Over the last year, we’ve built a strong union at St Charles Medical Center Bend. The culmination of our work has brought about an historic vote in support of informational picketing, and continually escalating activity in the hospital and throughout the community.

During that first mediation session after our vote to support picketing, our ONA bargaining team noted a dramatic shift in the tone from hospital administration. After back-to-back days of mediation, we have finally reached a tentative agreement that we can be proud of.

The tentative deal, which must be voted on and approved by ONA membership, includes major victories across all areas of the contract, including staffing, shared governance, and compensation.

As part of the agreement, we are cancelling the informational picket originally scheduled for Jan. 21.

We appreciate our community members’ support throughout this process and we plan to continue working on the food drive connected to the picket. We will share more details on that soon.

There will be more in-depth discussions, meetings, and information forthcoming, but here is a summary of just a few of the things we have won:

- Four-and-a-half-year agreement with regular cost-of-living adjustments that, over the life of the contract, will result in total increases of 11.5 - 12.5 percent for nurses (not including regular step increases).

- A new shared governance protocol that ensures ONA members have an equal voice and leadership in ALL shared governance committees and Unit/Department Practice Committee’s (UPC’s/DPC’s). The new language
specifically requires that management ensure that nurses are given the time off to attend UPC/DPC meetings.

- Removal of ETO blackouts, and agreement that a minimum of 20 percent of nurses on a unit/shift will be approved for ETO each day, if it is requested.

- Successfully delayed implementation of the 5 percent health premium shift to 2021, with cost-of-living increases between now and then that will more than make up for the difference in cost.

- The development of a new Medical Benefits Advisory Committee, with ONA nurse seats at the table, to address Healthcare Benefit concerns and coverage.

- Floating language that restricts floating to specific, identified clusters (Med/Surg, Critical Care, Women and Children's Services).

- Contractual commitment to establish a transition program for all specialty nursing units during the life of the contract, where nurses can have an opportunity to be hired to other units with a supported orientation.

These are just a handful of the victories that we are excited about in this new agreement. More details about the entire agreement will be provided in coming days, in addition to information about a ratification vote, where members will have an opportunity to approve or reject this agreement.

The ONA team will be recommending that nurses vote YES to approve the tentative agreement.

Our incredible success in these negotiations could not have happened without the overwhelming level of support nurses have shown for our union in recent months. The very threat of our picket was enough to move the hospital—and we should all feel proud of that fact.