We did it! An overwhelming majority of nurses at Willamette Valley Medical Center (WVMC) have demonstrated support for unionization by signing our ONA petition and authorization cards for the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). By signing the petition and cards, we have shown our solidarity as colleagues and our support for ONA as we move towards our union election. Thank you to everyone who helped gather signatures and signed the petition and authorization cards. Together, we are changing our workplace for the better.

**Our Petition**

On Friday, Nov. 22, a delegation of WVMC nurses delivered our ONA petition with nearly 120 signatures to Kirstin Karlik, Interim Chief Nursing Officer. Kirstin accepted the petition but was not able to respond to our request for voluntary recognition at the meeting.

Our petition highlights the values we seek to uphold by forming our union, including:

- Providing quality patient care with enough support and appropriate tools and technology to focus on safety for everyone;
- Ensuring that all staff nurses are represented, treated fairly, and have access to due process; and
- Nurse input in decision-making that fosters transparency and affects delivery of care and working conditions.

**Authorization Cards**

We submitted our authorization cards in support of unionization to the NLRB. The NLRB is the governmental agency which oversees union elections and ensures our right to organize. The NLRB will reach out to administration to request a list of all nurses employed at our facility. They compare this list to our signed cards in order to confirm majority support for unionization. The NLRB will not share specifics with our employer about who signed (or didn’t sign) an authorization card.

The NLRB will soon schedule a union election. Details about our election will be shared as soon as we have them! We may have a pre-election hearing if there is any disagreement by management on which nurses are eligible to vote.

**What’s next? We vote!**

Our election will be by secret ballot, and the results are decided by a simple majority of those who choose to participate. We want to invite every eligible nurse to cast a ballot. Details about our election will be shared as soon as we have them!
In Union There is Strength

Willamette Valley Medical Center nurses,

Congratulations on your choice to become part of the Oregon Nurses Association. From the four corners of our state we are there for you. We are united in your cause and invested in your future. We are union strong. I often think of a quote from a famous speech by John F. Kennedy:

"Our labor unions are not narrow, self-seeking groups. They have raised wages, shortened hours and provided supplemental benefits. Through collective bargaining and grievance procedures, they have brought justice and democracy to the shop floor."

Congratulations on your decision to become part of such an amazing union.

Tamarah Cline
ONA Board of Directors Treasurer
Good Shepherd Medical Center
Hermiston, Oregon

What We Should Know About Upcoming Anti-Union Meetings

Management will schedule several meetings at Willamette Valley Medical Center with nurses in the upcoming weeks. They are also able to have one-on-one meetings with nurses and we have good reason to believe they will do this as it is a common anti-union tactic management has used in every hospital ONA nurses have organized. We have no doubt that this will be a meeting full of anti-union rhetoric meant to discourage and dissuade us from voting “Yes” at our union election. Management will say the purpose of the meeting is to share their opinion and give us the whole story of joining a union. However, they will not invite or encourage democratically-elected ONA nurses or nurse leaders—from the 147 RNs at Providence Newberg Hospital or the 179 RNs at Legacy Silverton who are union members—for a balanced perspective.

The anti-union speech can only be on company time and property. That means they must hold the meetings at the hospital and pay us for our time. That also means that if we are not on the clock or at work, we do not have to listen.

During these meetings, HR and management can make disparaging remarks about the union. However, there are some limitations on this speech. They cannot threaten reprisals for nurses exercising their federally protected right to organize. They cannot promise benefits in exchange for voting no. More generally, management’s conduct cannot interfere with, restrain or coerce nurses in the exercise of our rights to organize.

**Employer CANNOT:**

- Survey/take attendance/write names of people down/photograph
- Interrogate: They can’t ask questions of nurses about their opinions or ask nurses about who is involved.
- Threaten: They can’t make direct or infer threats e.g., If you organize and join ONA, then we will close the birth center.
- Bribe: They can’t ask nurses to vote no in exchange for a reward. If you drop this, we will give you X (e.g., give you an equal seat at the table)
- Mandate attendance at the meeting.

**Employer CAN:**

- State negative opinions about unions generally.
- State their preference that nurses not unionize.
- Strongly encourage nurses to vote no.
What Are the Rules for Talking About ONA at Work?

Rules for Employers

Employers have a lot of latitude when it comes to sharing their “personal opinions” about unionization.

That said, the National Labor Relations Act forbids employers from interfering with, restraining, or coercing employees in the exercise of rights relating to organizing, forming, joining or assisting a labor organization for collective bargaining purposes, from working together to improve terms and conditions of employment, or refraining from any such activity.

As a general rule, there are four types of interference by employers that cross the line and are illegal:

**Unlawful threats** are statements made by the employer that imply unionizing will result in a negative outcome for the staff. Both direct and subtle threats are in violation of the law.

*Ex: “Who knows what will happen to your job if you unionize?” or, “If you vote for the union, I won’t be very happy with you.”*

**Illegal interrogation** includes any question by a supervisor about your interest, participation and knowledge of the union.

*Ex: “Have you heard anything about the union?” or “Why do you want a union?”*

**Prohibited promises** are offers to improve some benefit made by managers in exchange for the employee’s no vote or other anti-union activity.

*Ex: “You don’t need a union. Tell us what you want. We will make it happen.” or “If you vote no, we will increase everyone’s wages.”*

**Illicit surveillance** of employees includes trying to identify union supporters, observe meetings, or direct employees to report union activities of coworkers.

*Ex: Creating and keeping a list of union supporters or asking employees if they know who is interested in the union.*

If you suspect your employer is engaging in illegal behavior, please contact Elizabeth Gemeroy immediately at Gemeroy@OregonRN.org

Rules for Nurses

Under federal and state labor law, employees have every right to talk about unionization at work, so long as they are allowed to talk about other subjects at work. If you’re permitted to chat with colleagues at work about your holiday or vacation plans, an employer cannot prohibit you from discussing union-related issues.

That said, we recommend you use good judgment when discussing union-related issues while on the clock. Don’t disrupt patient care, be mindful of who’s around, and don’t let it interfere with your ability to complete your work.

**Breaks and lunches** are your own time, so you can talk about whatever you want!

Use good judgment when discussing union-related issues while on the clock. Don’t disrupt patient care, be mindful of who’s around, and don’t let it interfere with your ability to complete your work.
“I’m Voting Yes”: Jenie White from ICU Invites us to Step Up With Her

My name is Jenie and I love my role as an ICU nurse. The patients in my community feel like an extension of my family. I have been an ICU nurse for nearly a decade and the safety of our patients and our staff has always been my priority. I love working in a small community hospital where I have a personal relationship with the nurses and physicians I work with. Unfortunately, our community hospital is now a very small part of a large corporation. And we can feel it. Over the years, the voice of our clinical staff has become virtually silenced in the decision making of the care we provide to our patients.

I want to form a union so we have the representation to ensure we can provide safe care for our patients every day. As you know, it becomes difficult to provide that safe care when staffing decisions are made by those who do not provide bedside care. Staffing ratios continue to become more critical despite concerns expressed by nurses. Nursing turnover has increased significantly at our facility over the last year. Many talented bedside nurses are leaving to pursue careers at acute care facilities that have union representation to ensure adequate staffing.

Currently, I see nurses being reprimanded or terminated without proper cause and without a fair and transparent process. Many of them have been with the hospital for years. They have no voice or protection if they become targeted by administration. Forming a union will provide fair standards and representation to protect our staff and allow them to speak up without fear of reprisal.

Together, our union will provide a platform for all nurses at our facility to come to the table to discuss what they believe is most important. Safe staffing, safe standards of care, and benefits will all be addressed by both sides rather than being a decision given to us.

It is important now, more than ever, that we come together to make our community hospital the facility where patients want to seek care and nurses want to be to provide that care.

I will vote YES for ONA. I ask that the many of you who care about our small community hospital commit to staying. Join me by helping build a strong facility for each of us and the patients we provide care for. Vote yes with me for a facility where staff nurses have a voice that is heard and have an impact on the decisions made for our hospital. As ONA members, we can provide that voice for ourselves.

Questions or want more information about ONA - contact Elizabeth Gemeroy
Gemeroy@OregonRN.org