



4,000 Nurses Walk Out in Bay Area for Better Patient Care

by [James Parks](#), Mar 24, 2008



Elected officials and union leaders joined some 4,000 striking registered nurses and their families over the weekend in San Francisco to rally for better patient care at 10 Bay Area hospitals operated by the Sutter Health chain. On Friday, the nurses, members of the California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee ([CNA/NNOC](#)), began a 10-day strike against Sutter throughout the Bay Area. They are seeking safe staffing levels.

Jan Rodolfo, an RN at Sutter's Alta Bates Summit hospital, says:

This is about when you're a patient and you push your call light and you're short of breath, will a nurse come to your bedside right away and give you what you need?

The nurses also want lift teams to prevent patient falls and accidents and injuries and assurances that RNs are not improperly assigned to hospital areas where they are not qualified to serve. Additionally, the nurses oppose efforts by Sutter Health to close hospitals and reduce their health care benefits and seek to enhance their retirement security.

This is the third time nurses have struck Sutter Health hospitals in five months. Nearly 5,000 nurses [were locked out](#) at five Bay Area hospitals when they tried to return to work after a two-day strike in October 2007 and they waged a second two-day strike in December.

Sutter is retaliating against the workers, according to CNA/NNOC. The union says it plans to file unfair labor practice charges against the hospital, alleging that Sutter has made unilateral changes in nurses' health benefits, and unlawfully discriminated against

nurses for exercising federally protected union rights. Says Bonnie Castillo, CNA/NNOC's Sutter Health division director:

This disgraceful and unlawful behavior belies Sutter's hypocritical rhetoric that it values and respects its nurses.

At another rally last Friday in Oakland, community and union leaders and elected officials demonstrated their support for striking nurses. Art Pulaski, executive secretary-treasurer of the [California Labor Federation](#), told the crowd:

There's something wrong with this corporation named Sutter. There's something wrong when they try to nix our nurses from our hospital beds to try to improve their bottom line. We need our nurses. Our message is take care of our nurses because they're the only ones in our hospitals who take care of us.

Loni Hancock, a member of the California Assembly, said:

We used to have community hospitals. Now we have a large corporate hospital chain. I am proud to stand with you as a person who will be a patient someday and has been a patient. I need you there, I need you secure, and I need you healthy.