GAP IN WAGE PROPOSALS REMAIN, EMPLOYER SEEKS MEDIATION

Dear Mercy Medical nurses,

Our negotiators set a goal for this bargaining round to move our wages close to market average. We researched nurses’ wages at comparable hospitals in our region. Based on the most recent ONA contracts in Southern Oregon, we discovered that Mercy nurses currently earn 5.7% below market, on average.

At our last bargaining session on May 25, both labor and management made some movement in their initial wage proposals. CHI’s current proposal would raise wages 2.75% annually, which would leave us about 3 percent below what nurses earn at other regional hospitals.

Our team proposes annual increases of 5.0% in each of the next two years, which would leave us very close to market. Indeed, less than one percent below regional wages.

Thus, both sides remain significantly apart on wages after only two bargaining sessions. However, the cost to the employer, which has earned record profits in recent years, would be minimal. The difference between the two current proposals would only cost the employer an additional $550,000 per year, which is a tiny fraction of the $31.6 million in profits CHI-Mercy Medical Center earned in 2016.

We continue to hear directly from you! Nurses are united to achieve parity with our neighbors. Nurses regularly tell us they think CHI can afford to pay Mercy nurses wages similar to regional hospitals. A whopping 94% of the nearly 150 ONA members who voted in last month’s ratification election rejected an earlier proposal from the employer, which was only slightly below their current proposal.

The employer has now notified us that they will seek mediation. Either side can request the services of a mediator, whose job it is to facilitate an agreement between labor and management. The mediator, a federal official, cannot dictate to either side, but brings many years of experience in closing negotiations in diverse industries. Mediators are busy individuals, travelling throughout the Northwest to do their job.

Our bargaining team has held polite, professional and productive conversations with management’s representatives. While we welcome the mediator’s assistance, we have concerns that trying to identify a date on the mediator’s full schedule unnecessarily delays our joint progress. We would rather move forward in direct discussion with the employer to get a resolution more quickly.

We may not get the mediator scheduled in Roseburg until much later this summer. A late date won’t give us much time to reach an agreement before the pay increase is due to take effect in October. The employer is within their rights to ask for a mediator’s assistance.

Our negotiators appreciate your patience! We are particularly thankful for the many nurses who have attended a bargaining session or other meetings, displayed ONA signs, wore ONA buttons and stickers, and educated others.
We need your support at our next membership meeting, which is a drop-in session. Please stop by anytime between 5:30 and 8:30 p.m. this Thursday, June 28, at the Third Floor Conference Room of the Super 8 Roseburg, 3200 NW Aviation Drive in Roseburg.

For more information, please contact any member of our bargaining team: Su Mellor (ER), Trish Hayes (Staff Development) and Carolyn Starnes (OR), or our labor rep, Gary Aguiar.