federation of Nurses and its three other state affiliates—in Washington state, Montana and Ohio—agreed to affiliate with the 1.5 million-member AFT, the largest professional union in the AFL-CIO. The NFN nurses join approximately 48,000 RNs who were already members of the AFT.

"This has been a transparent, robust and democratic process," said ONA President Steve Rooney. "We have been 100 percent committed to providing all of our members access to details, implications and ramifications of the affiliation process. The vote today sends a clear message; ONA's members are excited about our new partnership and we know it will benefit nurses"
and the patients we serve." Weingarten said the affiliations are timely and important because nurses are dealing with a rapidly changing healthcare industry and the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. "Nurses who work on the frontlines of patient care need to have their voices heard," said Weingarten. "These affiliations by organizations that are respected leaders in their states represent a vote of confidence in the AFT as a union with a proven track record of standing up for professionals."

In welcoming the more than 10,400 ONA represented nurses into the AFT, Weingarten said, "We are absolutely delighted that our AFT family now includes the dedicated professionals of the Oregon Nurses Association. They share our commitment to quality services and high standards. We look forward to working together on our common goals."

ONA staff will be rolling out details of the benefits of the affiliation, including ONA member access to AFT+ and Union + member benefit programs provided by AFT and the AFL-CIO, in the coming months.

Oregon’s House of Representatives voted 39 - 20 in favor of House Bill 2902, March 19. The bill requires insurers to reimburse nurse practitioners (NP) and physician assistants (PA) in independent practice the same rate as physicians for the same primary care and mental health services. During previous votes, legislators mentioned the many calls and emails they received from nurses in support of the bill.

The bill now moves to the Senate where it will continue to need your support. Thank you to the many RNs, NPs and PAs who have already asked for their legislators’ support.