

April 6, 2010

WSNA Registered Nurses,

Washington State Nurses Association is NOT going to homes to talk to nurses about organizing. I want to make that very clear to all of the nurses at SWMC.

However, TO ORGANIZE OR NOT TO ORGANIZE, THAT IS THE QUESTION.

The questions being asked by employees regarding the action that appears to be taking place to organize the unorganized at SWMC are really good ones. It is also understood having a union representative come to your home unannounced can be a little unnerving. But you need to remember what kind of scrutiny is brought to bear on an individual when you are thought to be talking about organizing a new group at any place of employment. Remember when WSNA was organizing at SWMC, one of the largest Union busting firms in the country was hired to prevent the nurses from becoming organized.

Let's just be very clear. SWMC does not want to abide by any rules where they are not in total control. This would certainly not be the case if those employees who are not represented by a Union, with a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) were to decide to become organized. Please remember management has Human Resources, employees either have a contract or they are employees at will. What that means is you can be counseled, suspended, or terminated at will. There is also no progressive discipline involved. They can go right to termination. When you are organized and have a contract in place, it means you have someone in your corner willing to go to bat for your rights. That process is called a Grievance Procedure. There is a process with steps that are clearly outlined that must be followed. A contract actually levels the playing field, so to speak.

Just recently Hospital Management at SWMC came to the Local Unit Officers of Washington State Nurses Association to ask for concessions, meaning they wanted to make some changes to the contract regarding some of the articles specifically addressed in the CBA. The Local Unit Exec. Team listened to the request but decided it would not be in the nurses' best interest to open the contract at this time. Please understand that without a Collective Bargaining Agreement, Management would simply have made the cuts without input from the nurses.

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Think about this, WAGES, HOURS and WORKING CONDITIONS are mandatory subjects of bargaining, when you have a contract.

Employees have certain rights. Unions are there to see that those rights are protected, that all employees are treated fairly.

So be aware, there may be a union representative come knocking on your door, if you are not organized at this time. They may also ask you to sign a card to say you are interested in being represented by whatever union is trying to get the privilege of representing you. You are not obligated to either talk to them or sign the card, but before you say "NO", think about your work area. Are all employees being treated fairly? Are they all held to the same standard? Does the boss play favorites?

You know as a registered nurse at SWMC, having a contract has gotten you guaranteed wage increases in each of the three years of the contract. You have \$250 to attend education classes that pertain to your area of practice. You have 24 hours of paid time to attend those classes. You have rest periods and meal breaks that are contractual. You have paid holidays. You get overtime when you work beyond your scheduled shift. There is rest between shift language, to ensure that you get the appropriate amount of rest before returning to duty for the next shift.

REMEMBER THERE IS AN UNBELIEVABLE AMOUNT OF STRENGTH IN UNITY.

It is not Washington State Nurses Association making house calls but, it would certainly be advantageous to ALL Employees of SWMC, if you were ALL ORGANIZED.

Patricia L. McClure, RN
WSNA Nurse Representative
and
Your Local WSNA Executive Team