

# RN news

National Nurses United

**MNA**<sup>SM</sup> MASSACHUSETTS  
NURSES ASSOCIATION



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NATIONAL NURSES  
ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

**UAN** UNITED AMERICAN  
NURSES, AFL-CIO

**National Nurses United (NNU)—A National Voice with National Power**



## Voices of Support for the New National Nurses Union

*What Our Members and Long Term Allies are Saying*

**A**s we close in on Oct. 1 and the historic vote on the MNA affiliation with the new national nurses union, more members are becoming enthusiastic about this historic opportunity to change nursing history. This publication includes a variety of statements by MNA members from throughout the Commonwealth about why they support the national and intend to vote yes on Oct. 1. We invite you to read through these statements and to visit the MNA web site at [www.massnurses.org](http://www.massnurses.org) to view detailed information about this issue.

### REGION 1

As a nurse, my most important tool in caring for my patients is my voice. My patients depend on me to speak up when something is wrong and to keep on speaking until things are made right. I owe it to my patients, my family and my profession to participate in the historic discussions going on now in Washington. We have an unprecedented opportunity to join our voices with nurses across the country who, just like us, do the hands on work every day. And while everyone is feeling the pinch of the current economy, this is a reasonable investment with immediate and long term benefits. MNA has been around since 1903. Every day I experience the benefits of the work and vision of all those nurses who came before me. It's my turn to step up.

**Chris Folsom, RN • Unit 7**

As an MNA member in Region 1 and a nurse for 37 years, I think the Super Union is a good thing. More people, louder voices, greater strength in larger numbers of nurses all doing and fighting for the same goals.

**Dolores Conway, RN • Treasurer, Cooley Dickinson Hospital**

As a nurse working in behavioral health, I know that policies and issues related to mental health are often debated and decided on the national level, and as such, I want to make sure direct care nurses can participate in and shape those debates. I support this national union because it will protect my interest and the interests of my patients.

**Mary Barlar, RN • Providence Hospital**

I am so excited about the convention and participating in the debate for the new national nurses union and feel I will be participating in a truly historic event for nurses and the future of nursing in America. I liken the excitement surrounding the formation of a national organization of staff nurses to what it must have been like to be in Seneca Falls in 1848 for the National Women's Rights Convention.

**Ann Lewin, RN • Chair, Baystate Franklin Medical Center**

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I am very excited about the fact that we at the MNA will be there at the very beginning of this new organization and will be able to guide and shape the development of the policies pursued by the new national. As bedside nurses we know what needs to happen with nursing practice and patient safety and we understand the need to increase access to healthcare for all. Through this national we will have a voice in all these decisions.

**Colleen Hunkler, RN • North Adams Regional Hospital**

As a long time MNA member who proudly participated in the vote to disaffiliate from the ANA back in 2001, I have been waiting for the opportunity for MNA to affiliate with a national union that would truly represent nurses' interests nationally. That moment has arrived, and with it we have the opportunity to change health care and nursing in America. I urge my colleagues to vote yes for the new national on Oct. 1.

**Steve Mikelis, RN • Chair, Mercy Medical Center**

## REGION 2

I want bedside nurses to have a true voice in healthcare. The difference between life and death for many patients depends on the front line nurses ability to truly advocate for them. I feel we can best accomplish this goal by forming a national nurses union. Ours is a profession of great honor and responsibility. The time is now for nurses to unite for the safety of our patients.

**Marlena Pellegrino RN, BSN • St. Vincent Hospital**

School nurses tend to think of themselves as very isolated, but when they come together under the umbrella of the MNA and when they come together under the umbrella of the new national organization, there is a powerful organization behind them and they will have the opportunity to make significant changes in health policy to benefit them, their families and the children they care for.

**Cathy Watterson, RN • Worcester School Nurses**

The prospect of actually being able to bring a national nurses union to fruition is extremely exciting. It's time for the voice of the bedside nurse to be heard on the national front. This is a wonderful opportunity for us to join our sister and brother nurses across the country in order to further the interests of our patients and our profession. I am also very excited about the potential to create a multi-employer pension for all nurses who are a part of this union. I can't wait to be able to vote YES! on October 1 at Convention. I encourage all of my fellow MNA nurses to do the same.

**Marie Ritacco, RN • St. Vincent Hospital, Worcester**

I can see now that in joining the new national we, as men and women, could make a huge difference. So many voices will be deafening in Washington D.C! We can have the same lobbying power as the American Hospital Association, ANA, and the large pharmaceutical companies. So, yes, I am fired up! We need to be proactive and take charge of our futures. We need people who will speak for us, the bedside nurse; not the nurse administrators (management), not the CEO's of our hospitals. We have the chance, now seize this moment.

**Leona MacDonald, RN • UMass Memorial Medical Center—University Campus**

The impact of the National Nurses Union cannot be overstated. Unified direct care nurses, mobilized across the United States, will give us a very powerful voice on issues critical to our practice and security. I am so excited to be part of this historic vote and all that we will accomplish together!

**Colleen Wolf, RN • UMass Memorial Medical Center, Hahnemann Campus**

We staff nurses need a national voice. The ANA speaks for management positions and its time we had an organization, like National Nurses United, to speak for nurses at the bedside.

**Sue Carlson, RN • Chair, Heywood Hospital**

I am in total support of the National Union because it is so exciting to think that as a bedside nurse the real nuts and bolts of what WE are passionate about will be represented for us in Washington. For all the years we were represented by the ANA, knowing they are all part of management, made me realize just how far apart they are from us on issues. I also realize that in this economy, the dues increase for some will be of concern. I like the fact that by MNA going into the National Union at this time, and being one of the leaders, I feel we will be listened to for any changes or increases in future dues. And, if for any reason

## A National Voice with National Power

it does not work out, I love that we have the right to disaffiliate with the National with just a 30 day notice - unlike the nightmare with the ANA.

**Laurie Budnick • UMass Memorial Medical Center, University Campus**

By forming the new national nurses union we finally realize perhaps the most important goal of the MNA since leaving the ANA. Now more than ever it is important to influence labor policy at the national level by reforming the NLRA and passing the Employee Free Choice Act. By joining this new union we can participate in and influence this important debate.

**Michael D'Intinosanto, RN • Templeton Developmental Center • Chair, Unit 7 of RNs and Health Professionals**

The formation of National Nurses United is phenomenal. The power of coast to coast representation in our nation's capitol cannot be matched by individual state unions. Voting to join this "super union" is needed now to secure the future of nursing.

**Vicki Emerson, RN • MetroWest Medical Center, Leonard Morse Campus**

A national union is an investment in safe nursing practice and safe patient care. I am proud, as an MNA member, to support the development of a national union. Together we can make a difference and be a unified voice that will be heard.

**Yvonne Senecal, RN • Co-Chair, Health Alliance Hospital, Burbank Campus**

## REGION 3

When President Obama looks to nurses for their opinions and positions on issues related to patient safety or health care reform, I want him to be talking to direct care nurses, those of us who are on the frontlines who know what works and doesn't work for our patients and our communities. I want the President and Congress to hear my voice, and that is why I am urging all MNA members to support the formation of National Nurses United – a national voice for nurses that will make a difference for all of us.

**Sharon Barsano, RN • Chair, Tobey Hospital**

I do believe we need to join forces with other frontline RNs in order to create the organization of a larger voice. We need to fix so many of the problems in healthcare. With the formation of a National we will be defending not only our profession but more importantly protecting our patients. This will be better accomplished with large numbers and unity. Speaking together with a clear message from state to state I believe is exactly what creating the National Nurses Union will do and I will be voting YES!

**Karen Gavigan RN • Caritas Good Samaritan Hospital**

It is time for us to have a national voice which advocates for issues important to front line nurses -- safe patient handling, safe patient ratios, and prevention of workplace violence. It is time to have the strength of numbers to work to be recognized as a powerful advocate for health care reform. It is time to have a voice in the decision-making process for policies which affect our practice. It is time to be fully recognized as the voice for those who cannot speak for themselves. The time is now to stand together as one voice for our profession and our patients.

**Kathy Metzger, RN • Chair, Brockton Hospital**

On October 1, I will have the opportunity to make my voice heard in support of the National Nurses Union. I am voting a resounding YES to this union. Why? I want my voice heard Nationally because I am not "just a nurse". I am a professional who advocates and cares for patients and their families every day, especially those who can't speak for themselves. I am a professional who advocates for my fellow nurses who have a right to work in a non-hostile, physically safe environment while they deliver care. I want a National voice to advocate for these nurses and the patients and families in their care. We need a national voice to ensure a work environment that is physically safe and free from unreasonable working conditions. In order to deliver the best care possible to our patients we need to continue the forward movement of our nursing profession. Our voices together as one will be heard. It is time for a National Voice. Vote Yes.

**Linda Condon RN, BSN • Morton Hospital**

I am voting YES for the National. Thinking back, I believe my first experience of activism with the MNA was back with the disaffiliation from the ANA, a National organization that did not share the views and vision of the frontline RN. I also remember that our plan was to join a National organization of frontline, direct care RNs. The time is now! I am excited that the MNA is not just joining but will be creating this organization. Let's not wait. In the words of Horace Mann, a famous Massachusetts social reformer and educator: "Let us not be content to wait and see what will happen but give us the determination to make the right things happen."

**Janet DeMoranville, RN • Morton Hospital**



I am in support of the national nurses union, and will vote yes. If we move forward with the National Union there will be an enormous number of bedside nurses that legislators will have to contend with! We could make historical strides for the care that we deliver! I tell the members on my unit who have issues with delivery of quality patient care, why wouldn't you vote yes! Your issues and concerns are the same as those of bedside nurses across the nation! Again, historically, one voice may not be heard yet thousands cannot be ignored!!!

**Kris Kenyon, RN • Jordan Hospital**

My nursing career has spanned several decades during which time I have witnessed much progress in the delivery of Healthcare. After fighting for numerous changes to provide safe and adequate care for all patients, we need to take advantage of an unprecedented opportunity by joining the National Nurses Union. We will finally have a huge collaborative voice that most certainly will be heard and heeded. There is strength in unity; for the sake of our patient's lives and our own livelihood we must support this endeavor for survival. If a member of my unit felt uncertain about voting for the passage of the National Nurses Union, I would encourage them to consider all the problems that have frustrated us for as long as I can remember. If we are to attain a strong and unified presence and be recognized for our significant role in providing the very best in nursing care to all patients, it is imperative that we support this effort to unite nurses nationwide.

**Peggy Kilroy, RN • Cape Cod Hospital**

I believe there is strength in numbers. History has shown us that in many areas. As a National Nurses Union we will have a much more commanding voice that will speak to our professional issues –healthcare, safe staffing, safe working conditions and so many more. We want, and need, our nurses on the home front to be our decision makers and make sure we are heard. I am voting YES.

**Deb Caruso, RN • Visiting Nurses Association of Cape Cod**

## REGION 4

We in Massachusetts are not alone in this fight for safe staffing, and providing good patient care. Everyone I have spoken to, whether it has been from Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, Pennsylvania or Texas, all have our patients' best interests at heart. So it makes sense to all band together. Working together we can move mountains.

**Kay Marshall, RN • Anna Jacques Hospital**

I am voting yes on Oct. 1 to join National Nurses United as I want to be part of this history making event. Finally staff nurses will be coming together as one strong force for change. Nurses united will have power, solidarity and together we can prevail.

**Diane Lee, RN • Chair, Lawrence General Hospital**

Massachusetts we are not alone! Nurses across the country are struggling with: safe staffing, health care reform and patient advocacy issues. State by state nurses strive to solve these issues against great odds. Why fight the fights alone? Together with our brothers and sisters across the country as a united front we can do great things for our state and our nation? but most importantly for our profession, our practice and our patients.

**Patty Sullivan, RN • Lawrence General Hospital**

As a nurse working at a facility in the Merrimack Valley, I see great benefit in joining the new national nurses union because of its ability to increase the organizing of nurses in non union states, like New Hampshire, where their low wages are used by our management to hold ours down. When more nurses are unionized we all reap the benefits in better pay and practice conditions.

**Doreen Pacheco, RN • Lawrence General Hospital**

As a nurse who works at a facility that depends heavily on funding from the federal government, I want to have a say in Washington on how that funding is allocated so that my patients get the care they deserve. That's why I am supporting MNA's affiliation with National Nurses United.

**Marty Miraglia, RN • Unit 7/Tewksbury State Hospital**



## REGION 5

We know we are getting pounded every day at work, by a system that no longer respects our voice. As direct care givers we have seen our input marginalized by administrative interests. Our professional knowledge has taken a back seat to financial interests. I believe we need to join with as many nurses as we can through National Nurses United to put pressure on this system as it is clear that only by forcing them to do the right thing will positive changes be made.

***Nancy Gilman, RN • Co-Chair, Tufts Medical Center***

Nursing has been under siege long enough by hospital administrations and the nurses of the MNA and across this nation need to take advantage of this and every possible resource available to provide themselves with the voice and power necessary to take back their practice and advocate for themselves and their patients. 150,000 voices strong will be a definite step in the right direction and the dues increase is only a small investment for a better tomorrow for all.

***Barbara Tiller, RN • Tufts Medical Center***

These days it can seem that we are overworked, under-appreciated, and at times disrespected. But here we are, taking control, standing up for ourselves, each other and our patients. I am reminded of Caroline Kennedy's remarks at Ted's service at the Library - she said that we know what to do and how to do it, we always did, it was just that he always did it for us...now we need to go out and do it. Well now, in forming National Nurses United, we are.

***Susan Wright Thomas, RN • Cambridge Health Alliance***

The policy decisions that impact funding for home care services and my practice are often made in Washington, D.C., and right now we don't have a strong voice to ensure my practice and my patients are protected. I am voting for this new national to ensure that the voice of direct care nurses is heard and listened to in our nation's capitol.

***Maggie Hebert, RN • Vice Chair, Visiting Nurses Association of Boston***

As a home care nurse, I remember how our industry was devastated in the 1990s by provisions of the Balanced Budget Act, where decisions were made in Washington that resulted in the closure of many home care agencies and cuts in services to home care clients. At that time, ANA was the voice of nursing and they were asleep at the switch when these decisions were made. I support this new national nurses union because I want to make sure we have a real voice with real power in Washington to protect our patients and our practice.

***Pat Henderson, RN • Chair, Visiting Nurses Association of Boston***

We can't solve the problems we face every day in our practice here in Massachusetts alone. We need this national union so that staff nurses are representing the interests of staff nurses and not hospital administrators or the ANA.

***Paula Ryan, RN • Chair, Quincy Medical Center***

I had the honor of attending the CNA/NNOC convention in San Francisco. I was inspired, motivated and in awe of my fellow nurses from across our country. It is our right to have a voice for bedside nurses. As a member of our national union we can mobilize and help our peers who are crying out for help to unionize. We can have a unified voice to help us help our patients. We can help our individual union, with the help of colleagues nationwide. The time is now for NNU.

***Betsy Prescott, RN • Chair, Caritas St. Elizabeth's Medical Center***

I attended the California Nurses Association convention where we watched their membership vote to approve participation in our new national union. We left our hearts in San Francisco, but we're bringing home a commitment to a national voice for our nurses and our patients! NNU now!

***Kathy Reardon, RN • Chair, Caritas Norwood Hospital***



# Allies to Our Cause



— Alan J. McDonald —

The decision on whether to join National Nurses United as a founding partner is one of the most important decisions that members of the Massachusetts Nurses Association have ever had to make. It compares in magnitude to the decision made in the 1960's to engage in collective bargaining on behalf of rank and file nurses, to the decision made in the mid-1980's to insulate the Association's collective bargaining program from the influence of supervisors on the Board of Directors, and to the decision made early in this decade to disaffiliate from the American Nurses Association. The beneficial consequences of those earlier decisions have been profound; the consequences of the decision on whether to join National Nurses United will, for better or worse, be equally profound. Without qualification, MNA's participation in National Nurses United at this time is a natural and important step that it needs to take to preserve and expand its role as the voice and advocate for registered nurses in Massachusetts.

There can be no doubt that MNA's success as a collective bargaining agent for nurses throughout Massachusetts has been the single most important factor in the growth of compensation for registered nurses since Congress adopted the health care amendments to the National Labor Relations Act in 1974. Then, nurses in downtown Boston were making less than \$5.00 an hour at top of scale. Through the hard, dedicated and courageous work of rank and file nurses, with the support and guidance of MNA, collective bargaining gains over time have made nursing salaries far more commensurate with the responsibilities that bedside nurses bear than ever before in the history of the profession. But do not presume for a moment that these gains are guaranteed, as there are powerful forces at play seeking to undermine them. The hospital industry and its business and political allies are constantly looking for ways to minimize the numbers of registered nurses in the health care system, the role that they play in the care of patients, and the compensation they receive for their services.

Never before has there been a closer relationship between national events, particularly those in Washington, D.C., and MNA's ability to protect and expand the economic and other important interests of the nurses it represents. Decisions made in the executive branch of government regarding federal dollars available to the health care system, labor laws enacted by Congress, and new regulations from federal administrative agencies will have a direct and lasting impact on the terms and conditions of employment for nurses. To insure that this impact is not adverse, it is critically important that nursing speak with a united voice on all of these issues and that this voice broadly reflect the views of bedside nurses. National Nurses United will bring MNA's strength to this fight and will add the strength of over 130,000 more nurses to MNA's voice. Absent the unity of resources and purpose that only a national union can bring to these issues, our wonderful gains to date may demarcate the vulnerable apex of our historic efforts rather than the solid foundation upon which to build our future.

A national nurses' union can also directly impact the salaries and benefits of MNA members through well financed, focused organizing efforts within and without Massachusetts. Although MNA now represents over 95% of the unionized nurses in Massachusetts, there remain more bedside nurses in this state who are non-union than union. The greater resources available from a national union committed, as is National Nurses United, to organizational efforts will greatly help to bring unionization to large numbers of Massachusetts' nurses. Those efforts will bring upward pressure on salaries and benefits to previously non-unionized hospitals and make it more difficult for unionized hospitals to resist reasonable bargaining initiatives from our organized units. National organizing efforts, particularly in the increasingly prevalent hospital chains, will also make it less likely that a chain would enter the Massachusetts market with an ability to undercut and weaken salary standards within the health care industry.



## A National Voice with National Power

There is, of course, a cost of membership in a national union that is a fair concern to MNA members and should not be taken lightly. That cost, presently set at approximately \$137 per year, is not so exorbitant, however, that it should answer the question of whether to join National Nurses United. Rather, the answer to that question should depend on a reasoned assessment of whether the benefits of membership are worth its cost. In this regard, \$137 invested in a money market account would produce a return of around \$3 or \$4 per annum. If investing that same amount in a national nurses' union helps MNA (directly at the bargaining table or indirectly through impact on legislation) gain a one percent higher wage adjustment than it would have otherwise achieved, the return on investment would be \$400 to \$1,000 or more per nurse, per annum depending upon a particular nurse's placement on a typical MNA salary schedule. The same amount invested in a national nurses' union that helps to preserve jobs will return up to \$100,000 per annum if the job that otherwise might be lost was yours. Likewise, that same amount invested in a national nurses' union that is able to lobby Congress to redefine supervisory status in a way that unquestionably excludes direct care nurses, regardless of title, would be, as they say, priceless. Even if the cost of participation increases a few dollars each year, I cannot think of any other investment a member could make that would yield anywhere near the dividends of enhanced representation at a national level.

The members of MNA are positioned to have, at a reasonable cost, the best of both worlds: membership in an autonomous state organization with a strong record of achievement locally and affiliation with a new national nurses' union that will work energetically at the national level on issues important to our local success. Importantly, if I am wrong, the terms of the tentative Affiliation Agreement negotiated by MNA with its national partners permit a seamless disaffiliation without penalty of any kind.

***Alan J. McDonald, MNA Counsel***

Past organizational divisions within nursing have made it harder to achieve key legislative goals like safe staffing ratios and limits on forced overtime that would improve working conditions and the quality of patient care. The National Nurses United will give RNs a stronger voice and a higher profile politically. This will be particularly helpful in tackling the most important issue we all face today, which is getting a single-payer national health care system.

***Suzanne Gordon • Co-Editor, The Culture and Politics of Health Care Work Series***



Almost 20 years ago under the Clinton administration, health insurance coverage for millions of Americans was high on the national agenda. Two decades after that failed attempt, once again the question of whether access to health care will become a right of all Americans is the center of a contemptuous national debate. At the same time, scores of Americans are unemployed adding to the numbers of uninsured and we face the potential of a pandemic. It is essential that nurses, the largest group of health care providers, are represented forcefully in Washington as the details of framing and passing health policy legislation are unfolding. I strongly urge all members of the Massachusetts Nurses Association to join with their union brothers and sisters to form a national organization whose mission is social justice for all Americans in both the workplace and accessing health care – we can not afford to be on the sidelines for a debate that may not emerge again in our lifetimes.

***Judith Shindul-Rothschild, PhD, RNC, DPNAP***

***Associate Professor, Boston College, William F. Connell School of Nursing***

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The move to create a national voice for nurses is long overdue. Nurses in Canada, the UK and most other advanced industrial countries have long recognized that health care professionals need unions, and nurses unions need to have a voice at the national level. While a majority of the day to day issues of nurses may be dealt with at the local level, many vital issues affecting nurses, including health care policy, professional practice and standards and working condition issues are discussed and indeed regulated and legislated at the national level.

Health care in America is still viewed as a business, not a right. Nurses, the obvious voice for quality health care for all, are divided among dozens of organizations. And the division not only hurts nurses – denying them a powerful voice in the national debate on health care issues and policy – but it actually hurts everyone interested in quality health care for all.

It's not often in organizations that you get an opportunity to seize an opportunity to both help yourself and help others at the same time. Taking this bold step in forming a national nurses union will not only strengthen nurses voices at the national level, but it will give greater strength to nurses at the local level. And it will definitely be a crucial step in establishing a national voice for health care as a right, not a business.

**Elaine Barnard**

**Executive Director, Labor and Worklife Program at Harvard Law**



# Voices of Support for the NEW NATIONAL NURSES UNION

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