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In the name of love... We stand with Orlando!

PP. 3-4

Safe staffing bill passes NYS Assembly, pp. 7-10

The light of hope



By Judy Sheridan-Gonzalez, RN
NYSNA President

Sometimes we lose hope. Chronically working short-staffed, lacking critical resources, bringing these issues forward to management's unresponsive ears—we could resign ourselves to thinking that this is just the way it is. But without hope, without the belief that things *can* get better, what are we left with? Passive resignation that we simply have to accept things as they are and do our best to plod through each day? But that's the same message we get when administrators tell us to "Do the best you can"—a euphemism for "I'm not going to get you another nurse."

Legislated ratios passed a milestone!

Everyone said we would never get this bill out of committee. They said that the Corporate Health Systems lobby was too powerful, their pockets too deep, their control of the politicians too tight. Those things are true—but what no one realized was that *nurses have power!* In our testimonies, our POAs, our Staffing Captain reports, our phone calls, lobby visits, rallies, pickets, demonstrations, confrontations with management, town halls, visits to community events, media interviews, our dogged persistence in demanding that the issue of short

staffing be addressed in a meaningful way—*WE DID IT!*

Not done yet...

Of course, the spotlight is now on the Senate. But the Senators know—and we are clear—that we can get this done. It took years to get the Mandatory Overtime law; just as many to get ratios in California. We are 15 years on this bill and we have made more progress in the last few years, especially this past year, than we have made in all previous years. Thanks to you, to all of you who have joined in this struggle to make our voices heard, the tragedy of understaffing is being recognized as a health care emergency in New York State.

And then there's single payer...

Based on our research, observations and experiences with our dysfunctional profit-driven health care system, we moved on another initiative: the establishment of a Single Payer Health Care System—Improved and Enhanced Medicare for All. This growing movement across the country recognizes that having predator insurance and pharmaceutical companies determine health care delivery is hazardous to our future.

Thanks again to our members—in coalition with communities, providers and labor organizations—the

Single Payer bill passed the Assembly this year as well! The funding mechanism to hire more nurses can be found when hospitals don't waste so much money on advertising, administrative overhead, interpreting and accommodating insurers' ridiculously complicated parameters, and competing over market share. That can only happen under a single payer system, such as exists in every developed country in the world—except ours.

And climate change?

NYSNA's board of directors identified three key elements to focus on that are essential for a healthy state and nation:

- Protecting our patients with safe staffing (the ratios bill);
- Protecting our communities with universal access to health care (the single payer bill);
- Protecting our planet by reducing our carbon footprint (the climate bill).

NYSNA members' actions, in a broad coalition with environmental, social justice, labor union and scientific organizations, were successful in getting this bill passed as well in the Assembly. This bill would set specific goals to transform energy use to sustainable forms within a given time, provide for middle-class jobs for workers in the fossil fuel industry as part of that "just transition" to clean energy, and protect our most vulnerable communities from the toxic effects of polluted water, air and soil. Think Flint, Michigan—or, closer to home: Hoosick Falls and the Oil Train passageways.

Anything is possible

Many people think of "unions" as something not intrinsic to our lives. NYSNA nurses have proven that our union is a part of us. Just like our own selves, our union has strengths as well as flaws; sees victories as well as disappointments; matures and grows wiser with age. But the union is a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. The union is the combined strength and commitment of its members to make things better in meaningful ways. The union is, more than anything, hope.



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Our April 13 Lobby Day was one step in the road leading to the Assembly's passage of the Safe Staffing for Quality Care Act.

NYSNA RNs pay tribute to Orlando victims

NYSNA nurses held a tribute to the victims of the devastating Orlando shooting at our June 23 Patient Advocacy Conference and pledged to fight against hatred and gun violence. Marva Wade, RN and NYSNA First Vice President, opened the program with a call for unity against hate and violence and then introduced a video commemorating the lives of the women and men killed in Orlando with each of their photos and names.

Reverend Pat Bumgardner delivered a non-denominational invocation paying homage to the victims in Orlando, Charleston, San Bernardino, Sandy Hook and other recent mass shootings.

“Our lives have to be about more than praying for the dead and patching up the living,” said Reverend Bumgardner. “I invoke the power we hold to stand up against bigotry and violence.”

Stacyann Chin, a poet who fled her home country because she was persecuted as a lesbian, shared a poem via Skype calling on the LGBT community and allies to stand together to stop gun violence.



Jenny Curtis, RN at Hospice and Palliative Care and St. Elizabeth Medical Center spoke as part of the morning tribute to Orlando victims.

“Today—and every day moving forward,” said Ms. Chin, “I dare you to choose love!”

We shall overcome

NYSNA member Pauline Williams, RN, led the room in an emotional rendition of “We Shall Overcome” as the lights dimmed and nurses lit glow sticks at their tables.

Anne Bové, RN and President of NYSNA’s NYC H+H Executive Council, shared her memories of the public hospital response to the tragedy of 9/11. “For nurses and first responders, many of us living and working in New York City, the memories of the violence and horror of 9/11 are still fresh,” said Ms. Bové. “To the nurses, doctors, EMTs, aides, and other caregivers of Orlando Regional Med. Ctr., we understand and thank you for your compassionate and tireless work over these harrowing days.”

Jenny Curtis, a NYSNA member at Hospice and Palliative Care and at St. Elizabeth concluded, “We will not let the dream die. We will stand side by side for hope, equality and, greatest of all, love.”



Marion Parkins, RN



Lilia Marquez, RN

Utica nurses turn up the heat

NYSNA nurses at St. Elizabeth in Utica increased pressure on management after administrators attempted to back out of a negotiating session attended by 50 members of the bargaining unit.

RNs mobilized in all units and looked forward to attending the May 31 bargaining session. “This was the first time that the entire chapter was invited to attend, and for many it was their first exposure to the nitty-gritty of negotiations,” said Mike Pattison, RN and St. Elizabeth NYSNA Executive Committee Member.

The meeting was scheduled for 7 pm at the usual place within the College of Nursing. “When 50 nurses arrived, we found the College closed and no sign of management,” said Mary Thompson, an RN in St. Elizabeth’s Cardiac Unit. “After waiting nearly an hour, we all went together to management’s offices to bring them to the table.”

Standing room only

It turns out that management had moved the session without notice to a smaller room, apparently intimidated by the large group of vocal caregivers.

Mr. Pattison added, “That didn’t stop us. It may have been standing room only, but we made the hospital honor its commitment to meet.” The session began at 8:45 pm—one hour and forty-five minutes late.

By midnight, there was still no contract, but St. Elizabeth NYSNA members had gained new insight into the experience their bargaining committee had endured since negotiations started six months ago. The committee has presented contract proposals to raise patient care standards, resolve safe staffing concerns in a meaningful way, and provide fair wages and affordable healthcare for the hospital’s nearly 500 NYSNA nurses. The next meeting is scheduled for July 11.



St. Elizabeth nurses waiting for management to arrive at negotiations on May 31.



By Jill Furillo, RN,
NYSNA Executive
Director

The horrors of Orlando

It is with heavy hearts that we march in this year's Gay Pride Parade. 49 women and men were murdered by a madman in Orlando in the largest mass shooting in modern American history. Whether the assailant was a supporter of ISIS or another young man with a dangerous, untreated mental illness who could too easily access an assault rifle that shot 30 rounds per minute, his terror has devastated our nation.

Nurses, doctors, and other first responders carried light into a dark night for our nation when they saved countless lives with their quick action and tireless care. The *LA Times* reported that "an army of nurses" awoke in the night, picked up their phones even though they were off duty, and then arrived at the hospital in droves to care for the shooting

Sadly, in addition to vital primary care and life-saving medical treatments, when we discuss the closure of hospitals in our communities, we must now also consider the importance of having a well-staffed healthcare facility nearby to respond to the horrific mass shootings that have become so common in our country.

Stopping gun violence

Not long ago this column addressed the devastating impact our country's lack of rational gun laws has had on our safety. But today I want to write about new hope on the horizon.

A group of lawmakers recently held a 25-hour sit-in in the House of Representatives to push for reforms in our nation's gun laws, including expanded background checks. While the legislation they were sup-

porting wasn't without flaws, the lawmakers' commitment to its passage showed growing momentum to stop weapons from getting into the hands of dangerous people.

Representative John Lewis, a leader in the Civil Rights Movement, initiated the occupation of the house floor on June 22. "We will be silent no more," said Representative Lewis. "We have lost hundreds and thousands of innocent people to gun violence. Tiny little children, babies, students and teachers, mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, daughters and sons, friends and neighbors. And what has this body done? Mr. Speaker, not one thing."

House Democrats sang "We Shall Overcome" just as NYSNA nurses did at our own tribute to the victims of the Orlando shooting (see pg. 3 for more about NYSNA's tribute).

We are standing with members of Congress and demanding reforms to the lax gun laws that are making America the most dangerous industrialized nation in the world.

Choosing love

Hate is a disease that hurts all of us, but it is no coincidence that the Orlando killer targeted a gay bar that was a haven for the Orlando LGBT community. Lesbian, gay, and transgender people are most likely to be victims of hate crimes in America, according to a recent *New York Times* analysis of FBI data. LGBT people of color are even more frequently targeted. The Orlando shooting occurred on a Latino-themed night at the club and the vast majority of victims were people of color. This attack created terror in what was previously a safe space for a community that already lives in fear of all-too-real threats of hatred and violence.

Our country is at risk of being taken over by politics of hate and fear. Certain politicians respond to tragedies like Orlando by propagating more hatred, by proposing to build walls and ban all members of a faith adhered to by nearly a third of the world's population from our country.

The only way to combat fear and hatred is with action inspired by love and compassion. We will continue to fight to stop gun violence. But we will fight with love in our hearts, because it is love and not hate that will help us to build a better world for our patients and our communities.

victims. One healthcare worker described a "war scene" at the hospital as victims were brought in on stretchers, many with life-threatening wounds.

Help nearby

A key reason caregivers were able to keep so many patients alive is that the nearest hospital was a mere three blocks from the nightclub where the massacre took place. Nurses know that in a crisis every minute matters, and in Orlando first responders were able to give victims the care they needed without having to shuttle imperiled patients across town.

The majority of Americans support common-sense gun laws. But the National Rifle Association continues to put our nation in danger by fighting tooth and nail, through relentless lobbying and bullying, to stop any restrictions on guns whatsoever, even if that means allowing terrorists, criminals, or the severely mentally ill to buy guns.

Now, the tide is turning, and some lawmakers are bravely standing up for our safety.





Unions and environmentalists unite for climate justice

New Yorkers won a victory for climate justice on June 1 when the Assembly passed the *New York State Climate and Community Protection Act* (A.10342). Earlier that day, nurses rallied with our partners from NY Renews, a climate justice coalition that NYSNA members helped to form back in December. Our coalition includes more than 70 community, environmental, labor, social justice, and political organizations, including 1199SEIU and the Working Families Party. NY Renews drafted the legislation, which ThinkProgress called “the most ambitious climate bill in the nation,” and then lobbied to make it an Assembly priority and ensure passage in this year’s session.

Common goals

At the press conference following the vote, NYSNA President Judy Sheridan-Gonzalez said, “Our coalition reflects an unprecedented level of unity between environmentalists and labor unions as we embrace our common goals of protecting the planet for future generations and ensuring that workers have good jobs.”

The bill provides a framework for meeting environmental goals put forward by Governor Cuomo, including generating 100 percent of the state’s energy needs through

renewable sources by 2050. It also sets intermediate targets for the percent of electricity generated from renewable sources at 27 percent by next year, 30 percent by 2020, forty percent by 2025, and 50 percent by 2030.

The bill focuses on both green jobs and environmental justice with provisions for ensuring a just transition for workers in carbon-based energy production and for supporting low-income communities of color disproportionately hurt by climate change.

Next year: NYS Senate

Newsday reports that “Provisions of the bill would favor hiring unionized companies paying... the prevailing wage... on construction projects and in training workers for new careers in the renewable energy field.”

The Assembly’s 96 to 43 vote was a strong endorsement for the bill and positions it for review and passage by the NYS Senate next session. Senator Diane Savino (D-23) is the bill’s Senate sponsor and by the time the session ended on June 16, the Senate version (S.08005) had 31 co-sponsors — just one short of the 32 needed for passage.

The Assembly’s vote followed the April release of an important new report by the National Science and Technology Council and the U.S.

Global Change Research Program that presents a comprehensive and evidence-based estimation of observed and projected climate change related health impacts in the United States. “The Impact of Climate Change on Human Health in the United States: A Scientific Assessment” documents how climate change is affecting public health, highlights social and environmental disparities that make some communities particularly vulnerable to climate change, and confirms it is a significant threat to the health of all Americans (and indeed all world citizens).

Need to act now

Following the Assembly vote, Steve Englebright (D-4), the bill’s sponsor, said, “New Yorkers have witnessed firsthand the devastating loss of life, homes and livelihoods caused by Superstorm Sandy and tropical storms Irene and Lee. These storms... and threats to public health all point to the undeniable fact that climate change is happening now, not in some distant future.”

NYSNA members, along with our NY Renews partners, are committed to hit the ground running when the legislature reconvenes in the fall. We remain steadfast in our commitment to take on the climate crisis and protect our planet in ways that provide good jobs for communities that need them.

NY Renews members

1199 SEIU
32BJ SEIU
350 Brooklyn
350 Capital Region
350 NYC
AVillage, Inc.
ALIGN
Alliance for a Green Economy
All Our Energy
Binghamton Regional Sustainability Coalition
Bronx Climate Justice North
Buffalo Coalition for Economic Justice
Campaign for Renewable Energy
Catskill Mountainkeeper
Center for Popular Democracy
Center for Social Inclusion
Center For Working Families
Citizen Action of New York
Clean Energy Technology Resources, LLC
Climate Caucus of the West Harlem Progressive Democratic Club
Climate Changers
Coalition for Sustainable Economic Development
Climate Justice Coalition of WNY
Communications Workers of America District 1
Community Voices Heard
El Puente
Emerald Cities Collaborative
Environmental Advocates of NY
Environment New York
Faith in New York
Food & Water Watch
GreenFaith
GOLES
Here Now
Interfaith Climate Justice Community of WNY
Labor Religion Coalition of New York State
Long Island Progressive Coalition
Make the Road New York
Massachusetts Avenue Project
Mothers on the Move
NACA
New York Communities for Change
New Economy Project
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
New York Working Families Party
NYC Environmental Justice Alliance
NYS Amalgamated Transit Union
NYS Nurses Association
NYS Transport Workers Union Local 100
NYS United Teachers
Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition
Open Buffalo
Partnership for the Public Good
People of Albany United for Safe Energy
People’s Climate Movement Capital Region
People’s Climate Movement NY
PUSH Buffalo
Renewable Energy Long Island
Rochester People’s Climate Coalition
Sane Energy Project
Sierra Club
Solidarity Committee of the Capital District
Solutions Project
Southern Tier Solar Works
Sustainable Tompkins
Syracuse United Neighbors
Teamsters Joint Council 16
The Morningside Hts - W. Harlem Sanitation Coalition, Inc.
THE POINT CDC
UAW Region 9
UAW Region 9A
Ujima Company, Inc.
United University Professions
UPROSE
WASH Project, Inc.
WE ACT for Environmental Justice.

State answers SOS on safety-net hospitals

The 2015-2016 legislative session ended with a huge victory for New York's safety-net hospitals—and the millions of patients who depend on them for care. An *Enhanced Safety Net Hospital* bill (A9476A/S6948-A) passed both legislative chambers with unanimous votes! It now awaits Governor Cuomo's signature.

NYSNA was particularly grateful to Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie for his leadership in ensuring that this bill moved out of committee and to a vote by the full Assembly. His determination in behalf of safety-net hospitals has been extraordinary.

Healthcare equity

The legislation establishes a fairer and more equitable state funding formula for safety-net hospitals by directing funding for indigent patients where it is most needed. It creates a new funding category of "enhanced safety-net hospital" that enables hospitals that care for a disproportionately high number of uninsured and Medicaid patients to receive higher Medicaid reimbursement rates and aggregate payments.

It was a coalition of labor and public health advocates that brought

the measure to fruition. Our Save Our Safety Net Campaign (SOS-C) partners AFSCME DC 37, Doctors Council, Committee of Interns and Residents, New York Immigration Coalition, the Commission on the Public's Health System and NYSNA worked tirelessly to see the bill succeed. And AFSCME DC 37 Executive Director Henry Garrido was instrumental in the bill's success.

Fair funding

Steven Choi, Executive Director of the New York Immigration Coalition, hailed the bill for improving health equity: "New York's immigrant communities are unfairly excluded from many health insurance programs because of their immigration status, and thus rely on these safety-net providers for the care they need and deserve. This legislation helps keep these safety-net providers sustainable and financially viable, so they can provide this care for immigrants left behind by federal and state programs."

Hospitals throughout the state that serve large underserved populations should benefit from the

bill, including NYC H+H facilities, Interfaith Medical Center, Bronx Lebanon, Erie County Medical Center, Westchester Medical Center, Messina Memorial Hospital, and Champlain Valley Physicians Hospital, among others.

The bill's timing is especially critical for NYC H+H's Bellevue Hospital as it faces the prospect of a significant increase in inpatient volume as Mount Sinai's plan to restructure nearby Beth Israel Hospital moves forward. Beth Israel is the larger of two remaining private sector hospitals in lower Manhattan. In recent years well over half of the facility's patients were either on Medicaid or uninsured, and a good number of these patients will likely end up at Bellevue or at other H+H facilities. NYC's public hospital system provides care to one in five New Yorkers and, with the changes at Beth Israel, thousands more will seek inpatient care within the system over the next few years.

The new bill provides a much-needed boost to the revenue of NYC H+H and all public and private sector providers across New York that serve the poor and uninsured.



Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie



AFSCME DC 37 Executive Director Henry Garrido



Anne Bové, RN and President of NYSNA NYC H+H Executive Council (far left), with SOS-C partners at April 14 press conference outside New York City Hall. At the microphone is NYC Public Advocate Letitia James.



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.



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.



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.



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.



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

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.

e 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

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



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 every 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.

WMC nurses stage silent protest

More than one hundred NYSNA members from Westchester Medical Center greeted the hospital's board of directors as it arrived for a June 1 meeting, staging a "silent gathering" complete with signs and a giant petition signed by more than 800 nurses. The petition urged the hospital to respect nurses, and return to the bargaining table to negotiate a fair union contract.

Nurses ready to negotiate

The newly elected NYSNA Negotiating Committee has been steadfast in working toward a contract settlement, putting forward proposals and mobilizing members. According to Eileen Letzeiser, RN and WMC's NYSNA LBU President, "Nurses stand ready to negotiate, but management has taken a condescending and adversarial tone instead of sitting down to bargain in good faith. We've put forward proposals that we think are more than fair to both sides."

WMC's future is looking brighter after a period of cutbacks and



WMC Board Members were greeted by NYSNA nurses outside the hospital's June 1 board meeting.

layoffs. "Things are looking up at WMC and that makes management's disrespectful attitude all the more puzzling," Ms. Letzeiser added. "The nurses agree with the hospital that salaries need to rise to competitive levels so that WMC

is able to attract the most qualified nurses. If we can agree on that, we should be able to reach a contract with wages and healthcare benefits that will help WMC retain nurses and provide the very best care to our patients."

Two unions. One heart.

The ongoing campaign for safe staffing at Vassar Brothers Medical Center has built unprecedented unity between NYSNA RNs and 1199SEIU UHWE caregivers, and mobilized union, community, and political supporters into an unstoppable force for quality patient care. At a June 15 informational picket and rally, hundreds marched outside the hospital to demand safe staffing and spread the message that quality healthcare depends on healthy staff.

Paul Ellis-Graham, President of the Hudson Valley Area Labor Federation, told VBMC workers, "We are with you. All of the members of the Hudson Valley Area Labor Federation—from carpenters to plumbers to teachers to clerical staff—we're all with you to protect the safety and lives of your patients."

Later in the day, hospital workers and supporters walked in

and read aloud a letter from four Dutchess County legislators to VBMC's CEO Ann McMackin. "There should be nothing more important to the hospital and administration than providing the highest standards of quality care," read the letter. "The hospital must be appropriately staffed to meet that goal. Anything less than that is unacceptable to the patients, the workers, and the community."

Broken promises

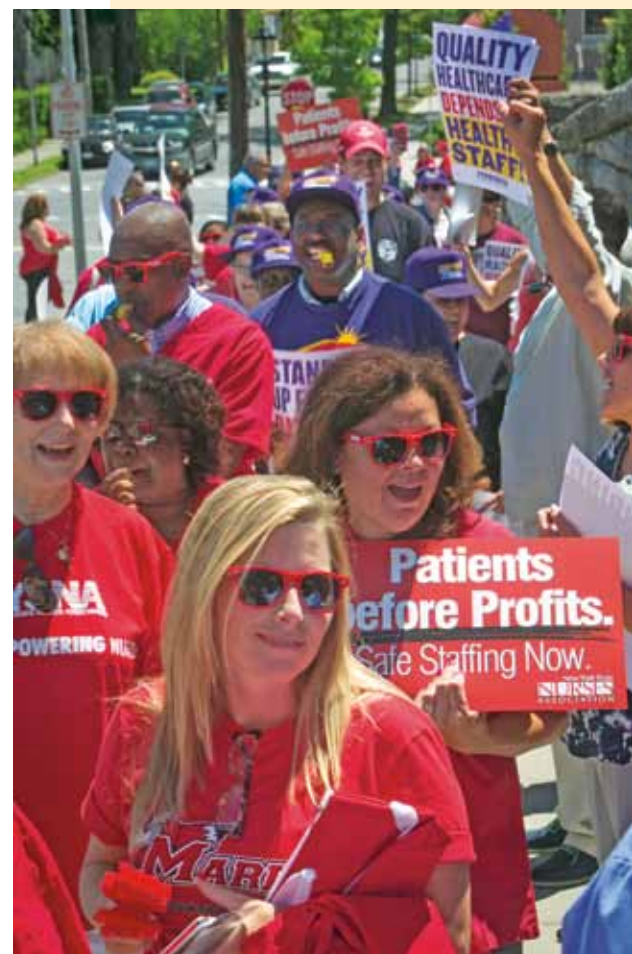
Two of the signers, Hannah Black and Micki Strawinski, joined workers on the picket line earlier that day, along with New York Senator Terry Gipson (D-41).

Assemblyman Frank Skartados (D-104) had also recently written to Ms. McMackin, asking that she "fulfill the staffing promises VBMC made to the nurses in the contract signed last December."

While management has added a few RN positions, VBMC nurses

are still working far below the standards management itself indicated as adequate and which were codified into the NYSNA contract. Cyndi Sexton, RN and VBMC NYSNA Executive Committee Member, reported that instead of hiring new staff to meet the higher patient census, "Nurses are being mandated to work overtime—made to stay 16, 17 hours and it's not safe." To add insult to injury, the hospital implemented a "dependability policy" that penalizes exhausted employees for getting sick.

Ms. Sexton added, "If there's a silver lining, it's the extraordinary solidarity we've built between the NYSNA nurses and 1199SEIU UHWE healthcare workers."



NYSNA and 1199SEIU members marched side by side at the June 15 info. picket.

Public and private sector nurses come together

"We are all leaders. We can empower each other."

**Cyndi Sexton,
RN, VMBC**

Corporatization and cuts to healthcare funding impact all of our patients, so members from both public and private facilities came together for NYSNA's third annual public sector conference on June 23. NYSNA First Vice President Marva Wade, RN, welcomed hundreds of members who gathered in New York City to the "Public Sector/Private Sector Patient Advocate Conference & Congress Meeting"—a day packed with opportunities for members to learn, share strategies and hone skills for dealing with the challenges facing patients and nurses.

Celebrating our victories

The timing of the conference presented an opportunity for members from across the state to celebrate our two recent legislative victories: the Assembly's June 14 passage of the *Safe Staffing for Quality Care Act* (see pages 7-10) and the Assembly and Senate's near unanimous June 17 endorsement of the *Enhanced Safety Net Hospital* bill (see p. 6).

"Thanks to the hard work of NYSNA members and our part-



Josephine Deocampo, RN in NYC H+H Bellevue Hospital Center, speaking at the morning workshop on using one-on-one conversations.

ners, safe staffing and fair and equitable hospital funding are now high profile public health issues across this state," said Anne Bové, RN and President of NYSNA's NYC H+H Executive Council.

We thanked our political supporters including Senators Liz Krueger (D-28) and Bill Perkins (D-30), Assemblymember Latrice Walker (D-55), New York City's Comptroller Scott Stringer and Public Advocate Letitia James, who joined us throughout the day. They

pledged to keep working with us to see the staffing bill pass the NYS Senate and become law next year.

Following a moving memorial to the victims of the Orlando mass shooting (see page 3), Ms. Bové introduced the day's first plenary by asking participants to name a deadly threat to public health. "I don't mean Ebola or Zika. The threat we are talking about today is from private corporations and healthcare business profiteers," she said. "They want to privatize every healthcare service—not to heal people but to make money. Where nurses see patients to be made well, they see billions of dollars to be made."

Fighting for our patients

Panelists included Jim Cavallero, Area Vice President of the Chicago Teachers Union Executive Board; Arthur Cheliotis, President CWA 1180 and CWA's national strike chair with whom NYSNA worked closely in CWA's recent Verizon strike; and Barbara Bowen, President of the Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York, a union of 25,000 college professors who recently won a hard-fought campaign to keep college education affordable and available to working New Yorkers.

Every speaker drove home the critical role of the Supreme Court in balancing power between the interests of the rich and powerful and the workers who keep our



Members take a moment to celebrate our historic victory in the New York State Assembly.

country running, and the key role of public sector unions in boosting the power of working people.

“Our unions are tools for social change but can only be as strong as we, who are the union, make them,” NYSNA President Judy Sheridan-Gonzalez told participants. “How we win today is the same as it’s always been. To quote Susan B. Anthony ‘Organize, agitate, educate must be our war cry.’”

“Make no mistake. The next President will have enormous influence on the composition, and therefore rulings, of the court,” warned Arthur Cheliotis. “*Citizens United*, the next *Friedrichs* case, reproductive choice, voting rights, affirmative action. These are all part of what makes this fall’s election so critically important.”

Building nurse power

The plenary was followed by workshops, where participants could choose between topics ranging from health and safety to building communication and leadership skills. At the workshop on “Using One-on-One Conversations to

Strengthen Our Movement to Advocate for Quality Patient Care and Protect Nursing Practice,” nurses shared experiences of when they felt powerful. Every story came back to one of two themes: 1) nurses feel power when we stand together, whether to advocate for our patients, fight injustice, or enforce contract language; and 2) we want and need power in the workplace to make changes for our patients.

We are all leaders

Josephine Deocampo, an OR nurse at Bellevue, shared how she and her coworkers came together to fight a workplace injustice. “I was empowered by my own unit standing together. As union members, as nurses, we are strong when we are united.” She advised workshop participants to “Know your rights. Know the policies of your own hospital. And speak up.”

To bring people together and build unity, we have to communicate, and we know from experience that one-on-one conversations are the most effective way to edu-

cate, engage and mobilize. Cyndi Sexton, RN and NYSNA Executive Committee Member at Vassar Brothers Medical Center, concluded the morning workshop by reminding every nurse, “We are all leaders. We can empower each other.”

The lunch panel featured private and public sector nurses sharing experiences and insights on the ways that corporatization and austerity are affecting patients and nursing practice. Judith Cutchin, RN and LBU President at Woodhull Hospital, addressed the impact of government austerity on her patients and the need for fair funding for public hospitals. “I see the cutbacks in my public hospital every day. I see it when I get to work and we’re short-staffed, in the long wait times for patients, in the slowness of receiving supplies, and in the fact that the hospital isn’t as clean as it used to be before housekeeping was outsourced.”

Sean Petty, RN at Jacobi Hospital and NYSNA Board Member, echoed Ms. Cutchin’s demand for fair funding for public health and then spoke of the power that nurses have to make change. “Don’t let anyone tell you there’s nothing you can do. When nurses stand together, we’re unstoppable. We saw this when North Central Bronx tried to close Labor and Delivery, and we stopped it. We saw this when NYC H+H tried to privatize dialysis, and not only did we stop it, we reversed the privatization that had already taken place. When we faced a staffing crisis in Jacobi’s ER, we stayed united and got management to agree to hire at least 15 new nurses.”

Broken promises

Kevin Donovan, Erie County Medical Center nurse and NYSNA Board Member, led the day’s final panel titled, “How Nurses Can Wield Political Power to Defeat Austerity, Win Safe Staffing, and Protect RN Unions in Public and Private Sectors.” He shared ECMC members’ successful campaign to get resolutions in support of the *Safe Staffing for Quality Care Act* passed by both the County of Erie and the City of Buffalo. “The key is to get involved in community and local politics. That’s where we can have the most influence and effect the greatest change.”



Anthony Ciampa, RN, New York Presbyterian and NYSNA Board Member, leading the lunch panel on austerity and corporatization.



Judith Cutchin, RN and LBU President, Woodhull Hospital, presenting at the lunch panel on corporatization and austerity.



Kevin Donovan, RN, ECMC, at the afternoon panel on using political power.



Nurses share ideas on how to build unity—and power—within their units and hospitals.



NYSNA President Judy Sheridan-Gonzalez, RN, speaks with members at the morning workshop on building diversity.

Nurse unity on LI



NYSNA nurses from three of Long Island's CHS hospitals united for a joint informational picket on June 8.

NYSNA members from three Catholic Health Services of Long Island hospitals (CHS) came together on June 8 outside the headquarters of the Diocese of Rockville Center to raise awareness of the staffing crisis inside their hospitals. St. Catherine of Siena Medical Center, St. Charles Hospital and St. Joseph Hospital are members of CHS, a healthcare network overseen by the Diocese.

NYSNA nurses at the three hospitals have been negotiating union contracts for several months. Safe staffing is the top concern at all three hospitals, which collectively employ about 1,200 nurses. Lorraine Incarnate, RN at St. Catherine of Siena came to Rockville Center to "let CHS know how important staffing issues are at our hospitals."

Staffing, staffing, staffing

Nurses are worried that short staffing is putting patient care at risk at all three hospitals. Tammy Miller, RN at St. Catherine of Siena, reported, "We're short on nurses. We're short on ancillary staff. When we're in the ICU and we have to take care of these critical patients and we're concerned that patient care will suffer because we don't have enough staff."

"Nurses are required to fulfill not only all the duties of a nurse, but the aide, the secretary, the lab tech, the transporter, and it's constantly taking us away from the bedside of patients who need our care," said Ms. Incarnate.

Life and death issue

"Having a correct ratio of patients to nurses can make the difference between life and death," Maureen Woodruff, a nurse at St. Charles, told the crowd gathered outside the Diocesan office. Ms. Incarnate added, "Our patients and our community deserve safe staffing and the quality nursing care that their disease or illness requires."

The June 8 action at the Diocese was preceded in recent weeks by informational pickets at the individual hospitals. "We're hopeful that CHS will finally hear us and listen to what we've been saying for quite some time: we need more nurses; we need more staff. We all are here to provide the best patient care we can to our patients," Tracy Kosciuk, an RN at St. Charles Hospital, said to the press and community members in attendance.

The nurses' unity is making a difference. In late June, St. Joseph Hospital reached a tentative agreement with its NYSNA nurses, which will be presented for ratification as this issue of *NY Nurse* goes to press.

Southside RNs unite for safer staffing

Southside Hospital's NYSNA nurses united to raise the alarm about patient safety beginning last fall when word spread that the Brain Injury Unit's already thin staff would be cut further.

Since then, members have come together to speak with a united voice for our patients in meetings with management to explain the already bad staffing situation and how cuts would worsen the staffing crisis. Nurse after nurse told stories of working on the unit and feeling lucky to get through each day. Sue Renz-Fetter, RN, explained, "the nurse staffing crisis is exacerbated by the fact that there is no ancillary staffing assigned to the unit, we get no support from the hospital's float pool, and we

must constantly deal with broken and missing equipment."

Francine Castellino, RN, added, "These patients require a lot of attention. They need a nurse to help them to the bathroom, take them to the dining room for meals, and crush their medications. And then there's dealing with family members and all the documentation."

Unsafe patient loads

"We rarely get to take our lunch or break. If we do, the nurse that stays on duty could have 14 patients," said Debbie Noller, RN.

Despite a seemingly sympathetic ear from the DON, management cut the unit's RN staffing from 4 to 3 on January 1. Members decided to amp up an ongoing

POA campaign to document safety concerns. Over the six months between September and February, BIU nurses filed 91 POAs with 240 signatures. In March, they sent the POAs to NYSNA's Nursing Education and Practice (NEP) department for preparation of a patient care chronicle (PCC).

At the May 17 NYSNA Labor Management Meeting at Southside Hospital, Carol Lynn Esposito, RN and NYSNA's NEP Director, presented the PCC's findings. Management hasn't yet responded, but Felicia Breen, a BIU RN said, "The experience of the last several months has empowered us to stay united and keep fighting to improve staffing. These patients need us to be their advocates."



NYSNA Pride

NYSNA's float and a contingent of 50 members participated in New York City's Gay Pride Parade on June 26. This was the first time that the union officially took part in the parade. NYSNA members were

among the 30,000 who marched down Fifth Avenue into Greenwich Village. Earlier in the month, on June 13, members participated in a vigil at the Stonewall Inn to memorialize the victims of the Orlando shooting.

UPMC expands network into New York

New York's Public Health and Health Planning Council approved the takeover of the Women's Christian Association Hospital in Jamestown, a 317-bed facility in Chautauqua County, by Pittsburgh, PA, based University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC). UPMC has been criticized for raising medical costs in areas into which it expands, and for years has waged a heated public battle with Blue Cross Blue Shield of PA. Al Palmatier, a NYSNA nurse at Brooks Memorial Hospital, which is in the same county, vowed that "New York nurses will keep fighting to hold UPMC and other healthcare systems accountable to accessible, affordable care for hundreds of thousands of people."

Tentative agreement reached at Clifton Park

Nurses at Ellis Medicine Medical Center of Clifton Park, who voted to join NYSNA just a few months ago, reached a Tentative Agreement on June 9 and ratified their first contract a week later. Congratulations to our newest members!



Marva Wade, RN and NYSNA First Vice President, watches Assemblyman Richard Gottfried, the bill's sponsor announce its passage.



Mayor de Blasio announcing NYC's Zika fight back.

NYC takes action on Zika

New York City is taking measures to ensure that Zika will not become an epidemic in our state during the summer months. The city's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene designated 21 primary care clinics and emergency rooms throughout the City as "sentinel sites" from July to September. DOHMH also recently began aerially spraying over unpopulated marshland and freshwater wetlands to kill mosquitoes that may carry the Zika virus.

OSHA to let the sunshine in on workplace injuries

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration announced it will begin posting workplace-specific injury rates on its website, enabling public access to the safety records of particular worksites. The move is an effort to boost transparency and encourage employers to improve workplace safety. OSHA says the new rule will only cover worksites in the most dangerous industries (e.g. health-care), and smaller worksites will have fewer reporting requirements than larger ones. The new structure is being compared to the public-health grades given to restaurants, and OSHA hopes the exposure helps push employers to improve workplace safety.

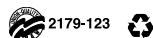
NYC H+H Gets Top Quality Recognition

The new 365-bed Henry J. Carter Specialty Hospital and Nursing Facility, part of NYC H+H, is off to an impressive start, receiving a top, deficiency-free, rating in all areas in a recent NYS Department of Health review.

Eight surveyors recently spent five days at Carter reviewing clinical services, environment of care and fire and life safety. DOH reviewers gave high praise for excellence in clinical care, communication among staff, and leadership. Carter's accomplishment is particularly noteworthy because fewer than 10% of the more than 13,000 skilled nursing facilities surveyed nationwide are able to achieve a "deficiency-free" rating.



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Public and private sector nurses come together for better patient care, pp. 12-13.

New York commits more funding for hospitals that serve the poor, p. 6.

Save the Date | 2016 NYSNA Biennial October 17 & 18

NYSNA nurses are committed to equal access to quality care for all New Yorkers. Join us for a day and a half of solidarity, education, advocacy, and fun – the NYSNA 2016 Biennial



SUCCESS STORIES

Meet and learn from nurses who have successfully united to improve patient care, and who have worked with community and union allies to protect services and win strong contracts.



EDUCATION

Find out who's behind the corporate assault on healthcare access and nursing practice, and what we must do to protect our patients. Our workshops are taught by the leading experts in the field.



THE RN MOVEMENT

Step up and help lead our movement. Set the strategy and make our next steps to win Safe Staffing and Healthcare for All.

For more information, visit www.nysna.org/2016biennial or contact your NYSNA Delegate or Rep.