

WSNA™ WASHINGTON STATE
NURSES ASSOCIATION

RNs for Patient Safety

Safe Staffing Now!



**Campaign
for Patient
Safety**

Dear Member,

As nurses, we know that appropriate staffing protects patients from preventable medical errors, injuries and deaths. Studies show that registered nurses intercept 85% of medical errors before there is harm to the patient. Quality nursing care can mean the difference between life and death, yet the volume and complexity of patient care continues to grow without adequate precautions in place to protect nurses and patients from the dangers of fatigue.

WSNA has worked in the Legislature, in collective bargaining, in the courts, and in good-faith negotiations between the hospital association and health care unions to ensure adequate staffing levels and safe patient care. Despite claiming economic hardship, the hospitals continue to focus on new buildings and expansions without any meaningful commitment to ensuring that nurses are not overworked and fatigued.

We have heard our members loud and clear. There is outrage over the ineffectiveness of the hospital nurse staffing committees, there is frustration with the ongoing fight to get uninterrupted meal and rest breaks, and there is anger over the increased use of pre-scheduled call to bypass the mandatory overtime law.

We are all out of patience and the hospitals are out of time!

Now is the time for bold action. We cannot allow hospitals to continue prioritizing profits over patients.

In response to this growing health crisis, WSNA is launching a new **Campaign for Patient Safety** to ensure safe nursing care for our patients. The campaign is comprised of three legislative bills to ensure Safe RN Staffing, uninterrupted meal and rest breaks, and an expansion of protection against mandatory overtime.

We know the hospitals will fight us every step of the way, but we cannot allow them to speak for us or for our patients on these important matters. WSNA is prepared to dedicate every resource to this battle for as long as it takes to win the real improvements we need in patient care. However, it is you—the members of WSNA—that are our greatest asset in this campaign. Legislators and the public need to hear from nurses about why these issues are so critical to patient safety. This campaign will require hard work and dedication from all of us, but we simply have no other choice. It is time for Safe Staffing Now!



Judy Huntington, MN, RN
Executive Director, WSNA

Legislative of the Cam

NEW STATEWIDE STAFFING MINIMUMS FOR SAFER PATIENT CARE

Despite good-faith efforts to encourage hospitals to adopt safer staffing levels to address the staffing disparities that put patients, nurses and other healthcare professionals at risk, hospitals have failed to make measurable, meaningful changes. It's time the State steps up and holds hospitals accountable for this dangerous trend in health care.

Requires the Department of Health (DOH) to establish **statewide minimum nurse staffing standards** with input from registered nurses and patient safety experts

Mandates hospitals to include staff nurses in the development of staffing plans. Hospitals can leverage existing staffing committees to review criteria such as census, intensity of patients and personnel skill mix to develop plans

Mandates nurses receive orientation prior to assignments to new units or clinical areas

Components paign

WSNA is pushing three bills forward in the Legislature in collaboration with other healthcare unions, labor organization and consumer groups. Each bill addresses a core patient safety concern and seeks to establish statewide safety standards to protect patients and nurses.

Mandates hospitals collect and disclose data related to nursing patient outcomes such as nurse staffing levels and nursing hours per patient day

Gives patients access to more data to make informed choices about the quality of their care

Requires DOH to investigate complaints related to inadequate nurse staffing

Mandates hospitals who violate staffing minimums **correct staffing practices and face a potential civil penalty** of \$10,000 for each violation

UNINTERRUPTED REST AND MEAL BREAKS

In order to protect the public, Congress adopted federal laws that prohibit pilots and truckers from flying and driving fatigued. But thousands of nurses and other healthcare professionals are forced to deliver complex, demanding care to patients in emotionally-charged hospital environments without an uninterrupted break.

Nurses and healthcare professionals must be vigilant and focused to oversee an array of duties for up to 12 hours or more without an uninterrupted break. These duties include: administering complicated pharmaceutical prescriptions and treatments, constant assessment and evaluation of patient treatments and conditions, and initiating life-saving emergency procedures.

Mandatory uninterrupted breaks for nurses and healthcare professionals who deliver direct-patient care

Hospitals retain the right to determine break times and exceptions to the law to deliver critical patient care around emergencies and disasters

Requires hospitals to track missed breaks

Prohibits hospitals from retaliating or firing nurses and healthcare professionals who report missed breaks

Institutes a potential financial penalty for knowing violations

LIMITING MANDATORY OVERTIME

Nursing and staffing shortages have forced nurses and other healthcare professionals into mandatory overtime or risk losing their jobs. The current State law for hospital nurses has a loophole that allows hospitals to use pre-scheduled call as a thinly veiled replacement for mandatory overtime.

Nurses and other healthcare professionals are being forced to work long hours without adequate rest. This causes fatigue and contributes to increased risks of patient safety.

Requires hospitals to apply mandatory overtime laws to prescheduled on-call duties so they are not abused to resolve chronic staffing shortages

Expands overtime protections to jails and State veterans' homes

Expands overtime protections to other healthcare professionals charged with direct-patient care

Stand Up for Safe Patient Care

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Legislators need to hear from you! We need to ensure that the public and lawmakers hear from staff nurses, the trusted experts at the bedside, not hospital administrators. You will continue to receive regular updates from WSNA in your email, on our website and in *The Washington Nurse* about how the campaign is progressing and what you can do to get involved. We need your voice!

www.wsna.org



facebook.com/mywsna

Special Webinar!

WSNA is hosting a special webinar for members on **January 24th** at 8am and also at 5pm to give you detailed information about the **Campaign for Patient Safety** and what you can do to help pass this important legislative package. Visit www.wsna.org to find out how to log on or to view an archived recording of the webinar after January 24th if you are unable to join live.



Washington State Nurses Association
575 Andover Park West, Suite 101, Seattle WA 98188