

AFSCME Local 328 declares impasse at OHSU

AFSCME Local 328 has declared impasse in negotiations with Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU). The union represents nearly 7,000 employees there, and has been bargaining since late February. The contract expired June 30.

Despite record revenue and profits, management is proposing replacing the current sick-leave system that protects dedicated time for ill workers, to a

“paid-time off” (PTO) system that would force workers to choose between coming to work sick or spending time off with their families.

“OHSU belongs to everyone,” said Karyn Trivette, a physical therapist at OHSU. “We are a vital teaching and research hospital for our region. When patients come to OHSU they deserve to know that those providing their care aren’t sick

themselves and that administration at OHSU is focused on patient care, not just profits.”

Local 328 presented a “last, best, and final” offer to OHSU on July 29. At that point, a mandatory 30-day cooling-off period began. If a deal isn’t reached before the cooling off period expires, OHSU may implement its final offer after five days’ notice. The union can strike on 10 days’ notice.

A mediation session between the two sides has been set for Aug. 13.

Local 328 will hold an informational picket Thursday, Aug. 8, from 4 to 6 p.m. at OHSU’s MacKenzie Hall. Family, friends, and the entire labor community are invited.

A strike authorization vote will be held Aug. 19-29 if a settlement hasn’t been reached.

SEIU deal with Oregon includes 10-15% raises

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 503 reached a tentative agreement with the State of Oregon on a two-year union contract covering 24,000 public employees.

State employees at the departments of Human Services, Transportation, Administrative Services, and Revenue will see raises ranging from 10% to 15% over the next two years as a result of cost-of-living-adjustments and step increases. Those who are at the top steps of their salary range will see, on average, a 10% raise over the same period. The new contract contains the largest increases in public employee wages in a decade, the union said.

The state initially proposed a four-year contract with a 1.68% raise in 2019, a 1% raise in 2020, and no guaranteed raises in 2021 or 2022.

“In the face of legal challenges and anti-union organizing, Oregon’s public employees chose to stick together. They won a contract that represents a major investment in our state’s public services,” Melissa Unger, executive director of Local 503, told Oregon Public Broadcasting.

The contract still must be ratified by members and the State of Oregon.

Legacy appeals Unity Health nurses’ union victory

Legacy Health Systems is challenging a union election by nurses at Unity Center for Behavioral Health, Portland’s only 24-hour psychiatric emergency facility. The facility is operated by Legacy Health as a joint venture with several other health networks.

On June 19, a unit of 202 registered nurses voted overwhelmingly to join Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). The tally was 128 to 25.

Legacy Health argued to the National Labor Relations Board

(NLRB) that Unity Center was part of a broader health system that includes Legacy Emanuel Hospital, and that because of that, nurses couldn’t create a separate bargaining unit. Legacy Emanuel Hospital nurses are non-union.

The NLRB’s regional director ruled against Legacy and allowed the election to take place.

On July 11, Legacy Health asked the NLRB’s appointed board in Washington, D.C., to review the regional director’s decision to allow the election to be

held. The NLRB can either grant or deny the request. ONA expected a decision by the end of July. (A decision had not been announced at press time.)

If the NLRB grants the request for review, oral arguments from ONA and Unity’s legal counsel will be made in Washington, D.C., in front of the full NLRB.

The Board is controlled by three Trump appointees who have been issuing management-friendly decisions since taking charge. One Obama appointee remains on the Board, and one

seat is vacant.

“Legacy’s request to have the NLRB review the decision from the regional director is another tactic to suppress the voice of nurses at Unity Center,” ONA said in a written statement. “Legacy has repeatedly said they value the opinions, expertise and input of nurses from Unity. If that were true they would respect the results of the vote. This is a tactic to delay bargaining and confuse the public, patients and nurses. Nurses at Unity Center are moving forward with elections for their bargaining team and expect Legacy to meet them at the table during contract negotiations.”

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