On August 30, we finally reached a tentative agreement with the State! We have been bargaining since April 20 and have held six days of bargaining over the last four months. We started bargaining while the legislative session was still underway, so the nature of the issues we were bargaining over changed drastically over the last few months.

We commenced bargaining expecting that there would be a layoff at the Eliot homes and ended with no cuts to the Stabilization and Crisis Unit (SACU) budget this biennium! This was due to multiple efforts, which included members Jeri Allen and Clare Chevalier attending a rally at the capitol to save the state budget and properly fund the vital services you all provide. Member leader Lori Gruenwald lobbied with ONA representatives to the leaders of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services. Without these efforts, we would not be in the good place we are in today.

Initially, management had proposed a step wage freeze, concessions to health care costs, and removal of the PERS pick up. One of our proposals was an improved version of our layoff package agreement, which included employer-paid medical insurance premiums, severance payments, and unemployment insurance.

The employer balked at this proposal. They concluded that severance payments were illegal*, which we disputed with case law. It became apparent that these facts would not sway them in our last round of bargaining. Since this was an important issue for our members, we did not withdraw this proposal until we

*Note: Specific reference to legality or legality of severance payments is unclear without additional context.
were given a greatly improved financial package. Their third employer package that we tentatively agreed to includes:

- Withdrawn step freezes
- Continued annual step increases each fiscal year upon one’s salary eligibility date, with the exception of those at the top step of the range
- A new salary range of 30, which will include 2 new steps, bringing the top of the wage scale to $8,150 per month. Each step has a 4.75 percent increase. Nurses that are currently at the top of the scale will move to this wage scale on their salary eligibility date in 2018.
- The PERS pick up will continue until February 1, 2019. From this date forward, salaries will increase by 6.95 percent, to make up for the loss of the pick-up and the tax liability. You will then make your own contributions to either PERS or the IAP, whichever is applicable.
- A continuance of the current health insurance benefits (employer’s concession proposal withdrawn)
- Increased differentials for evenings, nights and weekends:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior</th>
<th>Now</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evening</td>
<td>$1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night</td>
<td>$2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekend</td>
<td>$1.60</td>
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</tbody>
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- Pay upon separation or layoff: an increase to 300 hours of unused vacation will be paid. It was 250 hours.
- A voluntary medical separation program

In addition, we made improvements to several other areas of the contract. They include, but are not limited to:

- An improved layoff procedure, which requires union involvement and allows for volunteers
- Improved on call language for Outreach nurses
- Sick leave hours now count towards overtime
- Reporting and telephone time will be compensated by the minute, rather than a minimum of a 10-minute duration
- Shift being added to job postings

A special thank you goes to the bargaining team: Lori Gruenwald (Eliot), Jeri Allen (Eliot), Lizz Pierce Green (Outreach), Linda Martinez (Outreach and alternate) and Georgetta Shiflett (Pendleton)! They spent countless hours at the bargaining table advocating for you. They also spent several of their own hours preparing. Georgetta also either flew or drove to each bargaining session, which is upwards of 300 miles!

*Laid off employees are eligible for unemployment benefits.

Please be on the lookout for the ratification vote, which will be in your email next week. Voting starts on Sept. 6!

Are YOU Getting ONA Emails?
ONA wants to make sure all members receive timely communications, ensuring you have the most up-to-date information on your contract, bargaining issues, upcoming votes, nursing research, practice issues and workplace policies. If you are not receiving ONA emails, we can help!

Email ONA at News@OregonRN.org with your name, personal email address and the name of the facility you work at in the body of the email.

We will update our records to ensure you don’t miss future ONA emails.