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SEIU Local 49 members at Emanuel Hospital settle contract at 11th hour

Members of Service Employees International Union Local 49 employed at Legacy Emanuel Hospital ratified a new three-year contract. The vote was 183-11.

The agreement came less than eight hours before workers were scheduled to hold an all-day informational picket, and only a week-and-a-half after Dr. George Brown began as Legacy's new chief executive officer. "Encouragement from the new CEO went a long way in helping reach a settlement," said bargaining team member Pat Brown.

The contract covers more than 450 support staff, including certified nursing assistants, surgery techs, emergency room techs, secretaries, house-

keepers, transporters, food service workers, and others.

"It's been a long, hard struggle, but with the support of our co-workers we were able to reach a settlement," said Carlotta Franklin, a transporter at Emanuel who served on the bargaining team.

Highlights of the contract include:
• 3 percent across-the-board wage increase in 2008, 2.5 percent in 2009, and 3 percent in 2010.

• An added "Step 10" at the top of

the wage scale to reward and maintain experienced employees.

• A 4.5 percent wage increase for emergency room techs, who were paid less than those at other Legacy hospitals.

• Other improvements including shift differentials.

"After months of negotiations we are finally about to put our focus back where it belongs: on the patients," said Donna Forbes, a bargaining team member.

Oregon's minimum wage will increase to \$8.40 in 2009

Oregon's minimum wage will increase to \$8.40 per hour on Jan. 1, 2009, the Oregon Employment Department announced. The state's minimum wage is adjusted annually by the increase in the U.S. consumer price index. Next January's adjustment will be a rise of 45 cents an hour, or more than 5 percent.

Oregon had the fourth-highest state minimum wage in 2008, behind Washington, California, and Massachusetts.

In 2009, Oregon's rate will remain lower than Washington's minimum wage, which will rise to \$8.55 per hour. The federal minimum wage rate, which rose to \$6.55 per hour on July 24, 2008, will rise again to \$7.25 per hour on July 24, 2009.

Oregon had roughly 143,040 jobs paying less than \$8 an hour in the fourth quarter of 2007. More than half of these jobs were in the leisure and hospitality or retail trade industries. Three industries in Oregon had a substantially larger-than-average share of jobs that paid less than \$8 per hour: Leisure and hospitality (26 percent), natural resources and mining (16 percent), and retail trade (14 percent). The average for all industries was 7.5 percent.

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