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SAFE STAFFING PASSES STATE ASSEMBLY

NEXT STOP: STATE SENATE



A historic NY Assembly vote

It all came together this week, on June 14. Within our hospitals the calls for safe staffing were heard. Our petitions were read. Our rallies and informational pickets were seen. Our POAs were lodged. Letters from supporters and to legislators were noticed. Our outreach to other unions, public health experts, community advocates... our voices became one. Our campaign for safe staffing scored a major victory and made history.

The *Safe Staffing for Quality Care Act*—A08580A (Gunther)—passed the New York State Assembly resoundingly today. The Act must now pass the State Senate and be signed by Governor Cuomo before it can become law, but the Assembly vote constituted a very critical step forward on our path to victory and positions the bill for a strong start in the 2016-2017 state legislative session. Come September, we'll be ready to take the final steps toward winning safe staffing for our patients, hitting the ground with more visibility, public support, and allies than ever before. We will call upon office seekers to support this measure.

NYSNA's leadership in this central campaign to protect patient care demonstrates a profound resolve and unity of purpose. Over the past year members came together as never before and waged a comprehensive campaign to see our Safe Staffing bill become a reality. It was our hard work—thousands of NYSNA members in all corners of the state—who spent countless hours educating, engaging, and mobilizing in our workplaces and communities and lobbying local governments and elected state representatives to raise awareness about the staffing crisis in our state.



Members of the Champlain Valley Physicians Hospital Med/Surg bargaining team organized coworkers and the community around the issue of patient safety.



Two of the six thousand petition signers who stopped by the NYSNA exhibit at the 2015 New York State Fair.



Jayne Cammisa, RN, Westchester Medical Center, at the March 8 RN Advocacy Training.



Martha Wilcox, RN with Sullivan County, helped staff the NYSNA booth at the Kingston Farmers Market on September 26 and spoke with community members about the importance of safe staffing.



Interfaith Bargaining Committee members (l-r): Paul Garrett, RN; Judith Bingham, RN; Sharon Bedford, RN; Ari Moma, RN; NYSNA Rep Glenn Bouldin; and Solomon Bakare, RN. RNs at Interfaith Medical Center reached an agreement that is a win for the hospital's nurses and patients. The hospital agreed to add 20 RN FTEs over the four-year term—nearly a 10% increase—and to an expedited process for enforcement of staffing language.



NYSNA nurses present a thank you card to the Buffalo Common Council following its November 24 passage of a resolution in support of the safe staffing bill.



Southside Hospital bargaining committee members (left to right) Chrysse Blau, RN; Marie Boyle, RN; Marianne Walsh, RN; Maria Harmel, RN; and Caroline Grupe, RN, worked to negotiate a contract renewal last fall that improves patient safety with the addition of a new 30-FTE float pool.

NYSNA nurses mobilizing for victory

Inside our workplaces, we took myriad actions to address patient safety concerns. At our bargaining tables, we negotiated contract language to ensure safer staffing and protect patients. With every step, we gained focus and built unity. It was extraordinary.

A significant outreach innovation came in the form of our Safe Staffing Captain Campaign to document the conditions we face on every shift of every day, enforce our contract language, and provide a comprehensive picture of staffing conditions to help those outside our hospitals understand what we observe in our practice.

We filed grievances, made phone calls, signed petitions in our units, and met with nursing directors, labor-management committees,



Safe Staffing Captain Lisa Alleyne-Moore, RN, Kings County Hospital Center.

for safe staffing!



Assembly member Aileen Gunther (standing), DeAnn McEwen, RN, former President, California Nurses Association, Marva Wade, RN, NYSNA's First Vice President, and Pat Kane, RN, NYSNA Treasurer, in Albany, at the Campaign for Patient Safety's February 9 Legislative Briefing.

and administrators to shine a spotlight on unsafe conditions and raise care standards for our patients.

Inside our union, we trained hundreds of members to be effective leaders and advocates. On March 8, we held our union's first ever conference for RN advocates to further develop the educational, organizing, and advocacy skills gained through NYSNA's member leader training program.

Community outreach

We educated and mobilized our friends, neighbors, and families while at the same time caring for

our communities. Member volunteers from Oneida Healthcare Center, Samaritan Medical Center, Onondaga County, and St. Elizabeth gathered over 6,000 signatures in support of safe staffing legislation at last summer's Great New York State Fair. Members in towns across the state gathered thousands of additional signatures by hosting NYSNA booths at local events such as the Kingston Farmers Market, Smithtown's 350th Anniversary, the Marine and Outdoor Recreation Expo, and the Valley Stream Community Fest. There was much, much more.



Donna Kalette, RN, St. Elizabeth Medical Center, with coworkers at the March 18 informational picket outside the Utica hospital.



We took our message to our communities with presentations to local governing boards, informational pickets, rallies, and vigils. NYSNA nurses at Ellis Medicine, St. Elizabeth, Nathan Littauer, Oneida Healthcare, St. Catherine of Sienna, St. Joseph, St. Charles, Samaritan, Westchester Medical Center, and Vassar Brothers Medical Center all took their staffing concerns to their communities in recent months. In towns and cities across the state, NYSNA nurses raised awareness about what was happening inside our facilities.

"We want the community to understand the critical link between staffing and quality of care," said Dawn Bailie, RN and member of

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Safe Staffing Captain Ethel Mathis, RN, St. Elizabeth Medical Center.



Kevin Davis, RN, Westchester Medical Center, recruits a petition signer at the February Black and Puerto Rican Legislative Caucus in Albany.



St. Charles nurses took their safe staffing message to the streets on April 8.



State Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson with NYSNA President Judy Sheridan-Gonzalez, RN, (on her left) and members displaying the safe staffing petition at the Black and Puerto Rican Legislative Caucus in February, where NYSNA nurses were more united than ever in asking our Senators and Assembly members to support the Safe Staffing for Quality Care Act.



At NYSNA's March 8 Advocacy Training, Promise Nwankpa, RN, Harlem Hospital (left), led her table's discussion during the afternoon workshop.

(at left) Albany heard the message loud and clear, "Safe Staffing Saves Lives!" when a record-setting 2,000 members from all corners of the state converged on the State Capitol for NYSNA's April 13 Lobby Day.

A historic vote for safe staffing!

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the NYSNA Executive Committee at St. Catherine of Sienna.

United for patient care

We developed a sophisticated and targeted media campaign to educate the public and help our elected representatives see the need for safe staffing legislation. We formed partnerships with other unions and patient advocacy groups to advance our safe staffing agenda.

We announced the *Campaign for Patient Safety* at a February 9 legislative briefing in Albany, where nearly 100 New York State Senators, Assembly Members, and their staff heard from experts about safe staffing. The press conference that followed spread our message far and wide as nurse unions and patient advocacy groups united for safe staffing, including members of the Public Employees Federation, the Communication Workers of America, the New York State Union of Teachers, and the New York Statewide Senior Action Council.

On May 6, RNs spearheaded a statewide day of action for safe staffing in honor of National Nurses Day. Elected leaders and patient advocates joined nurses at rallies and press conferences throughout the state calling on the New York State legislature to pass the *Safe Staffing for Quality Care Act*.

Political action

We took action on two fronts in the political arena. We worked to educate and engage elected leaders on the need for safe staffing legislation while helping to elect leaders that share our values.

In the electoral arena, in April, Long Island members mobilized



NYSNA members from Nyack Hospital, St. John's Riverside, Montefiore, Mount Sinai Medical Center, Mount Sinai St. Luke's Hospital, New York Presbyterian, Harlem Hospital, and Jacobi Medical Center came together on May 3 to witness the Rockland County legislature pass a resolution in support of safe staffing.



Assembly members Jose Rivera and Jeffrey Dinowitz joined NYSNA members at Bronx Borough Hall as part of the Campaign for Patient Safety's statewide action on May 6.



Anne Bové, RN, and President of NYSNA's NYC H+H Executive Council, speaks out on safe staffing.

to elect Todd Kaminsky, adding a strong supporter of the bill to the State Senate.

Together with our coalition partners, we lobbied our local governments to support of the *Safe Staffing for Quality Care Act* and saw success as Albany, Erie, Rockland, Schenectady, and Ulster Counties, the cities of Buffalo and Utica, and towns and villages throughout the state passed resolutions calling on the state legislature to pass the bill.

We met with state representatives in their district offices and in Albany. At the February 13 Black and Puerto Rican Legislative Caucus, we hosted an educational table outside the Convention Center's Meeting Rooms, where we handed out flyers and gathered hundreds of signatures in support of bringing the *Safe Staffing for Quality Care Act* to a vote in both the Assembly and Senate. After filling ever corner of our petitions

with signatures, NYSNA nurses joined together to create a sea of red and present the giant petitions to state legislators.

A few weeks later, we were back at the State Capitol for the spring *Somos el Futuro* conference held March 18-20, where members spoke with elected leaders about safe staffing and other issues of importance to nurses.

On April 13, a record-setting 2,000 members from all corners of the state participated in NYSNA's Lobby Day. We made such an impression that Assemblyman Richard Gottfried, chair of the Assembly Health Committee, told members gathered in for the afternoon rally, "In all my years in Albany, I have never seen a crowd this big in this park." Calls for safe staffing reverberated.

We returned again to Albany on May 10—this time with our Campaign for Patient Safety partners. We thanked our Assembly and Senate supporters and honed in on undecided legislators, demanding a "Floor Vote Now!" during legislative office visits and the afternoon rally outside the Senate office building.

Time and again, we saw that when nurses talk, people listen!

What's next?

The bill currently has 135 sponsors and strong bi-partisan support in the NYS Assembly and Senate, but needs additional Senate support to become law. Now is the time to move forward with members of the State Senate!!



Rachel Jordan, RN, Erie County Medical Center, addressed the press at Buffalo City Hall as part of the Campaign for Patient Safety's statewide action on May 6.

(at left) On May 10, members did their part to make sure the message of "Floor Vote Now!" was heard by legislators in Albany.