Part-time Nurses to Receive Equal Rates of PTO/EIB Accrual with Full Time (pending ratification!)

On August 8 our Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) bargaining team met with management in our ninth day of negotiations over the last 12 weeks. At the bargaining session we reported to management that in the previous two days nurses had taken the very serious step to hold a vote on whether to hold an informational picket. It was powerful to see so many nurses turning out to the polls, reminding colleagues, and helping each other to get to the polls to vote. Huge credit and appreciation goes out to every single nurse who helped with voter turnout! Our bargaining team was so impressed to see 80 percent of nurses take part in the vote, a historical turnout percentage. We await the remaining absentee ballots before reporting our results, but we let management know that nurses were turning out en masse to take part, because we must reach a fair agreement now.

At the bargaining session it was clear that management is finally taking us seriously, though we still did not reach a tentative agreement for members to vote on. Management finally addressed two of our very top priorities! They offered to provide equal rates of Paid Time Off (PTO) and Extended Illness Benefit (EIB) for our part-time nurses, if we agreed to the other parts of the economic proposals. This is double the amount of time that part-timers receive. While we conceded regaining 5 percent retirement match for now for people receiving the 13 percent and 5 percent part-time differentials, nurses reported that the PTO disparity was a far larger issue and really is major progress towards correcting the harm that was done to part-timers. One nurse reported that this change would equal her having 16 days of PTO per year, rather than the current 8 days she has, which could be completely used up with just one bad case of the flu leaving no time for vacation or any other sick days. This is a major win for part-timers, but management was clear that they only tentatively offered this and only if we reach agreement on wages and other economic proposals.

In an effort to try to reach agreement, we countered with 2.5 percent, 3 percent and 4 percent raises for 2018, 2019, and 2020. Previously we had asked for 3 percent for 2018. Reducing our proposal for 2018 by 0.5 percent was an effort to accommodate management’s assertions that 2018 is a tough financial year for them, while maintaining that over the life of our agreement we still expect them to make financial decisions that prioritize catching our wages up with our peers.

At previous negotiation sessions management had said they
saw no problem with the massive use of variable shift positions. However, at recent sessions they have started to respond to our pressure, agreeing to cap the percentage of positions in each unit that are variable. First, they offered a 50 percent cap, but at our bargaining session yesterday they offered 40 percent after nurses spoke out publicly on this patient safety issue. The research we’ve reviewed shows on average nurses make double the errors when switching back and forth from day to night shift. We countered with 30 percent and hope that management understands that patient safety is not an issue nurses take lightly or make compromises on. Management also offered to improve the process for counting staff meeting attendance.

You can read copies of our proposals here, and management's proposal here.

Informational Picket Vote

After holding nine bargaining sessions across May, June, July, and August our bargaining team has heard from members that we can’t continue to work with an expired contract and past due raises that were owed July 1. Nurses from across the hospital stood together to sign petitions and deliver them to the hospital president. The majority of nurses across the hospital have worn stickers and attended bargaining sessions wearing black and packing the room. Nurses have spoken publicly in The Lund Report, and The Dalles Chronicle. But an agreement was not reached, so now 80 percent of nurses have voted on holding an informational picket to inform our community about how this hospital is being run. By standing together we can make our hospital a place we can all be proud to work and recommend to our community.

No dates or decisions have been made yet for when a picket will occur, but we held this vote to authorize the bargaining team to be able to call for a picket if we do not reach a fair agreement. An informational picket is not a strike, all nurses would still report to work. During an informational picket nurses who are not working, or who are on break would join each other at a designated time to publicly show the community how important it is for us to get a fair agreement.

Now is the time to pack the bargaining room for our next session, and stand strong on our remaining issues, until we reach a tentative agreement we are proud to take to our members for a ratification vote. Every single nurse at this hospital is ONA, and together we will build a hospital we are proud of.

If You Requested an Absentee Ballot, Don’t Forget to Submit It!

Tentative Agreements on Two Articles Reached!

Article 7: Hours of Work

In this article both sides agreed to make changes to weekend shift work. Previously if there were insufficient volunteers to cover a weekend, each nurse in a unit would need to work up to 2 weekends per four-week schedule period. Now it will be listed as two weekends (four shifts) per four-week schedule period, which provides clarity where this may not have been followed consistently. Additionally, we reached agreement on staff meeting attendance, so nurses can join by phone if there isn’t a hands on training component. We had management clarify what Hand’s On means, and they stated that it would involve "equipment or demonstration, or a show me piece, not a PowerPoint or video demonstration". We hope this is a very large help to nurses who live an hour or more away to drive in for a one hour meeting every month that might only involve PowerPoint they could view online and join by phone.

Article 8: Employment Status

There had been some disagreements on making changes to this article, but both sides agreed to essentially leave it as it currently is.

Next Bargaining Session: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. August 15

There are no further bargaining sessions currently scheduled, so be sure to wear black, and pack the room!

We are accepting nominations for ALTERNATE positions on the staffing committee for all departments until August 30, 2018

Please email a signed consent to serve form to cooper@oregonrn.org.

The form can be found here: https://OregonRN.org/73.