

Nurses Vote Unanimously to Form Largest RN Union

December 9, 2009

On December 7, delegates to the founding convention of National Nurses United (NNU) held in Phoenix, Arizona voted unanimously to create a 150,000-member nursing “superunion.” NNU is being formed through the consolidation of three large and active national labor organizations, including the California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee, the United American Nurses, and the Massachusetts Nurses Association. Convention delegates also adopted a constitution and elected three co-presidents to head NNU.

A press release issued in connection with the convention, available at <http://www.calnurses.org/media-center/press-releases/2009/december/unanimous-vote-creates-largest-rn-union-in-u-s-history.html>, touted the potential power of NNU and predicted “a major escalation in campaigns to expand union representation of nurses and an expanded voice in healthcare reform.” The NNU goals include the organization of “all direct care RNs into a single organization capable of exercising influence over the healthcare industry, governments, and employers” and the advocacy of specific “public policy” proposals, “including the enactment of safe nurse-to-patient ratios and patient advocacy rights in Congress and every state.”

The massive NNU consolidation comes at a time when the labor movement at large continues to seek to capitalize on increased political influence in Washington, D.C., and to find new ways to reverse declining membership. In addition to nurse-specific legislation, NNU can also be expected to push aggressively for the enactment of labor-friendly bills such as the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA).

Perhaps of most immediate concern to employers in the healthcare industry is an increase in grassroots organizing activity that is expected to follow the formation of NNU. Deborah Burger, one of the three NNU co-presidents, indicated that increasing membership will be a top priority and stated, “We are going to make sure we organize every single direct-care RN in this country.”

Morgan Lewis attorneys have experience preparing healthcare and other industry clients to respond to union organizing activity, including corporate campaigns, authorization card drives, and union elections. We stand ready to assist you in facing the challenges presented by NNU and other healthcare industry labor organizations.

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