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Health Care Employees

RNs at Three Las Vegas Hospitals Vote For CNA/NNOC, Ousting SEIU Local 1107

Registered nurses at three Las Vegas area hospitals March 31-April 1 voted for representation by the California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee, ousting their current bargaining agent, a local of the Service Employees International Union.

Nurses at three campuses of St. Rose Dominican hospitals in Las Vegas and nearby Henderson cast 409 ballots for CNA/NNOC and 135 ballots for SEIU Local 1107, Stephen Wamser, an official with the National Labor Relations Board's resident office in Las Vegas, told BNA April 2. He said 919 RNs were eligible to vote.

The election was a rerun of a runoff election that had been held Dec. 2-3 in which the nurses cast 392 ballots for SEIU, and 390 for CNA/NNOC, with another 11 challenged ballots (234 DLR A-5, 12/5/08). Wamser said that NLRB resolved the challenged ballots, but CNA/NNOC had filed objections that were still pending.

Following the announcement last month that a national agreement had been reached between CNA/NNOC and SEIU for the two unions to work together on organizing and bargaining with common employers (52 DLR A-1, 3/20/09), the parties entered into a consent agreement to hold the runoff election, Wamser said, adding that they also agreed on who would be eligible to vote so there would not be any challenges.

According to CNA/NNOC spokesman Chuck Idelson, as a result of the national agreement, SEIU Local 1107 "agreed not to campaign" in the runoff election.

Idelson said the Nevada nurses want to unite with their colleagues at other Catholic Healthcare West hospitals represented by CNA/NNOC. The union currently represents some 10,500 other RNs in 30 CHW hospitals in California and Nevada, he said.

Amber Lopez Lasater, a spokeswoman for SEIU Local 1107, said that the national agreement between the two unions called for the election to be rerun and for SEIU to refrain from campaigning. She added that Local 1107 will continue to represent the other employees at the hospital. SEIU members at these hospitals will "continue to work along side the RNs to care for our patients and the community," she said.

SEIU Local 1107 had represented nurses at two of the hospitals since 2004 and was in the process of negotiating a third collective bargaining contract when CNA/NNOC filed a petition last year seeking an election. RNs at the third hospital were organized by SEIU in November 2006 and were in the process of bargaining a first contract.

An initial election was held May 6-7, 2008, in which nurses cast 400 ballots for CNA/NNOC, 377 for SEIU Local 1107, 26 for no union, and six additional ballots were challenged. Neither of the unions received a majority of the votes cast and SEIU filed unfair labor practice charges against the hospitals (90 DLR A-3, 5/9/08). Several months later the parties entered into an agreement to conduct a runoff election between the two unions.

Meanwhile, in late October 2008, members of Local 1107 ratified a new four-year contract reached with the three hospitals. The contract did not act as a bar to the runoff election since the original petition seeking an election was filed during the window period prior to the expiration of the last contract, according to Wamser.

No representative of the St. Rose Dominican hospitals could be immediately reached for comment.