

## NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

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**Office location:**  
4275 NE Halsey St., Portland, Oregon

**Mailing address:**  
P.O. Box 13150, Portland, OR 97213

**Phone:** (503) 288-3311

**Web address:**  
<http://nwlaborpress.org>

**Editor & Manager:** Michael Gutwig  
**Senior staff reporter:** Don McIntosh  
**Office manager:** Jill Lukens

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# ...OHSU fights union campaign at Hillsboro hospital

From Page 1

ing. But private sector hospitals, under the National Labor Relations Act, can drag out the process, hire union-busting consultants, and insist on an election before which they have seven weeks or more to campaign in the workplace.

That anti-union campaign in the workplace has already begun, says Shellie Powers, a 10-year employee at the hospital. Powers works 12-hour graveyard shifts checking patients into the Hillsboro Medical Center emergency room. Powers says a manager who oversees housekeeping and food service workers has been telling workers one-on-one that unionizing would be a big mistake. The manager told workers if they unionize she won't be allowed to schedule them beyond 8 hours in a shift, or approve their vacation requests except by seniority. [Having worked union at Kaiser, Powers knows both of those statements are false. In fact, nurses at OHSU Hillsboro Medical Center are represented by the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) and routinely work longer shifts.]

The manager even told one worker he should look for a job

elsewhere if he's not happy, and that she'd be posting his position. Oregon AFSCME is preparing to file charges over that illegal threat.

By late September, a majority of the workers had signed cards saying they want a union. On Sept. 21, a delegation of workers tried to meet with CEO Lori James-Nielsen to ask for voluntary union recognition. Instead, they were intercepted by a security guard and told to get off the property.

It was Powers who first contacted Oregon AFSCME, in April, after her and her co-workers' frustrations had reached a boiling point and she started talking to co-workers she hadn't met before.

"I found out that I wasn't alone," Powers told the *Labor Press*. "And my department wasn't alone. Every single department had complaints."

The biggest complaint: no say, no voice, in the decisions that affect their working lives.

"We voice our concerns, but then they go nowhere," Powers said.

Having no voice meant no Personal Protective Equipment when the COVID-19 pandemic first hit, even though employees

### HELP THEM WIN A UNION

Union supporters will hold a public rally on Wednesday, Nov. 11, 11 a.m. at the main hospital entrance: 335 SE Eighth Avenue, Hillsboro.

The union is also collecting signatures on an online petition demanding that OHSU Hillsboro Medical Center follow the law and stop threatening its employees: <https://bit.ly/3kl4dGU>

were clamoring for protection. Workers also had their hours cut, and exhausted their reserves of paid time off. Workers got no raise this year. They also get no hazard pay, even when they interact with COVID-19 patients. Twenty-one staff members have tested positive for COVID-19 as of Oct. 27. Wages and benefits are also lower than those of union members doing the same work at other OHSU locations.

Oregon AFSCME submitted the union cards Oct. 5 to the Oregon Employment Relations Board (ERB), which administers the public sector union law. On Oct. 29, the last day OHSU could legally respond to that submittal, an attorney for Bullard Law filed a petition with the National La-

bor Relations Board requesting a union election — on behalf of Tuality Healthcare.

"They're Tuality Healthcare when it suits them," says AFSCME organizer Sarah Thompson.

An OHSU spokesperson said by email that Tuality and OHSU are affiliated, but each has a different board of directors, and they're distinctly separate entities with regard to employment and labor.

"I guess they think they're calling our bluff," Thompson said.

To avoid delay, Oregon AFSCME may just agree with the hospital's proposed election timeline, in which mail ballots would go out Dec. 9 and be due back Jan. 13. Like the AFSCME bargaining unit at OHSU, the proposed unit would include many kinds of workers, including pharmacists, medical lab scientists and social workers; respiratory therapists, diagnostic technicians and other medical technologists; skilled maintenance employees; and service workers like CNAs, housekeepers and food service workers.

"Our interest is in having people be in the union as soon as possible," Thompson says.

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### CLARIFICATION

Library workers were offered recall

Our Oct. 16 article about turmoil in the wake of position cuts at the Multnomah County Library failed to mention that the library DID offer recall to staff who earlier accepted voluntary layoff.

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