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Massachusetts Nurses Association Votes to Join RN Super Union at Annual Convention

Massachusetts Nurses Association [1]

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BREWSTER, MASS.—The formation of the largest RN union and professional association in U.S. history took another major step forward Thursday as members at the annual convention of the Massachusetts Nurses Association cast an overwhelming vote to endorse affiliation with the new national union.

National Nurses United (NNU), unifying the 23,000-member MNA with the 86,000-member California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee (CNA/NNOC) and the 45,000 member United American Nurses, is scheduled to hold its founding convention December 7 and 8 in Scottsdale, AZ. The new union of will be comprised of more than 150,000 front-line direct care nurses working in 22 states.

"This represents a monumental step forward in the growing movement of direct care nurses to finally claim a national voice with true national power," said Beth Piknick, RN, a nurse at Cape Cod Hospital and president of the MNA. "As the debate over health care reform takes center stage, it's essential that direct care nurses, those who spend the most time with patients, have the ability to make their positions known and their voices heard."

"We have just sent shock waves through the health care industry and I hope it sends chills down the backs of those employers who would want to continue to keep us down," said Karen Higgins, an ICU nurse at Boston Medical Center who has been appointed by the MNA Board of Directors to serve as one

of three co-presidents of the NNU.

"I am in favor of the national union because I am tired of other people, who don't provide direct care, speaking for nurses," said Jane Connolly, RN, a nurse at Carney Hospital in Dorchester, MA, who spoke at the meeting when the motion to affiliate was presented. "The NNU will be an organization of RNs, speaking for RNs to improve the care of our patients from coast to coast."

National Nurses United is being formed by the parties with a commitment to strengthen the ability of direct care RNs to protect and improve patient care conditions and RN standards from coast to coast. The NNU also aims to protect and expand patient rights and RN professional practice, including promoting a Senate Bill, S.1031—the National Nursing Shortage Reform and Patient Advocacy Act—which is modeled after the successful California law that established RN-to-patient safe staffing ratios. The new organization will work to strengthen the voice of nurses in the national health care debate.

After the vote, MNA Executive Director Julie Pinkham spoke of a growing movement of "nurses from all over our nation coming together to raise their voices in defense of their patients whose safety has been compromised by an industry that puts business interests over the interests of sick patients."

"The system is broken," Pinkham added "and we are coming together to fix it."

At the annual meeting the membership voted by more than a three to one margin in favor of the MNA's affiliation with the NNU, and passed all related motions supporting the organization's participation in the new union. A preliminary vote on a dues increase to support the organization's participation was also conducted, but secret mail balloting on the measure still needs to be completed. Final results expected in early November.

The preliminary agreement between the three founding organizations to form the NNU was announced on Feb, 18, 2009. The CNA/NNOC membership voted to endorse the new national nurses union in September and the UAN is scheduled to hold its vote later this month.

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