March 4 represented the third time your negotiation team met with the State and the first negotiation session for our latest addition to the team, Mystie Haynie from Pendleton Cottage.

The session was short, but we still were able to reach two tentative agreements.

**Article 15.4.d (mandatory overtime)** - The first agreement was on Article 15.4.d. ONA had proposed and the State agreed that the current language caused some confusion about the meaning of the phrase “beyond the employee’s agreed upon shift.”

Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) interpreted that phrase to mean any shift an employee agreed to work. For example, if an employee was scheduled to work an eight hour shift on Monday, the employer could only require the employee to work one hour of additional overtime beyond the employee’s eight hour shift (for a total of 12 hours). The State agreed and the language was amended to state:

Should the Agency be unable to find other registered nurses or other qualified employees to work the unfilled hours or shifts the Agency may require an employee to work one (1) hour beyond the shift the employee was scheduled to work, or the shift the employee agreed to work.

The new language is in bold.

**Article 50.1 (cashing out of compensatory time)** - During the last negotiations, the State agreed that the contract allows nurses to cash out accrued compensatory time. The problem for the State was that the contract did not have a process to administer the cashing out of compensatory time. The State proposed and ONA agreed to a process—hours accrued can be paid in cash at the employee’s request, payments will happen no more than once per month, and compensatory time earned in the current month is not eligible for cash out.

This tentative agreement was also...
treated as a letter of agreement that goes into effect immediately.

The State also made a proposal to change how holiday pay is paid to twelve hour employees. Currently, twelve hour employees that work a holiday, like their eight hour employee counterparts, get two and one-half times their regular rate of pay for working on a holiday. The State proposed that for twelve hour employees, they should receive eight hours of holiday pay, plus one and one-half times their regular rate of pay for the twelve hours they work on the holiday. This amounts to a four hour reduction in pay for these employees.

The State’s rationale for this proposal is that all other State employees only receive eight hours of pay.

The parties also had further discussion on ONA’s proposal to allow nurses in the three agencies that make-up the bargaining unit (Pendleton Cottage, BMRC, and SOCP) to be able to cross-train and pick up open and available shifts at other agencies. Currently, this proposal seems most applicable between BMRC and Pendleton Cottage where Pendleton Cottage has only five nurses currently available to staff a twenty-four hour, seven day a week operation. Medical leaves have left that facility critically short and as a result Pendleton Cottage is unable to consistently have a registered nurse present the full twenty-four hours. Instead, nurses put themselves on-call, sometimes resulting in a nurse working two shifts back-to-back.

We don’t think this is safe or sustainable. Our proposal is simply meant to broaden the pool of nurses an Agency could rely on to voluntarily take call.

Our next meeting with the State is April 4.

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**Proposed changes to Oregon’s PERS**

As you’ve likely read, Oregon’s Governor has proposed several significant changes to Oregon’s Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) this year, and workers throughout the state have been surprised to learn how current proposals would negatively affect their retirement. The Governor’s budget is built on savings from his three PERS proposals which include capping the COLA to the first $24,000 of annual benefit, ending out-of-state tax payments, and making the 6 percent pickup negotiable between 0 and 6 percent. These proposals will be discussed and debated in the Oregon legislature, and as a nurse in public service, you have a right to know how proposed changes could affect you.

We believe any changes should honor the promises made to hard-working public employees and should be fair for all Oregonians. Additionally, it’s important that any changes the legislature enacts are constitutional.

Despite all of the hype, Oregon’s PERS system remains one of the most stable and best funded public retirement systems in the nation.

Find out how Governor Kitzhaber’s proposed cap on Cost Of Living Adjustments would affect your benefits using the COLA Calculator. Simply input your estimated yearly benefits into the calculator and find out what you stand to lose if the Governor’s proposal passes.

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**Information about the COLA Calculator:** The COLA calculator is designed to inform members about a current PERS proposal. *It is not meant to provide financial or retirement counseling.* Active members can get an approximation of their expected benefit by using the PERS benefit calculator and then placing that number in the COLA calculator to see the impact on their projected retirement benefits.