Our Final Scheduled Negotiation Session

On Dec. 28, 2017, our Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) bargaining team and Providence Medford Medical Center (PMMC) met for the fifth and final pre-scheduled negotiation session. PMMC provided the remaining counterproposals to our opening proposals, including work schedules, paid time off (PTO), wages and differentials, as well as new proposals for health insurance and appendix B. All proposals are available for review on our bargaining unit webpage.

Our ONA team and PMMC remain far apart at this time in many areas, including our proposals on scheduling, staffing, PTO, wages, differentials and education. We do, however, now have PMMC’s opening proposals, giving us a starting point.

Our ONA team has proposed language to allow, encourage and empower nurses regarding the scheduling and staffing process, which will improve our ability to retain and recruit staff in order to provide excellent care for our patients. PMMC has proposed removing language that already exists in the contract regarding the staffing process and has stated that the current process is working great.

We also proposed PTO accrual increases that would equal the accrual rates for our colleagues at Providence St. Vincent Medical Center. PMMC offered a counterproposal and statement of support explaining why it is important to maintain similar benefits for all PMMC employees across the board, and that the financial impact of such an increase would take away from any wage increase proposal.

This does not seem to fall in line, in our opinion, with the Providence core values of justice, excellence, respect, compassion and stewardship. Nurses at PMMC are all expected to follow the same regional policies and protocols. Our human resources, payroll and staffing concerns are all now in a central Providence regional system. Allowing the same PTO accrual rates for nurses at different hospitals in the Providence system seems appropriate as well.

Our wages and differentials are lower than those in the Portland service area, and it is imperative that we remain competitive regionally. Our opening proposal for wages was a 5 percent across-the-board increase in each year of the two-year contract. PMMC’s opening proposal was 1 percent across the board effective the first full pay period after ratification and 1 percent across the board.

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effective April 1, 2019. PMMC clarified they are not including any sort of retroactive pay in this proposal, even though they only provided their opening proposal on the last day of pre-scheduled negotiations and four days before the contract expires. PMMC has also stated they are open to extending the length of the contract.

PMMC also said they are open to requesting federal mediation services any time we are ready. A federal mediator’s job is to help the parties reach an agreement. While mediation is not uncommon in contract bargaining, our ONA team said we prefer to have direct, face-to-face negotiations with PMMC leaders rather than including a third party in the process at this time.

Our next negotiation session is tentatively scheduled for Jan. 18, 2018, with the location to be determined.

What’s Next for Nurses?

Our ONA bargaining team will have drop in sessions to give you information and updates about negotiations on Jan. 3 at the following times: 6:30-8 a.m. in the main lobby conference room, 12:30-1:30 p.m. in the cafeteria and 6-7:45 p.m. in the main lobby conference room. We are available to answer your questions and share information about upcoming events.

The Contract Expires at Midnight on Jan. 1, 2018, What Does That Mean For Us?

The majority of the contract remains in force as “status quo,” meaning PMMC cannot make unilateral changes. Wages, schedules, benefits and work hours all remain exactly as they are now.

There will be no across-the-board increases until our bargaining team and PMMC complete negotiations. However, if your step increase is scheduled before we conclude negotiations, you will advance to the next step as before. Please note the wage for that step will remain as it has been in 2017 until we complete negotiations.

Can We Talk About Union Issues At Work?

Yes, you have a legally protected right to talk about union issues at work in any place that you would have conversations about sports, movies, families or any other non-work related conversations. To be very clear, this does not include while directly providing care to patients. If you are told by anyone that you are not allowed to speak about union activity at work, please contact your labor relations representative, Susan Bruce, immediately by phone at 541-261-8359 or by email at Bruce@OregonRN.org.

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