

the Infusion

March 2005



*From the desk of
Vicki Wornath, Co-Chair
of the Local Unit of WSNA
at SWMC.*



It has been a long time since I have touched bases with you. As I promised earlier in the year, as your Local Unit Co-Chair, there would be more communications from us. But as the year goes on, individual's lives get busier, unexpected events happen and sometimes what you thought would happen in January just doesn't. Pour your coffee or tea, put your feet up and let's chat.

A lot has happened this past year. I always consider a year from September to September, patterned after the school year. Too many years in school, raising a family, etc., everything always changes in September. A little over a year ago we signed our second contract with SWMC. Can you believe we are prepping for our third as we speak. The current contract is better than the first, but I am the first one to admit there is room for improvement. If you are willing to join with us, our third contract will certainly be better than our second. As a result of the contract we have seen increases in preceptor pay, weekend bonus, and your October raise. This is the first time ever that you have had a negotiated raise. You know, one that you knew was due on a certain date and you knew what percentage it was going to be. You didn't have to worry about pleasing your manager or making them angry. Your raise was not subjective, it was negotiated.

This year we have seen an increase in the number of grievances. We have won some fairly significant cases for nurses. When a nurse is terminated, without "Just Cause" they now have recourse to the Grievance Procedure.

The nurses have had the ability to have their jobs back as well as the awarding of some substantial back-pay they wouldn't have received otherwise.

Meetings with management have been held monthly in the form of a Conference Committee. This is the forum for the Nurses at SWMC to bring issues to the attention of management for discussion and resolution.

Topics have ranged from staffing issues, premium pay, education reimbursement, floating, low census and individual unit problems. Thanks to all of you who have brought your issues forward.

We are the first Local Unit in the state of Washington to join the Central Labor Council. This is a coalition of Unions in Clark County who meet to discuss central issues that are common to all of our members. Keeping in mind that there is strength in numbers. You have representation on the State level of Washington State Nurses Association with a member on the Cabinet of Economic and General Welfare. You have a member who is a Washington State Nurses Association representative to UAN and ANA.

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Our Unit was the first in the State to have the Wilson Group do a random survey of 250 nurses to get a better idea of how we can better serve YOU. Our goals for the next year will be to work on the areas that were identified as needing improvement.

The past year your Executive Team developed a Local Unit Budget. Our spending has been within that budget.

Our MEMBERSHIP has grown! If you are not a member now, please consider partnering with your fellow nurses for the betterment of all of the professional nurses employed at SWMC. Together we can achieve more for our patients and ourselves. United we can make positive changes in our work environment. By standing up united, we can truly make SWMC one of the top one hundred Hospitals in the United States for the professional practice of nursing and quality of care that we are proud to deliver.

Dear Nursing Leaders and Activists!

As you know -- the Legislature moves very fast at times and very slow at others -- I thought it might be helpful to give you an update (see below) of where things are with several of the bills that WSNA and other nursing groups have been lobbying since the Legislative session began on January 10th. Keep in mind, this is the status of the bills as of March 17th and that things are constantly changing on a daily and often hourly basis.....

If you haven't already done so, please thank your legislators who voted for the bills on our list.

Thanks for all your help in support of the legislation -- stay tuned for additional Action Alerts as we continue to move through the legislative session.

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Funding for Central Nursing Resource Center HB 1353 & SB 5599 - As the nursing shortage looms in Washington State and projections are for it to worsen significantly in the next two decades, we must have a central resource center to focus specifically on addressing issues related to the nursing work force. Nursing can't wait any longer and are willing to help ourselves. This legislation imposes a \$5 surcharge on the nursing license fee to fund activities of a central nursing resource center to ensure an adequate nursing workforce to meet the needs of our citizens. There are more than a dozen nursing organizations that support this legislation. *This bill passed both the Senate*

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and House floor with strong bi-partisan support and is scheduled for more hearings.

Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission Composition Change HB 1075 & SB 5598 - Nurses are the largest health care profession in Washington State with nearly 70,000 RNs and 15,000 LPNs. An increase in the Commission members from 11 to 15 is needed to accommodate the heavy workload of the Commission. The specific designation of ARNPs, staff nurses, nurse manager and nurse educators will ensure a broad spectrum of backgrounds needed to better serve the public's interests and address the wide range of issues that the Commission oversees. The House bill passed with near unanimous support and will now proceed to the Senate.

School Nurse Ratio HB 1494 - Increases the number of registered nurses in schools in order to ensure that our children have access to the qualified staff necessary to provide essential health care needs in the education environment. This bill passed the House floor and will now go over to the Senate.

Removal of Joint Practice Agreement for Nurse Practitioners HB 1479 & SB 5516 - Nurse practitioners in WA serve thousands of health care consumers in both the rural and urban areas of the state. The Joint Practice Agreement (JPA) is a barrier to practice for many nurse practitioners who seek full prescriptive authority. Removing the requirement of a JPA would result in greater health care access for consumers in WA. The house bill passed the House floor with strong bi-partisan support and will now be heard in the Senate.

Mandatory Overtime HB 1371 & SB 5368 - Extend protection of mandatory overtime for nurses to additional settings such as jails, state hospitals, and state veterans' homes and close loopholes in current law. This bill unfortunately did not pass out of the relevant committees, so is "dead" for the 2005 session. We will continue our efforts next year.

Safe Patient Handling HB 1672 - Protect nurses from musculoskeletal injuries through "no manual lift" policies and other safe patient handling initiatives. Enhance patient safety by reducing injuries by requiring each hospital to establish a patient care activities program (with input from frontline health care workers) that addresses safe patient handling. This bill has an excellent hearing in Committee but did not pass out of the committee so is "dead" for the 2005 session. We will continue our efforts next year.

Safe RN Staffing HB 1372 - In order to ensure safe patient care, we must have adequate RN staffing in our hospitals. WSNA is advocating for legislation to require hospitals to develop and implement, with input from registered nurses providing direct patient care, a staffing plan for nursing services that is based on the patient care needs and the skill mix of registered nurses and other nursing personnel. This bill unfortunately did not pass out of the relevant committees, so is "dead" for the 2005 session. We will continue our efforts next year.

Nursing Education Funding - Nursing programs in WA State are turning away hundreds of qualified students every year due to a lack of funding for enrollment slots, lack of funding to recruit and retain qualified nursing faculty, and lack of physical capacity. The Health Professions Scholarship and Loan

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Repayment program is essential in attracting more men and ethnic diversity to the profession.

Request: At least 500 fully funded slots to be designated specifically for RN programs.

Request: Increase RN faculty salaries at community colleges and at four year universities by funding increments in the operating budget with specific designation of funds for RN faculty.

Request: Capital budget allocation for expansion of physical capacity of nursing programs such as the WSU campus.

Request: Increase HECB Health Professions Scholarship & Loan Repayment program funding by \$1 million dollars in the operating budget and expand the program to include registered nurses seeking a Master's Degree. *We are still working on all the above budget items and will continue our efforts to ensure adequate funding for nursing education.*

Local Negotiating Team

You know after receiving the survey that your Washington State Nurses Association Contract is being prepped by your Local Negotiating Team.

It was obvious that we have an aging workforce and that our younger nurses are more savvy than their predecessors because Retirement showed up as a priority area. Of course, the other priority that we were sure was important to all of the nurses was Medical Benefits. Eligibility for Medical Benefits as you all know have increased to a .6FTE. Current employees have been grand fathered in for two years at the current eligibility of .5FTE.

Wages are always important to each and every one of us. The complete subjectivity of the current system has not gone unnoticed by the nurses or Washington State Nurses Association.

Please stop and think, "How do I get the improvements that I want and need in the new contract?"

It was mentioned more than once that the Washington State Nurses Association dues are too high! I want to explain how the dues increase was arrived at. There was a Task Force

from WSNA Local Units around the State that looked at what needed to happen. After a lot of hours and hard work the dues increase was submitted to each and every dues paying member of Washington State Nurses Association for their approval. Yes, every nurse in the State got to vote on the dues structure increase. And, that was only after our Executive Director, Judy Huntington held multiple meetings around the State to explain how the increase was arrived at as well as why the increase was necessary. Please be aware that your dues with WSNA are less than other Unions. And, as nurses always do, we let everyone have a voice in the process. You also need to understand that other Unions rely on their Executive Teams to make those decisions. Those members do not get to vote on whether or not an increase is necessary.

I guess I look at Union Membership as an Insurance Policy. Just like Car or Fire Insurance, you don't need it until something catastrophic happens.

The other little tidbit that I usually leave with potential members is, if something were to happen and you needed legal representation, do you know what one hour of a private attorney's time would cost you? *Think about*

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that, it's staggering. YOUR WSNA DUES WOULD BE PAID FOR THE YEAR WITH JUST TWO HOURS OF AN ATTORNEY'S TIME!!!

If you have questions about membership, please call one of your Local Unit Officers or Patricia McClure, your Nurse Representative. (360-263-4258)

Any one of us would be more than happy to talk to you about what it is going to take to get you the contract you want and deserve. Now is the time to **PARTNER** with your **LOCAL WSNA UNIT** and **WASHINGTON STATE NURSES ASSOCIATION** for the best possible **CONTRACT**.

It is the responsibility of each nurse to notify the Washington State Nurses Association of any changes in their work status which may include but are not limited to: **name, address, phone number, FTE increase or decrease, leave of absence, medical leave, maternity leave, leaving or joining a bargaining unit.** This change must be done in writing either by using a change of information card or sending an email to wsna@wsna.org.

The Cabinet on Economic and General Welfare (EG&W) has a policy that states when a nurse is on a leave of absence for any reason, the dues are reduced to 50% for the entire period of the leave time. The dues accumulated during the leave time are to be paid within 90 days of returning to work.

Seattle, Washington

Don't miss out on this important opportunity to join your nurse colleagues from all across the state. Learn about the important issues facing nurses today and what's being done to address them.

See enclosed!

Voice Tel Line: 1-800-384-7144

Local Unit Officers:

Vicki Wornath, Co-Chair
Elaine C. Lewis, Co-Chair
Patricia Moeller, Vice Chair
Janice Y. Blakemore, Secretary
Nancy C. Denny, Treasurer
Terry M. Joyce, Grievance Officer
Christie L. Riley, Member-At-Large

Local Unit Nurse Representative:

Pat McClure
Kathi Landon

**UPCOMING EVENTS
and MEETINGS**

**2005 Biennial WSNA
Convention/Summit**

May 5 - 6th, 2005

Doubletree Guest Suites, Southcenter

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