



September 13, 2011

BARGAINING UPDATE AND CALL TO MEMBER MEETING!

Where are we in our contract negotiations with UMHS management?

The bargaining team returned to negotiations on August 16, August 26 and September 13 along with a mediator from the Michigan Employment Relations Commission (MERC) to try to resolve our disputes. Through the mediator, both parties have submitted informal ideas of how to address the remaining open issues.

Even though the bargaining team believes the Employer bargained in bad faith by putting a less favorable position on the table on health insurance in July, the team has made overtures to the Employer to work with it on health insurance if there is a satisfactory wage increase for all members and no other concessions.

Today, the Employer provided the negotiating team with a formal comprehensive proposal which included:

- Full implementation of increased health insurance premiums by the third year of the agreement, with flexibility only as to when increases are charged to members.
- Employee concessions on retirement, overtime, PSMs, incremental PTO, short term disability, leaves, and other provisions that affect our lives.
- 2% across the board wage increase with 3 additional steps between steps 10 and 13, so it will take longer to get to the top of the wage scale. In addition, the employer offered lump sums for some steps.
- No changes to the current Nurse Practitioner MOU.

The Employer said its proposal must include the COSHB health insurance changes, CORHB retirement changes, overtime changes, and the elimination of PTO accrual while on disability. These changes significantly lower the standards in our contract and negatively affect the Health System's ability to recruit and retain highly skilled nurses. The Employer's position on overtime will negatively affect its ability to staff the Hospital on a daily basis. Currently, almost every inpatient unit is short staffed and being offered overtime incentives above the current contract, and yet, the Employer wants to erode the way overtime is currently paid. Who do they expect will come in and care for the patients in a crunch?

Since there has been so little movement in these negotiations, MNA/UMPNC today petitioned for fact finding.

What is fact finding?

Fact finding is an impasse dispute resolution procedure that may be initiated by the Union and/or Employer in the Michigan public sector when attempts to resolve the disputed issues through negotiations and mediation are unsuccessful. The fact finding process includes a formal hearing conducted by a fact finder appointed by MERC. The fact finder's primary responsibility is to conduct a hearing where evidence and testimony is submitted on outstanding issues and to issue a non-binding recommendation. The fact finder has the authority to accept or reject either parties' position or issue a recommendation that is somewhere between the two positions. The fact finder's recommendation does not end the parties' duty to bargain, and the written findings are not binding on either party although the findings will be made public.

What is impasse?

Impasse is the point in negotiations where the parties are deadlocked in their positions.. Until the point of impasse, the Employer does not have the right to unilaterally change the status quo, even if the contract is expired. After impasse, assuming the Employer has bargained in good faith, which we dispute, the Employer has a right to implement all or a portion of its last best final offer without the agreement of the Union. Often, an Employer will implement those things that will negatively effect [this is iffy-so the best grammarian amongst us can decide-effect vs. affect] the members like increases to the cost of health insurance while withholding those things in its offer that are favorable to the members like wage increases. The Employer does this in order to exert pressure on the nurses to accept its offer. The Employer cannot unilaterally make any changes when a petition for fact finding has been filed, provided the fact finding petition is filed prior to impasse.

Are we at impasse?

No. Although there has been little movement, both parties have demonstrated a willingness to meet and bargain in order to resolve our differences.

Will the UMPNC bargaining team continue to negotiate?

The bargaining team is prepared to continue to bargaining with a goal of getting a fair contract that will allow UMPNC members to provide the highest quality patient care!

The parties agreed to resume negotiations on Wednesday September 21, 2011.

We must continue to stand together and speak out to achieve a fair and just agreement that upholds nursing standards.

General Membership meetings are scheduled on Wednesday, September 21 at IBEW Local 252 at 7920 Jackson Road, Ann Arbor at 8:00am, 1:00pm, 5:00pm, or 8:00pm to provide more information and discuss next steps.