

Union members collect signatures for nursing home initiative

Nursing home workers and supporters gathered at Portland's Pioneer Courthouse Square on Mother's Day, May 14, to collect signatures for a new ballot initiative. The measure would set minimum staffing standards in nursing homes. The Nursing Home Resident Safety Act is backed by Service Employees International Union and the Oregon Alliance for Retired Americans, a union retirees group. SEIU has been unionizing workers in nursing homes.

Currently, nursing home workers can be responsible for as many as 25 residents. Measure backers say such understaffing means patients face de-

hydration, incontinence, bedsores and neglect and fall injuries.

If the initiative gets on the November 2006 ballot and wins voter approval, the minimum staffing level of nurses and aides would be improved, and the Oregon Department of Human Services would have the power to audit and revoke the licenses of nursing homes that violate the new standards.

The campaign plans to use a combination of paid and volunteer signature gatherers to qualify for the ballot. It's a statutory measure, not a constitutional change, so it will need 75,630 valid signatures by July 7, 2006.



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