

Q & A for PECSH members

Where are we in our contract negotiations with Sparrow management?

On Sunday, October 31, Sparrow management presented its final offer to the PECSH bargaining team. Members will be voting on the offer November 3 and 4. If the offer is rejected, the Employer has agreed to bargain next Wednesday and Thursday. The parties have agreed to extend the contract through November 19. Although some progress has been made in staffing and in other areas, the concessions being asked in regard to health insurance benefits and the pension structure are still extreme. Therefore, the PECSH bargaining team is recommending that the membership reject the Management's contract proposal.

What are the next steps?

The first step will be to take the vote rejecting Management's final offer and authorizing the PECSH negotiating team to call a strike if necessary. Once the offer is rejected, PECSH will continue negotiations with Management next week.

Has Sparrow management been bargaining in good faith?

MNA/PECSH has evidence of several unfair labor practices committed by Sparrow. MNA/PECSH will be filing ULP charges in the near future.

Does a strike authorization vote mean PECSH will go on strike?

No. A strike authorization vote simply means that if the negotiations following the rejection of the offer reach impasse, the PECSH negotiating team has been given the ability to call for a strike by the PECSH membership. A strike is not called without serious thought and planning.

What is the process for going on strike?

If the PECSH negotiating team determines a strike should be called, a 10-day strike notice will be given to Sparrow management as required by national labor law. Members of PECSH will be notified immediately when a strike notice is being served.

How long would PECSH be on strike?

One of the decisions that would be made before a strike notice is given to Sparrow management is whether the strike would be open-ended or of a specific duration. This decision would be based on several different factors including the status of contract negotiations.

Will I be assured of getting my job back if I got out on strike?

The Hospital cannot "fire" you for striking. The negotiating team will work to negotiate an agreement fully reinstating all professionals covered by the contract, including probationary employees. In a strike against unfair labor practices, an employer cannot fire or permanently replace employees. In an economic strike, the employer can "replace" you in an action similar to a layoff. MNA/PECSH believes that Sparrow's unfair labor practices during these negotiations will provide protection for your job in the event of a strike. Sparrow could also lockout professionals, and whether the lockout is legal or not would depend on the circumstances of the lockout.

How would PECSH help its members when they are on strike?

MNA will call on faith, community, and labor leaders to support the nurses and health care professionals as well as provide numerous resources for dealing with banks, credit unions, etc.

Are my benefits safe while we're negotiating?

The Employer cannot unilaterally change the terms and conditions of the expired contract, which remains in effect (with the exception of dues collection and arbitration). In addition, employees engaging in concerted union activities are still protected under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). Your wages, hours of work, and conditions of employment are protected by the NLRA as negotiations continue on a new contract.

Will I have health insurance benefits if I'm on strike?

The Hospital may have already paid the premiums for the first month of the strike. The Hospital is required under federal law to send written notice advising all employees of their rights under COBRA to continue health insurance under the Hospital's group plans. Within 60 days after receipt of this written notice, employees electing to continue coverage must notify the Hospital of the choice and make their own payments.

Do probationary, per diem and PRN employees have a right to strike?

It would be a violation of the National Labor Relations Act for the Employer to discriminate or retaliate against any employee who exercises their right to strike.