

THE UNION TALKS

STATE ASSEMBLY TO CONSIDER SAFE STAFFING LAW FOR NON-NURSING HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES

MAY 2005

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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>

May is COPE drive month, and union members may be wondering "Why are you hounding me to contribute via payroll deduction to the Committee on Political Education?"

A clear demonstration of why union members need to participate in politics occurred April 19th, when the State Assembly Committee on Health considered and passed AB 761, a bill authored by Assemblymember Dave Jones, sponsored by SEIU, and supported by the California Society of Radiologic Technologists. AB 761 would "require the Department of Health Services (DHS) to consider the guidelines of relevant professional associations and worker and patient injury rates in determining whether or not non-nurse staffing in hospitals is adequate." It is a safe staffing bill for non-nurses.

The purpose of AB 761 is to provide some specific guidelines and standards for determining when non-nurse staffing is adequate to provide safe patient care. Existing law requires the DHS to adopt regulations establishing minimum nurse-to-patient ratios by licensed nurse classification and hospital unit. It requires additional staff (that's everybody but the nurses) to be

assigned according to a patient classification system designed to determine nursing care requirements, which includes the severity of illness, the need for specialized equipment and technology, the complexity of clinical judgment needed to design, implement and evaluate the patient care plan, ...and the licensure of the personnel required for care."

Is something more needed? Look at the positive results for nurses from the nurses' safe staffing law and judge for yourself the effect of regulation on staffing. Unfortunately, those in non-nursing positions lack a similar recipe for safe staffing. Non-nurses can fill out "objection to assignment" forms," charge the hospital an hour's pay for missed lunches and/or breaks, bargain over increased workloads and productivity requirements, or fall victim to the workplace injuries that accompany unsafe staffing, but we don't have specific standards from DHS to refer to. The voice of radiology



SEIU UHW union members came to the Capitol from around the state to support AB 761.

techs, ultrasonographers, respiratory therapists, and other professional classifications is missing from DHS regulations and that is what this bill asks the DHS to consider.

It was enlightening to attend the State Assembly Committee on Health Hearing and observe the results of union political action. Many union members (as well as other members of the community) worked hard to elect Assemblymember Dave Jones and it was good to witness his abilities as a member of this Committee and author of AB 761.

AB761 passed out of Committee and will now be considered by the full Assembly. If it passes in the Senate, it will await the Governor's signature.

Our COPE contribution helps make worker-friendly bills happen. That's politics, folks! --E. Dillinger, Radiology

POLITICAL ACTION CORNER....

On May 11th, we will be holding our General Membership Meeting at Mercy General. Everyone should come and pick up a contract. For those new members who just started with MGH, \$50.00 of your initiation fee is waved if you come to our General Membership meeting. This is a good time to meet your field representative, Josie Summers, and find out how much your pay increase will be, since in **May**, our contract states we get a **3% raise**.

This is also a good time to contribute to **COPE**, our **Committee On Political Education**. As many of you know, and for those who do not, **COPE** contributions go directly to our political department and provide the much needed funds to hold our politicians accountable. With **COPE** funds, we lobby our politicians, which helped us stop cuts to our hospital, home health workers and convalescent workers. Both Republicans and Democrats are lobbied to hold them accountable for helping us and



Sharon Martinez, PAC chair, SEIU/UHW

working with us on issues that are important to working families. **COPE** funds are neither Democratic nor Republican; we use the funds to support those who support us. We just recently had one of our supporters, Dave Jones, Assemblyman for the 5th district, author a bill which will set some guidelines for our patients and have safe staffing for our non-nursing members (which passed

the Assembly on Tuesday). We also were able to help elect a City Councilman in West Sacramento who supported us by voting against a Super Wal-Mart being built. Dave Jones a Democrat, and Mark Montemayor, a Republican, both support us in our efforts.

We are unable to use union dues for any political work, so we strongly encourage everyone to give an extra "five dollars" a month to **COPE**. The five dollars is broken down into two payments from our paycheck.

Without our political funds, we wouldn't have the laws that help working families; the 8-hour work-day and overtime pay being two examples. And hey, what about weekends! So, next time you go for that extra latte or doughnut, think about what you can do better with the \$ and, better for yourself: contribute to COPE!

---Sharon Martinez, PAC Chair

PRE-ARBITRATION RESULTS IN SOME SETTLEMENTS

SEIU/UHW shop stewards and our field rep met with MGH Human Resources representatives on April 25th to attempt to resolve grievances otherwise bound for Arbitration. As stated in our contract, "The Employer and the Union recognize that the goal of this grievance and arbitration procedure is to attempt to resolve the grievance at the lowest possible level with the least amount of time and resources."

Ideally, disputes will be resolved informally, with the employee or the Union Representative (field rep or shop steward) conferring with the supervisor or the Employer's designee to settle the matter. If this fails, a griev-

ance is initiated, requiring the timely filing of grievance forms, followed by Step 1 and Step 2 meetings with attempts at resolution at each step. If this fails, the case may be submitted for arbitration.

The pre-arbitration meeting has evolved as the "last chance" to resolve an issue before taking it to arbitration. The Union field rep, and the HR representative have the power to bargain on this occasion, but if no agreement is reached, the Union takes the case to the Union attorney for review.

Since the Arbitrator's decision is binding, grievants may chose to accept a

bargained settlement agreement in Pre-Arb, rather than gamble on the Arbitrator's decision, which could go against the grievant. It is the Union's duty to present the options, but in the end, it is the grievant's choice whether to accept a settlement agreement or move to Arbitration,

Present for each case at Pre-Arb are the grievant, the grievant's shop steward, the field rep, the Chief Shop steward, and perhaps a note-taker or two, and the Employer may have HR and/or their attorney.

--Ellen Dillinger

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
Brenda Emmons-Doddrill
 Home: 723-1224
 Work: 453-4567

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.

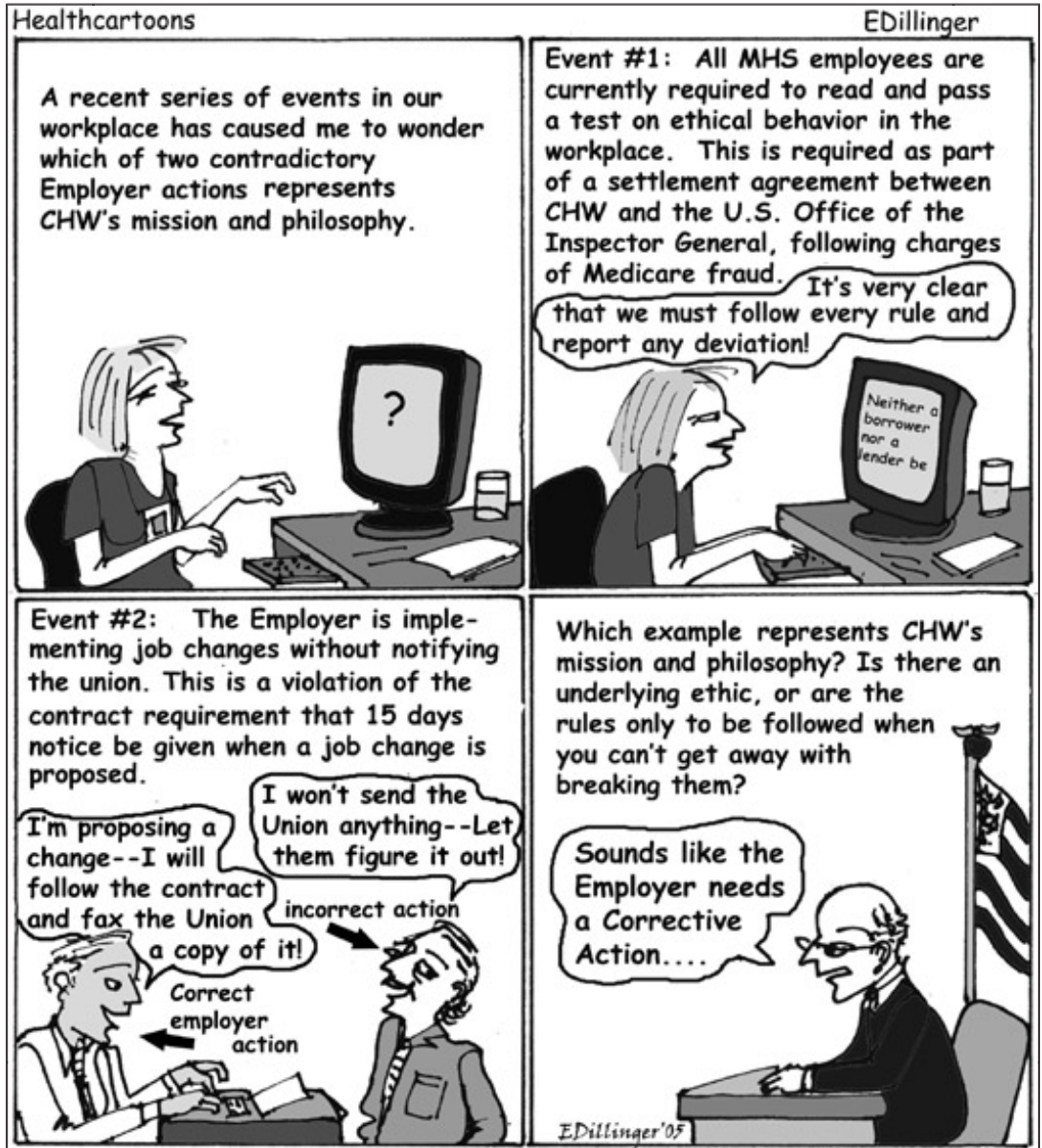
STEWARDS MEETINGS

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

LOCATION VARIES

- May 18: Conference Rm 2
- June 15: Conference Rm 2
- July 20: Conference Rm 1
- Aug 17: Conference Rm 2
- Sept 21: Conference Rm 2
- 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.



SEIU/UHW GENERAL MEETING: Raises, contract info, initiation fee rebates, and much, much more.....

A General Meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 11th at Mercy General to discuss raises (how much, when does it start, etc.), distribute copies of the contract, and answer whatever questions you might have. If you are a new member, inform the field rep, and you will receive a rebate of \$50 on your union initiation fees.

Location/Time Varies: 0700 - 1200: Conference Room 1
 1200 - 1400: MGH Cafeteria
 1400 - 1900: Conference Room 1

to all.