



California Nurses Association Using NNOC To Move Organizing Attempts Eastward

Insights

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Trumpeting an agenda that purports to advance "the cause of direct care RNs across the nation," the California Nurses Association (CNA) is charging eastward with ambitious new organizing tactics that could affect healthcare providers around the nation.

CNA is seizing upon personnel shortages and the thorny issue of nurse-to-patient staffing ratios to spearhead its efforts. Using its newly formed National Nurses Organizing Committee (NNOC), the union has scheduled a series of so-called continuing education sessions, which are likely to amount to little more than thinlyveiled organizing meetings. This is not the first time that the CNA has used ostensible "education sessions" to drum up support. This time, however, the union has apparently refined its approach and planned it more carefully.

The upcoming "educational" programs are entitled, "Collective Patient Advocacy: Strategies to Promote a Single Standard for Safe Patient Care." So far, they are scheduled in the following 13 cities on these dates:

Ann Arbor, MI.....	Jan. 19
Detroit, MI.....	Jan. 20
Atlanta, GA.....	Jan. 27
Charlotte, NC.....	Feb. 2
Raleigh, NC.....	Feb. 3
Washington, DC.....	Feb. 22
Baltimore, MD.....	Feb. 23
Cleveland, OH.....	Mar. 7
Cincinnati, OH.....	Mar. 8
Newark, NJ.....	Mar. 14
Portland, OR.....	Mar. 22
St. Louis, MO.....	Apr. 14
Kansas City, MO.....	Apr. 15

Mandated staffing ratios remain a cornerstone of CNA's efforts, although the American Hospital Association's Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE) does not support such measures. AONE recognizes that "one size fits all" staffing plans may adversely affect both access to care and patient safety, especially during the continuing nursing shortage. Last year, California adopted emergency

safety, especially during the continuing nursing shortage. Last year, California adopted emergency regulations to prevent tightening of the nation's first ever legislatively-mandated nurse-to-patient ratios until it could assess the impact such changes would have on patient care. In response, CNA promptly sued Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to stop the emergency regulations.

The CNA/NNOC's brash approach has also extended to other unions. Citing the American Nurses Association's (ANA) "legacy of failure," it won a significant victory on November 30 at Stroger Hospital in Cook County, Illinois. As a result, 900 unionized nurses there will soon vote on whether to replace the Illinois Nurses Association with the CNA. The union has already opened a permanent headquarters in Chicago.

Despite shortcomings in its substance, the union's message resonates with many nurses, especially those who do not realize that management is as concerned as they are about continuing personnel shortages and pressures resulting from increasing costs and shrinking reimbursement. We think it is critical to maintain vigilance and open communications, especially between staff nurses and their first-line supervisors.

The experienced attorneys in the Healthcare Practice Group (HCPG) at Fisher Phillips can help hospitals and other providers be prepared when unions target them. This preparation includes building strong relationships that make the union completely unnecessary; identifying the warning signs of organizing activity; training your supervisors regarding how to respond; and creating an effective overall strategy to maintain your union-free status.

Contact your Fisher Phillips attorney for additional information.