

Suburban hospital comes under union fire

by [Rupa Shenoy](#)
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West Suburban Medical Center in Oak Park was charged by the National Labor Relations Board with suppressing union activities, and the hospital denied it.

The NLRB cited an October incident in which a manager kept Torrence Shorter, a union activist and food service employee, from talking with coworkers.

West Suburban is a member hospital of non-profit Resurrection Health Care Corp., the largest Catholic health care system in Illinois.

The episode came a week after Shorter spoke at an American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 31 event, said Robert Malgieri, coordinator of the union's campaign for representation at the hospital system.

According to the complaint, West Suburban used an "overly broad rule which prohibits employees from speaking to co-workers about concerns affecting conditions of employment and which discriminatorily singles out union supporters..." The hospital "has been interfering with, restraining, and coercing employees in the exercise of the rights guaranteed in (the National Labor Relations) Act..."

A hearing on the complaint is scheduled for March 12.

"West Suburban Medical Center denies the allegations in the complaint issued by the NLRB's Regional Office," Resurrection said in a statement. "In the past five years this same labor union has filed more than 40 similar complaints against Resurrection Health Care affiliates and the NLRB has not ruled in the union's favor in any of the previous cases."

A record of previous complaints could not be immediately confirmed by NLRB Acting Regional Director Gail R. Moran.

Malgieri said employees at RHC approached AFSCME about organizing in 2003.

Resurrection is the second-largest health care system in the Chicago area, with eight affiliate hospitals throughout the north and west suburbs. The hospital system's statement of workers' rights affirms employees' rights to organize, in accordance with the policies outlined by the United States Catholic Bishops Conference.

“This is a Catholic hospital system that should respect the rights of workers to organize and should sit down with the union and work out a fair process, a process that doesn't intimidate that doesn't harass and lets workers make a free and fair choice,” Malgieri said.