Frequently Asked Questions about Our Vote

The Vote Will be Decided by Those Who Participate

A National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election is scheduled for Thursday, Nov. 21 at the St. Alphonsus Medical Center - Baker City (SAB). There will be two voting periods – 6:30-8 a.m. and 2:30-4 p.m. All ballots must be cast in-person. The vote is by secret ballot and will be decided by a majority “plus one” of those who cast ballots.

If you have a question about your eligibility to vote in the election, or questions about ONA, contact Lydia Hallay at 503-807-0156.

Employers Will Say and Do Anything to Stop Employees from Unionizing

Although it’s illegal, making threats or implying adverse consequences if employees choose to unionize is one of many tried and true strategies used by employers to attempt to turn the tables on organizing drives. Assertions like these can be concerning to those who hear them. The truth is, that’s the exact point of this kind of strategy - to cause anxiety, fear and confusion in the days and weeks leading up to a union election.

Under Section 8(a)(1) of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), it’s an unfair labor practice (ULP) for an employer “to interfere with, restrain, or coerce employees” in their effort to unionize. For example, an employer may not “threaten employees with adverse consequences, such as closing the workplace, loss of benefits, or more onerous working conditions, if they support a union, engage in union activity, or select a union to represent them.” It is also illegal for an employer to ask you about your support for the union or ask you how you plan to vote in the election.

Many of you have reported that the employer is spreading mistruths and asking people how they plan to vote. Be on the lookout for these violations of the law and contact ONA immediately if you believe your rights under the NLRA are being violated.

After the Election, the Employer Must Bargain

Once techs and technicians at St. Alphonsus Baker City elect to unionize, the employer is legally required to negotiate over wages, benefits and working conditions. ONA members will elect their peers to sit at the negotiating table on their behalf. Training and support will be provided by ONA staff, including surveying the membership, crafting and costing contract proposals, requesting supplemental data from the employer, and pulling market data for wages and benefits for techs and technicians in comparable unionized facilities.

The employer and union are both required by law to bargain “in good faith,” which means that they must work towards a mutual agreement. Once a tentative agreement on the entire contract is reached, ONA members will be asked to vote it up or down. If the contract passes, it goes into effect immediately.

The Union Contract will be Enforceable

Unlike employer policies, a union contract is legally binding. Once the contract is in place, the employer will not be able to make unilateral changes to wages, benefits, or working conditions without negotiating the impact of those changes on ONA-represented employees.

You will Decide What’s in the Contract

It’s not uncommon for different classifications of workers to be in a union together. In the hospital setting, certain classifications are required by law to band together as a “community of interest.” Under these rules, nurses are required to be their own group. Dietary aides, CNAs and housekeeping staff are required to be together, as are technicians and technologists.

Greater numbers mean greater strength when it comes to negotiating broad scale benefits like health insurance, retirement benefits and cost-of-living adjustments. Because many classifications and departments will be covered by this contract, you may decide to have separate salary schedules for different job titles, different call or scheduling provisions for different units, or
attachments to the contract that call attention to things that impact small groups of workers.

Membership Builds Strength

Membership in the union pays for negotiating and enforcing the contract, signals solidarity to the employer, and builds bargaining unit strength. By default, membership in ONA is voluntary. In some facilities, ONA members decide to require membership, in recognition of the fact that the ONA contract benefits everyone. That decision, as well as whether or not to have an initial opt-out period (aka "grandfathering in") for objectors, will be determined by you all, once bargaining for the ONA contract begins. No one will pay any dues until after the contract is negotiated and approved by the bargaining unit.

Membership is Affordable

ONA membership dues are approximately 1.4 percent of straight-time/base pay, with a maximum cap that is calculated based on Step 4 wage averages for like-classifications. Dues are paid per pay period, usually through automatic payroll deduction. Members who work less than 64 hours/month pay a reduced rate (half).

Currently, there is no wage transparency for unrepresented technical employees at St. Alphonsus Baker City. There is no published salary scale, no annual movement through the scale based on years of experience, and employees do not know whether they are being compensated fairly or in accordance with market averages (or, compared to their peers).

Once a new ONA contract is in place, a monthly dues amount that represents 1.4 percent of the average Step 4 salary of employees in the bargaining unit will be calculated. One thing is certain, technical bargaining unit employees will not pay more than nurses in Baker City pay, which is approximately $94/month. It should be noted that no dues will be paid until the first contract is ratified.

The only thing guaranteed in bargaining is that the employer is legally required to bargain in good faith. That said, ONA-represented nurses at St. Alphonsus Baker City recently negotiated cost-of-living increases totaling 12.5 percent over the four years of their agreement. Those increases more than cover the cost of ONA membership dues.

Members Make Decisions

ONA is a democratically-run, member-driven, not-for-profit organization. ONA members in each individual bargaining unit decide what to prioritize in their contract negotiations. Members are eligible to run for ONA office, attend conventions and ONA trainings, participate in local and statewide ONA elections, and vote on ONA contracts.

While strikes often make the news, the reality is that they rarely occur and are a tactic of last resort, after all other avenues for agreement in negotiations have been exhausted. Striking in the healthcare sector requires a 10-day notice to the employer, so that critical needs patients can be diverted, elective procedures can be rescheduled, and supplemental workers can be brought in to continue operations at a minimum level.

ONA members at the local bargaining unit level are the ones who decide whether and when to strike. It’s a very serious decision, and ONA works with bargaining unit members to ensure every other path towards agreement is explored before getting to that point. The last strike by ONA members was more than 15 years ago (at Oregon Health & Science University).

Have additional questions?

Call or text ONA’s Lydia Hallay at 503-807-0156 or email her at hallay@oregonrn.org.

GET OUT THE VOTE!

Look for direction signs to the voting room.

Thursday, Nov. 21, 2019
6:30-8 a.m. and 2:30-4 p.m.
DECLARATION

We, the undersigned employees of Saint Alphonsus Baker City, believe in the vision of Saint Alphonsus. All of us want to provide healing and hope close to home, help our community grow and thrive, be trusted in our community, and deliver value in everything we do.

As RNs who are already represented by ONA, and as Technologists and Technicians seeking to further these values through joining with ONA, we stand united in our desire to ensure Saint Alphonsus Baker City is a great place to work.

Unfortunately, all of us have experienced failures on the part of Saint Alphonsus to follow its own guiding behaviors over the past ten years. We are deeply committed to building a workplace where we communicate openly, honestly, respectfully, and directly- and where the highest priorities are:

- Reasonable job requirements that are conducive to healthy and happy employment and the best possible outcomes for our patients;
- Fair and transparent compensation rates, including compensation for being on call and working above and beyond one’s normally scheduled hours (regardless of Full Time Equivalence);
- A real voice in decisions that affect our wages, benefits, and working conditions.

To ensure these priorities are realized and our values are upheld, Technologists and Technicians at Saint Alphonsus Baker City are joining with over 15,000 ONA-represented healthcare professionals at hospitals across the state with contracts that establish a voice for workers, due process and transparency.

As employees united together, we commit to supporting one another in achieving the highest standards of care for our community.

Respectfully,

Employees of Saint Alphonsus - Baker City

[Signatures]