

## **Big Turnout on Picket line by Washington Hosp Center RNs**

### ***AFL-CIO President Praises RNs for ‘Standing Up’ for Patients RNs: MedStar Spending Over \$1 Million a Day on Lockout***

Hundreds of Washington Hospital Center registered nurses jammed picket lines outside the District’s largest hospital Friday for a one-day strike called to protest stalling by the hospital administration on serious patient care problems at the facility.

The nurses were joined in a boisterous noon rally by community supporters and RNs of close to 2,000 people.



**AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka and nurses and supporters at rally Friday**

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka praised the RNs for “standing up and standing together like our brothers and sisters in Madison and Cleveland and Indianapolis and a hundred other cities across America.”

Trumka hailed the “way you fight for patients, for quality care, for safe staffing and decent working conditions,” and condemned MedStar CEO Ken Samet and Washington Hospital president John Sullivan for “putting profits ahead of everything.”



**NNU Co-President Karen Higgins, RN and nurses on picket line**

“We have called this strike because we want to ensure that this hospital is safe for our patients,” said Jessie Ruehl, an emergency room RN at the hospital. “Our moral, ethical and professional responsibility is to advocate for our patients, and we intend to do just that.”

“Numerous studies have shown that poor nurse staffing is unsafe for patient and causes nurses to burn out,” Ruehl said. “This leads to high nurse turnover rates with more and more nurses leaving the hospital. This problem is rampant at Washington Hospital Center. WHC cannot keep pace with the nurses leaving. 1,300 nurses have left since 2005.”

“We are all DC nurses today,” said Karen Higgins, RN, co-president of National Nurses United which represents the 1,600 WHC nurses, told the rally. “I represent more than 160,000 nurses across the country who stand with you today.”

“At Washington’s largest hospital, they will hear you. They must hear you. Nurses are the backbone of care here and across the nation,” said DC Councilman Harry Thomas Jr.

U.S. Rep. Dennis Kucinich who noted he once worked in a hospital as an orderly and a surgical tech noted, “I know what it means if you don’t have enough nurses, it hurts the patients... All over this country workers are watching the events in Wisconsin, in Ohio, here in Washington, they’re seeing these signs of workers demand these rights not only for themselves, but for patients. This is an important moment in history.”

Others speaking at the rally included former Washington Redskin Nolan Harrison III; Terence O’Sullivan, general president of the Laborer’s International Union of North America; Jos Williams, president of the Metropolitan Washington Council (AFL-CIO); Margaret Shanks, RN, president of the District of Columbia Nurses Association (NNU); and Rev. Graylan Hagler of Plymouth Congregational Church.

## **MedStar Likely Spending Over \$1 Million a Day Against Nurses**

WHC RNs will continue to picket the hospital for the next four days if hospital management carries out a punitive, unwarranted and costly lockout of the nurses as it has threatened.

At a strike last year by a similar number of RNs at Temple University in Philadelphia, the hospital spent on average \$1 million a day over a four-week strike, according to Temple's own audited statements.

“WHC will likely waste at least \$5 million of funds diverted from patient care for this punitive and unwarranted dispute with its RNs,” said NNU National Bargaining Director Jill Furillo, RN. “They should focus on settling the differences to achieve a fair contract for the nurses and for the well being of the patients and the community.”

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