

# Kaiser Permanente avoids strike



FILE PHOTO, Keizertimes

By **JOEY CAPPELETTI**  
Of the *Keizertimes*

Less than 48 hours before 35,000 Kaiser Permanente workers were set to strike, union leaders and Kaiser were able to reach a tentative agreement Saturday morning, Nov. 13.

The strike, which was set to begin at 6 a.m. on Monday, Nov. 15, would have included 3,400 Kaiser employees in Oregon and southwest Washington. The four Kaiser facilities in the Salem and Keizer area would have most likely been impacted, with possible impacts to the Kaiser-affiliated Salem Hospital as well.

“The pressure our members, including leaders and community, put on Kaiser and the threat of a strike worked and moved Kaiser leadership to do the right thing and settle a proposal that

will improve care for the entire community,” said Jodi Barschow, president of the Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals (OFNHP), the union that represents the 3,400 workers.

Last month, 96% of nearly 3,400 Kaiser workers in Oregon and southwest Washington voted to approve the strike. On Nov. 4, labor unions gave Kaiser Permanente the required 10-day notice that they planned on striking on Nov. 15.

For months, union workers have pushed back against a “two-tier” wage system proposed by Kaiser executives that would have paid future hires between 25 and 40 percent less than current employees. With new hires being paid substantially less, union leaders said the two-tier wage proposal would have only worsened the staffing crisis.

According to a statement from OFNHP on Saturday, the four-year contract eliminates the “two-tier” wage proposal and includes wage increases, racial justice improvements and a staffing committee that will begin to tackle the staffing crisis at Kaiser. The deal was negotiated by the Alliance of Healthcare

Unions, a coalition of labor unions representing 52,000 Kaiser workers.

“This agreement will mean patients will continue to receive the best care, and Alliance members will have the best jobs,” said Hal Ruddick, Executive Director, Alliance of Health Care Unions. “This contract protects our patients, provides safe staffing, and guarantees fair wages and benefits for every Alliance member.”

Both local and national union workers will still need to vote on the contract before it is finalized. That vote, according to OFNHP’s statement, will begin after information sessions are held to allow every member to know what is in the new agreement.

## NEWS TIPS?

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Sundays: 8:15 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.  
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**KEIZER CLEAR LAKE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
a member of Open Door Churches of Salem-Keizer  
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Services are Sunday at 10 am  
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[www.KeizerChristian.org](http://www.KeizerChristian.org)  
Worship and Children's Church • 10:00 a.m.  
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