Update from the State Nurses Bargaining Team

Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) and the State of Oregon (State) met April 4, 2013 for our fourth negotiation session. ONA presented its economic proposal with the goal of getting nurses paid closer to their private sector counterparts.

Article 18.1
- Move all current steps down two (e.g. Step 3 becomes Step 1). Proposal would have you stay at current step. So if currently at Step 3, would “stay” at the new Step 3 which is the current Step 5.
- 3.60 percent increase between steps (currently there is a 4.7 percent increase between steps)
- 2 percent Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) effective January 1, 2014 and July 1, 2014
- New Step 10 effective July 1, 2014
- 4 percent COLA January 1, 2015
- New Step 11 effective July 1, 2015
- Nurse practitioner (NP) wages 15 percent greater than registered nurse (RN) wages

Article 18.2
Currently nurses with masters get paid a differential. Because of our proposal to put NP wages above the RN wage scale, we proposed to amend the language to say that the differential only applies to mental health nurses not NPs. This proposal would be withdrawn if the State doesn’t agree to increase NP wages. With that said, there are currently no NPs in the bargaining unit.

Article 20.3
We proposed contingency language if 6 percent is reduced that reads (underlined language is new language we are proposing, struck through is old language we are proposing be deleted):

Effect of Changes in Law (Other than PERS Litigation). In the event that the State’s payment of a six percent (6%) employee contribution under Section 1 or under Section 2, as applicable, must be discontinued or reduced due to a change in law, valid ballot measure, constitutional amendment, or a final, non-appealable judgment from a court of competent jurisdiction (other than in the PERS Litigation), the State shall increase by six percent (6%) (or by the amount of the reduction) the base salary rates for each...
classification in the salary schedules in lieu of the six percent (6%) pick-up. This transition shall be done in a manner to assure the State’s continuous payment of either the employee six percent (6%)-contribution or the appropriate salary increase depending on whether the pick-up is discontinued (resulting in a six percent increase) or reduced (resulting in an increase in the same amount as the reduction) a six percent (6%) salary increase. Any salary increase pursuant to this Section shall be in addition to any salary increase applicable under Articles 18 or 25.

This was proposed last time, but withdrawn when legislature failed to pass language making this an option.

We also made the following non-economic proposals. For Article 15.6, we proposed to increase the mandatory breaks between shifts the employer needs to allow an employee to take (if the employee wants) from eight hours to 12 hours. We made this proposal to address a concern raised in the surveys where a number of nurses have been mandated to work overtime, returned to work to start the regularly scheduled shift, but worked tired. The hope is that with the increased break time, nurses will be able to recover before needing to start their next shift.

We proposed in Article 50.2.b to allow nurses to vote to be able to have a system where they make vacation requests twice a year, as opposed to the current four times a year. Nurses at Blue Mountain Recovery Center requested this change.

Our next negotiation session is scheduled for April 25, 2013.

### ONA Backs Historic Partnership with AFT

The Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) has approved a historic affiliation agreement with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). On Saturday, March 16, 2013, the ONA House of Delegates met in Portland and the delegates voted overwhelmingly to affiliate with AFT.

"This is a historic day for nurses and their patients in Oregon and throughout the nation," said AFT President Randi Weingarten, who spoke to the House of Delegates today, prior to the vote. "Educators and nurses share a mutual respect, mutual priorities and a mutual desire to provide our members with the tools and conditions they need to do their jobs. They need the power and the voice to advocate for their patients, whether it's in Salem or on Capitol Hill."

The ONA’s action comes after the board of the National Federation of Nurses and its three other state affiliates—in Washington state, Montana and Ohio—agreed to affiliate with the 1.5 million-member AFT, the largest professional union in the AFL-CIO. The NFN nurses join approximately 48,000 RNs who were already members of the AFT.

"This has been a transparent, robust and democratic process," said ONA President Steve Rooney. "We have been 100 percent committed to providing all of our members access to details, implications and ramifications of the affiliation process. The vote today sends a clear message; ONA’s members are excited about our new partnership and we know it will benefit nurses and the patients we serve."

Weingarten said the affiliations are timely and important because nurses are dealing with a rapidly changing healthcare industry and the implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

"Nurses who work on the frontlines of patient care need to have their voices heard," Weingarten said. "These affiliations by organizations that are respected leaders in their states represent a vote of confidence in the AFT as a union with a proven track record of standing up for professionals."

In welcoming the more than 10,400 ONA represented nurses into the AFT, Weingarten said, "We are absolutely delighted that our AFT family now includes the dedicated professionals of the Oregon Nurses Association. They share our commitment to quality services and high standards. We look forward to working together on our common goals."

ONA staff will be rolling out details of the benefits of the affiliation, including ONA member access to AFT+ and Union+ member benefit programs provided by AFT and the AFL-CIO, in the coming months.