

THE UNION TALKS

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This is an MGH employee-produced monthly newsletter. It will report union activities and issues from MGH employees represented by SEIU United Healthcare Workers-West.



Letters and suggestions are welcome- send to dillwood@sbcglobal.net

Ellen Dillinger, Editor

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An online copy of this newsletter as well as information and photographs of Sacramento union events can be seen at

<http://dillingertoons.net>

A FIELD TRIP TO THE SUTTER STRIKE IN S.F.

What's it like to go on strike at your workplace? How does the strike fund work? What happens to your health care insurance? Who does your job while you're out?

SEIU UHW members at CHW hospitals in Sacramento have been spared the disruption of going on strike, in part because UHW/CHW hospitals in the Bay Area struck for us. In 1999, SEIU Local 250 Bay Area members struck to gain (among other things), an SEIU-CHW code of conduct for Union organizing. The Union prevailed, and we in Sacramento were able to organize in 2001 with more protection than we had the first time around.

On September 17th of this year, SEIU UHW members at three Sutter hospitals in the Bay Area began an open-ended strike. Sutter workers have worked without a contract for more than a year,



Amadea Maraviglia, CSPD and Noli Volmario (EVS), Sutter employees for 28 and 30 years, expressed dismay at the Sutter impasse.

and a Federal mediator was called in to help.

On August 28, the mediator issued a compromise which the UHW bargaining team agreed to. Sutter's California Pacific Medical Center (CPMC) initially agreed, then claimed they hadn't, provoking the strike.

Are the Sutter UHW members asking for the moon? No. The mediator's compromise agreement (which

can be read on-line), shows that Sutter employees want the same things we have in our contract, but Sutter is refusing to meet the industry standard.

A field trip to Sutter's CPMC campus in San Francisco to observe the strike firsthand was undertaken.

We arrived at noon to find lunch being served at a curbside barbecue grill by striking

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NEW KAISER/UHW CONTRACT GIVES US ALL A RAISE

The new SEIU contract with Kaiser will benefit union members at Mercy as well as Kaiser, a great demonstration of one Union contract raising the standard for others.

Kaiser's new 5 year contract gives across-the-board wage increases and will eliminate the divisive two tier system in N. California, bringing the lower B2 tier to the higher B1 tier in quarterly increments by July 1, 2008.

Because the wage increases in our SEIU contract here at MHS are tied to Kaiser, what happens to them happens to us. According to our contract, on 9-1-07, implementation of the Kaiser B2 scale in effect on 9-1-07 will occur. By then, Kaiser B2 will be half-way to B1. This is definitely a plus!

Congratulations and thank you, Kaiser UHW!

PTO, SICK LEAVE AND OTHER BENEFITS EXPLAINED

The other day I was filling out my latest education quiz, and was reminded of the fact that every year, employees are required to complete various trainings on line, on paper, or at a forum of some kind. We go to Safety Safari and Skills Day, complete HIPAA questionnaires and more recently OCEP, but there are a lot of other things we may not be familiar with, such as various benefits or hospital policies not covered by these trainings.

The policies are created for every aspect of our job here at Mercy General. Some of these are based on California regulations and some are created while bargaining during contract negotiations with our respective unions. Policies concerning patient care and safety are more well known, due to JCAHO preparation, but policies regarding benefits and our employment may be less understood.

I chose the PTO and sick leave topic due to some recent confusion in my department over when to use PTO and sick leave. Policies 322 and 334 from the Personnel Policy manual deal with PTO and sick leave. PTO is a benefit to compensate us for time not worked when we go on vacation, take a day off, holidays, minor illness or other personal reason. Sick leave is accrued in a separate bank for prolonged illness or disability from injury. There is also allowance to care for family members based on state law AB 109.

The hours accrue based on non overtime hours worked. PTO starts accruing from the first pay period. Sick leave also accrues immediately but can't be used until after 6 months of employment. (Refer to the policy for rates based on length of employment and classification.) Both PTO and sick leave may not be

used until it is actually accrued. **Sick leave accrues up to a maximum of 480 hours. PTO accrues up to 400 hours and any hours over 400 are automatically paid.** It is paid at the employee's base hourly rate, plus shift differential if applicable. Payment for excess PTO is made by December 15th each year.

During the use of sick leave, no PTO or sick leave is accrued, and no PTO is accrued on the excess PTO hours paid. Sick leave may not be used until after 3 full days of illness or injury unless there is a hospital admission or surgery, in which case sick leave can begin. If the illness or injury is work related, PTO is not used. Sick leave is also to be used in conjunction with State Disability insurance, and starts on the 8th day of illness. If the absence is due to a work-related injury, sick leave is used from the 1st - 3rd days and then, in addition to Workers' Compensation, from the 4th day. Hours not worked the day of the injury are also paid to the employee as regular hours worked.

SDI forms are available from the HR Department. The employee is responsible for submitting these forms within 49 days of the illness or injury, along with a doctor's certificate to the Employment Development Department. This is very important and must be complete and accurate, or payment may be delayed. If there is a relapse of the same illness within a 7 day period after returning to work, no PTO will be used and sick leave will commence. An employee must be cleared to return to work by Employee Health for any illness longer than three days. The employee must keep his manager aware of his/her illness, and give a 7 day notice of return to work.

An employee is allowed to use up to

one/half of annual sick leave accrued for a parent, spouse or child who is ill. This is due to the Family Medical Leave Act or AB 109. Family sick leave is allowed for illness over three days or if hospitalization or surgery occurs. The first three days of illness are subtracted from the employee's PTO bank.



The manager or supervisor must approve all PTO. PTO is used to complete the hours the employee normally works, if those hours are not all worked, with the exception of Hospital Convenience. PTO may be donated with HR approval for emergencies suffered by an employee. Recently we saw donations requested to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Forms are available in HR. Employees themselves may request a PTO cash out in the event of a financial hardship. PTO is paid out upon resignation or termination of employment. Conversely, sick leave is not paid out on termination or resignation, as it is considered a disability insurance.

These policies can be read in your department's policy manual. There are many considerations to be aware of to reap the maximum benefit from PTO and sick leave. Please take the time to educate yourself now to prevent delays in benefits if illness or injury occurs.

Lorenza Clausen, RT/Imaging

PAC NEWS

Everyone is aware of the costly (70 million dollar) Special Election that Governor Schwarzenegger has created to put anti-worker initiatives on the ballot. This is about him flexing his muscle to prove he can roll over working people and our elected representatives! This election is to help his big corporate donors and waste taxpayer money. He has broken his promises and instead of working across party lines to solve problems, he's attacking teachers, firefighters, nurses, police officers, and all of us in healthcare.

PROPOSITION 75 is geared to silence the voice of working people. We spoke out when Arnold slashed funding for our schools. We stopped him when he tried to take away pensions and eliminate death benefits for family members of police officers and firefighters who die in the line of duty. **Prop. 75**, the "Paycheck Deception Act" is sponsored by corporate special interests who want to silence the

political voices of nurses, teachers, and firefighters. The initiative's sponsor is an anti-union crusader who campaigned for President Bush's Social Security privatization scheme. If passed, public employees who wish to participate would have to sign a form each year allowing union dues to be used for political activities. This restriction on political speech would apply to public, not private sector employees and not to corporate contributions. If it passes and the voice of public workers is silenced, there will surely be a future attempt to silence private sector unions (Us!). **SEIU** does not use union dues for political purposes, so COPE funds are needed to keep our voices loud and clear on the political front. **VOTE NO ON PROPOSITION 75!**

PROPOSITION 76: The "Cut School Funding Act." This measure gives the Governor the power to ignore Prop.98's voter-approved minimum funding levels for schools, and cut healthcare, police, fire and other vital services, while eliminating our State Constitution's system of checks and

balances. This measure would cut school funding by over \$4 billion every year --\$600 per student, leading to overcrowded classrooms, teacher layoffs, and fewer textbooks and classroom materials. Our schools lost 2 billion dollars when the Governor broke his promise to repay the money he took from education. If this initiative passes, he will never have to repay that money to our schools. He wants to cut our MediCal funding by 1/2, which means less money coming in to our hospitals and potential layoffs for us. So **STAND UP, VOTE NO ON PROPOSITION 76.**

We cannot afford to have our voices silenced. **STAND UP FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS AND VOTE NO ON PROPOSITIONS 75 AND 76!!!!**



UHW/SUTTER STRIKE.. from page 1

Nutrition Services workers. When we asked who was serving lunch in the hospital cafeteria, we learned that in the absence of food service employees, Sutter was selling box lunches for \$5. Who was taking food up to patients on the floors? "Scabs."

We learned that Sutter was importing hurricane Katrina victims from Mississippi and paying them wages lower than the "Living Wage" ordinance in S.F. requires. These workers appeared to be untrained and uninformed that they were to be used as strikebreakers.

At a table by the purple UHW support bus, striking workers distributed informational flyers, and signed people

in for shifts on the picket line. The picket line runs 24 hours, the earliest shift starting at 0530 hours. The number of picketers varies from about 20 to 200, depending on events scheduled.

Striking workers are paid from the strike fund (a % of member dues), which SEIU International President, Andy Stern and 1.8 million SEIU members nation-wide have augmented by pledging \$250,000 per week until a settlement is reached. UHW has committed to covering health benefits for all striking workers for the duration of the strike.

When we asked whether any workers were crossing the picket lines, a CSPD employee stated that some were. Sutter has a habit of handing

out raises during critical moments of negotiation, and some Sutter employees had received 9% wage increases, according to CSPD employee Amadea Maraviglia. "People get a 9% raise, and think they don't need a union. They don't realize that if the union wasn't there, they wouldn't have gotten the 9%"

Apparently Sutter hopes people can be bribed with a one-time raise to forget the larger issue of raising healthcare industry standards.

But, as Della Reed, LVN at Sutter CPMC said: "I'm fighting to make sure that I can give my patients the same quality care that I would want for my family!"

Ellen Dillinger/Imaging Services

is an injury

THE UNION TALKS

MGH Steward Chairs

Chief Steward
Raj Dayal
Home: 729-8187
Work: 453-4084

COPE Chair (alt.Chief)
Sharon Martinez
Home: 372-2145
Work: 453-4440

Mobilizer Chair
Kathy Stegall
Home: 682-0844
Work: 453-4553

Secretary Chair/Editor
Ellen Dillinger
Home: 441-3468
Work: 453-4138

SEIU UHW-West Field Representative:
Josie Summers: 275-6342

See list of Shop Stewards on Main Union bulletin Board near Cafeteria.

STEWARD MEETINGS

Every third Wednesday,
Time: 1 p.m.- 5 p.m.

LOCATION VARIES

Oct. 19: Conference Rm 2

Nov.16:East/West Auditor.

Dec.21: Conference Rm 2

It is the responsibility of the shop steward to inform their dept.manager in a timely manner of release time required for shop stewards' meeting.

HEALTHCARTOONS



to all.