

Council Alert



SEIU Healthcare MERITER NURSES' COUNCIL
United for Quality Care **JANUARY 2009 ISSUE 1**

WE NEED YOU!! BARGAINING PREPARATION

Tuesday, January 20
Wednesday, January 21
7:30a—? Evening

Our Union Bargaining Team needs your help in preparing for bargaining. Our Union Team will be gathering for two long days to do preparation at our new Madison Union Office. Please plan to attend and provide input into the issues to be discussed at bargaining. Our new Madison Union office is located at:

4513 Vernon Blvd
Third Floor
Madison WI 53705
608-277-1199

(one block south of Hilldale Mall)

In addition, please plan to **ATTEND BARGAINING** on the following confirmed dates:

January 28 & 29

February 11, 12, 13, 18, 19,
20, 24, 25, & 26

March 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8

MANDATES—THE LATEST

By Marcia Rayho, RN, 6T

Meriter has continued to mandate nurses even though it is in violation of our Union contract. Through collaboration with Meriter, our Union has reduced the number of mandates significantly in the last two years. However, Meriter has not shown the “political will” to stop mandates completely.

We are at a point where this issue has gone to the arbitration step. In an attempt to reach an agreement, we are trying mediation as a last step before arbitrating. Unfortunately, it doesn't look promising. Meriter's current position is to simply get rid of the language that was bargained in good faith by both our Union and Meriter. This means that Meriter would reinstate mandates as a staffing option. This is an obvious step backwards for quality patient care!

(Continued on page 2 “Mandates”)

OBAMA INAUGURAL WATCH PARTY

Tuesday
January 20
10am-2pm

Union Office
4513 Vernon
Blvd 3rdFloor
608-277-1199

BARGAINING TEAM

Mary Malaney 4E/6E, D/PM

Kathy Farwell 8T, D

Marcia Rayho 6T, NOC

Marian Stokes, 6N, NOC

Kathy Flath, 4/5N, NOC

LeEllen Jordan, 10T, D

Rebecca Wolfe, ES, D/PM

The Whole Truth—Meriter has the MONEY

Every year that we bargain, Meriter tries to convince us that there is not enough money to meet our demands in bargaining for safe staffing, affordable employee contributions to health insurance, and an improved compensation package. In fact, Meriter continues to be a “profitable” non-profit hospital. Meriter “profits” (net revenues after expenses) and Net Assets for the last published years are (based on IRS reports):

<u>Year</u>	<u>Net Profit</u>	<u>Net Assets</u>
2004	\$14,584,118	\$125,762,161
2005	\$22,566,383	\$149,298,127
2006	\$26,683,591	\$181,876,352
2007	\$28,054,048 (nearly doubled in 3 years)	\$210,930,728 (nearly doubled in 3 years)

Information for 2008 is not yet available but, based on Meriter management’s statements in recent meetings with our Union, Meriter expects to meet or exceed budget for 2008. Meriter is doing so well that their “bond rating” was increased so Meriter’s ability to borrow money for capital projects is greatly improved. Has your financial situation improved like Meriter’s in the last 3 years? Surely not, so despite Meriter’s incessant focus on “the budget” whenever employees ask for something better, Meriter should focus their money on improving their quality of patient care through safe staffing, high patient satisfaction and high employee satisfaction. Yes, We Can—accomplish this together!!!

Mandates (Continued from page 1)

Meriter has also suggested that nurses should float house-wide and be on-call for the entire hospital as a way to cut down on mandates. This was suggested, even though when the impact of floating cluster on mandates was reviewed in committee, this was not found to have a significant impact on preventing mandates. All of you must realize how unsafe this would be for patients and how it could put your license in jeopardy.

The Committee did find that **mandates were reduced** by adding staff to targeted units that had a high number of mandates. This proved to be very successful. Now, we feel that the way to **eliminate mandates** is to add staff to the Mobile Unit and Women’s Health Pool to give greater coverage to a larger number of units. Even though we are not talking a large number of additional staff, Meriter is unwilling to do what is necessary to stop mandates.

It is NOT a matter of money! Meriter has been steadily increasing their revenue (see above) and can afford to do what is necessary to protect quality care for our patients.

Meriter needs to step up and honor what they agreed to do. We must insist on safe, quality patient care. We must stand together, strong and united, to make sure that quality, patient care is the number one priority in our Union contract bargaining. Show your support by attending bargaining and participating in our Union activities to put pressure on Meriter to do the right thing.