

The Dallas Morning News

Letters: Readers sound off about business issues

Sunday, June 23, 2008

Look before voting on union

Re: "Hospital managers meet with lawyers over unions" by Jason Roberson, June 13
Business section

By choosing to characterize an upcoming vote by the nurses as "gearing up for a vote to authorize such a union" rather than "gearing up to choose whether or not to authorize a union," it would appear that you have a clear pro-union bias.

This is unfortunate because in what could have been an informative article on the progress or lack thereof by the California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee organizing drives over the past few months, your readers would have learned that just this past month they failed once again to organize a hospital in Fresno, Calif., and that they are locked in a very public battle with a rival nursing union that includes allegations of union raiding and the theft of a private membership mailing list by the CNA.

My advice to my fellow RNs in Texas is: Do your due diligence before you make any decision.

Geneviève M. Clavreul, RN, Ph.D., Pasadena, Calif.

The Dallas Morning News

Hospital managers meet with lawyers over unions

10:39 PM CDT on Thursday, June 12, 2008

By JASON ROBERSON / The Dallas Morning News
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Local hospital managers, worried about the possibility of nurses unions, talked with labor lawyers Thursday about how to avoid their coming here.

The California Nurses Association/ National Nurses Organizing Committee began contract negotiations this week with a Tenet Healthcare Corp. hospital in Houston. Meanwhile, a second Tenet hospital there is gearing up for a vote to authorize such a union.

Dallas is next, predicted the Dallas law firm Littler Mendelson PC, which sponsored Thursday's seminar titled, "The Unions are Coming! The Unions are Coming!"

Tenet's labor attorney Dan Rodriguez also was on hand to offer tips and answer questions from hospital human resource managers.

"The day of reckoning is coming and the [nurses union] is targeting Texas," said Robert Millman, a labor attorney with Littler Mendelson. "The [hospital] CEOs in Houston are meeting, and they're scared. We don't want that to happen here in Dallas."

In the seminar, managers were advised to befriend nurses by learning the names of their children and to immediately fire those who are disruptive and complain. Such nurses, according to Littler Mendelson attorney Steven Rahhal, can be a catalyst for unionization.

He said it will be easier to fire them now than later, because without a labor contract, managers in Texas are permitted to get rid of employees for almost any reason.

David Monkawa, regional union organizing director with the CNA/NNOC, confirmed that Texas is a key target. He said he does not believe hospital managers, under the current health care system, can create working conditions favorable enough to avoid unionization.

"There's a fundamental conflict of interest because with hospitals there is profit being made, and to that end, hospitals have to watch the bottom line," Mr. Monkawa said. "If hospitals were to provide all the health care the public needed it would cut into that bottom line."

He added that he was disappointed that lawyers and managers "would meet to discuss how to stop the nurses from advocating for better health care."