Our Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) bargaining team met with Providence Medford Medical Center (PMMC) again on Dec.18, for the fourth of our five scheduled negotiation sessions. While we exchanged some proposals, the hospital did not offer the full package of proposals we had expected. The administration has yet to offer any financial proposals. While such a delay is not historically uncommon by this facility, it is certainly frustrating for the nurses who volunteer their time to be at the table as well as those nurses who support our team members at the table by attending as observers on their off time.

Our contract expires at 12:01 a.m. on Jan. 1, 2018. While this expiration date has been known for two years, the hospital has no concern regarding its intent to miss this timeline for completion, considers such action to be normal business practice, and has requested that we simply agree to an extension of the contract through Jan. 30, 2018. Nurses, please remember that the current contract was not settled until February 2016, two months after the previous contract expired, and new provisions that were negotiated were not implemented until that time.

Our ONA bargaining team continues to bargain in good faith in order to reach agreement on contractual changes.

When a contract expires, the employer is required to maintain "status quo" on wages, policies, working conditions, past practice, and benefits.

One potential risk related to working without a contract includes the ability to take a grievance to arbitration.

The opportunity an expired contract provides is that we now have the ability to participate in an informational picket or strike if such actions are approved by a vote of the bargaining unit members. Another opportunity is that we would have the right to negotiate over any and every change the hospital proposes for day-to-day working conditions.

Have questions? Please contact one of your ONA bargaining team members or our Labor Relations Representative, Susan Bruce, at Bruce@OregonRN.org.
Education Hours?

Our ONA bargaining team proposed language in Article 9.3 to allow nurses easier access to education. PMMC responded by proposing that all “non-productive hours” be excluded from the weekly calculation of overtime.

Our example of the problem was provided by bargaining team member, Connie Bologna, RN (emergency department). Connie requested and been approved for 16 hours of education as permitted by the contract in Article 9.3. She was granted those education hours in the early part of the week. Then she worked her scheduled hours. At the end of the week, the hospital asked her to pick up an extra shift as they were understaffed and looking for volunteers. Connie agreed to pick up the extra shift. When she reviewed her paystub, she noted she did not get paid for the education hours, nor did she earn the expected overtime compensation. When she inquired as to the error, she was told some of her education hours were removed because working the extra shift would have then put her in overtime if the education hours had been included. This action by the hospital is a violation of the contract and illegal. While Connie could have grieved this contractual violation, she chose not to do so.

We do not consider education to be “non-productive” in the sense that it has no value to the hospital, patient care, or nurse development. We also do not agree that any hours worked be excluded from the calculation for overtime. Nurses are a valuable resource and should be recognized as such!

What’s Next?

Our only scheduled negotiation session remaining is Dec. 28, 2017. We provided a comprehensive proposal package to PMMC on Nov. 16. To date, we are still awaiting initial counter/proposals for Articles 5, 13, 14, 15, 17, and exhibit A from the hospital. Realistically, there is little chance to reach agreement on a contract before the current contract expires. We need your support. Please join us as observers at the next negotiation session on Thursday, Dec. 28, at 9:30 a.m. in Mary Norbert Hall. Wear your “I support our negotiation team” and “I (heart) RN” buttons. If you need buttons, please contact a bargaining team member.

Vote YES on Measure 101 to Protect Health Care Access

Oregon voters will face a decision on whether or not to protect health care for more than 350,000 children, adults with disabilities, seniors, and low-income families in a special election Jan. 23, 2018.

Measure 101 asks voters to uphold the bipartisan Oregon Healthcare Protections Bill which the legislature passed in the 2017 legislative session. Nurses, hospitals, insurers, Democrats and Republicans all supported the bill in order to fund health care and lower premiums for more than half a million Oregonians.

Voting YES on Measure 101 means protecting health care for Oregonians who otherwise couldn't afford care and are too often forced to go to the emergency room when they are sick. If the measure fails, thousands of our most vulnerable patients will be in jeopardy of losing their health care.

It is critical we stand together to protect Oregon families by supporting Measure 101 in the Jan. 23 special election.

Learn more, get involved, and add your name to pledge to vote YES on Measure 101 at:

www.OregonRN.org/YesOnMeasure101