

Joint Press Release From:

**The National Union Of Hospital And Health Care Employees 1199 NM AFSCME, AFL-CIO,
And
The Northern New Mexico Central labor Council, AFL-CIO**

Friday, July 15, 2011

For Immediate Release:

The information below is taken from a twelve page Brochure put together for the Nurses and Technicians of St. Vincent Hospital in Santa Fe. They have been in negotiations with CHRISTUS Health since April.

These negotiations have been frustrating, discouraging and disappointing for not only the workers who are subject to the proceedings, but also to the Santa Fe community at large.

There is a community on-line signature and comment petition to show support for the Hospital Workers that can be signed by clicking this site:

http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/support_hospital_workers/

The CHRISTUS management has hired a lawyer to represent them at the negotiations who has a reputation of Union Busting.

And the management also has been touting a so-called 'management study' they purchased from a health care management and consultant operation that has a history of being charged with Medicare fraud and settling with the federal government for large amounts of money. This firm also has a reputation and list of lawsuits, some settled and some still in litigation, relative to mismanagement claims by community hospitals all over the United States that feel they were shortchanged by this same company.

We are asking for more community support.

We ask the Greater Santa Fe community to attend our very important '**Gathering at Our Lady Of Guadalupe**' on Sunday, July 24th at 6:30 PM. (at the intersection of Guadalupe and Agua Fria, in Santa Fe), to show support for the dedicated Nurses and Technicians of St. Vincent Hospital ... and to let CHRISTUS Health know that *Santa Fe Wants Its Hospital Back!*

The full text of the 12 page leaflet is available at the Christus Labor Action web-site (presented by the Nurses & Technicians of 1199 NM) at the following link:

<http://www.christuslaboractionsantafe.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/cmcm20110711.pdf>

And there is much more on CHRISTUS and the Labor battle at the home page of Christus Labor Action at this link:

<http://christuslaboractionsantafe.org/>

(more)

The following appears on pages 4 and 5 of the leaflet:

There Is An Old Saying: You Are Known By The Company You Keep ... And Sometimes By The Companies You Hire.

CHRISTUS likes to hire out of state consultants ... look who they go to for advice:

Recently **CHRISTUS** held a press conference regarding a mysterious study completed for them by a Health Care Management Consultant.

The Santa Fe New Mexican ran a headline the next day stating "Hospital touts study reporting overstaffing."

The consulting firm is none other than **QUORUM HEALTH RESOURCES**. Why should that sound familiar?

Well this outfit made headlines across the nation several years ago when it was exposed as ripping off taxpayers millions of dollars in Medicare. According to a United States Department of Justice press release:

QUORUM HEALTH GROUP AGREED TO PAY \$85 MILLION TO SETTLE ALLEGATIONS OF DEFRAUDING MEDICARE

This was not the only problem **QUORUM** has had with fraud claims, not to mention mismanagement claims.

Take a look at this from Mississippi:

A \$46 Million lawsuit for "**gross negligence, breach of fiduciary duties, fraud and other wrongful acts**" according to a local newspaper. The story also reported that the local community (county owned) hospital claims **QUORUM's** "mismanagement is ultimately what led to the hospital's bankruptcy filing in February 2009."

Then there is this from Bangor, Maine: A Superior Court Judge's ruling ended the

participation of **QUORUM** in the Down East Community Hospital's downward spiral of mismanaged and dangerous health care.

No wonder Santa Fe County Commissioners are nervous about CHRISTUS lack of transparency in the use of County and Federal matching indigent dollars.

QUORUM'S trail of bad advice, mismanagement and claims of fraud extend across the United States ... Minnesota, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Maine, Massachusetts and California ... as another local newspaper put it: ***Across the United States, from Alaska to California, QHR has had a run of bad luck over the years with their managed hospitals.***

Bad luck, bad advice or fraudulent behavior, **WHATEVER?**

Our question to **CHRISTUS** is 'What were you thinking' when you hired these guys?

Then there is CHRISTUS' own problems away from Santa Fe.

Texas -- A jury found Christus Saint Catherine's Hospital in Katy, Texas committed fraud and has ordered the hospital to pay \$2 million to the family of a former patient.

They claimed the hospital tried to cover up the cause of a man's death in part by removing his heart during an autopsy -- without asking for permission from relatives.

OWNER OF CHRISTUS ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL IN HOUSTON, TEXAS TO PAY \$220,000 TO SETTLE MEDICARE FRAUD ALLEGATIONS

(more)

Why Does It Seem Like CHRISTUS Is Interested In Lowering Costs At The Expense Of Keeping Experienced, Well-trained Nurses & Technicians And Safe Staffing Standards?

CHRISTUS Has Been Firing Experienced Health Care Professionals. Why?

In February the *Santa Fe New Mexican* ran a story entitled: "Nurses' firings shed light on union, hospital rift."

CHRISTUS had fired at least 15 nurses in the past year according to the newspaper story. A state legislator and county commissioner began looking into the firings.

One of the nurses in the article pointed out that she had been fired for questioning operating room policy.

It was also reported in the same article that in the opinion of nurses and technicians CHRISTUS was "systematically going after the most experienced nurses" and "targeting those at the top of the pay scale who tend to be vocal about their rights."

The Nurses and Technicians Union, 1199 NM, is fighting to protect those unfairly fired.

And it is the same Union that is leading the fight to protect SAFE STAFFING language in the negotiations with CHRISTUS.

CHRISTUS again wants the public and the workers to trust them and believe what CHRISTUS says ... but what CHRISTUS says is many times in sharp contradiction to their actions.

In June the *Journal North* reported that workers at CHRISTUS St. Vincent Hospital "described an understaffed facility where patient safety is at risk."

The Union has produced paperwork showing over **800 under-staffed shifts** at St. Vincent Hospital in under a year's time.

The hospital paid penalties of about \$720,000 because of its failure to meet the standards.

CHRISTUS' response is to bring in a union busting negotiating team to try and beat back the workers efforts to protect the safe staffing standards.

The lead negotiator for the nurses and technicians of 1199 NM stated in that same article: "The hospital continues to insist on reducing safe standards for nurse- and technician-to-patient ratios, through their attack on staffing language in the existing contract."

In another article in the *Santa Fe New Mexican* the negotiator for the Union said "It's not about the money. All of us would rather have the staff."

The Union proposes to give the money generated by penalties to a community fund.

California is the only state where staffing standards are required by law. In the absence of a state law mandating and enforcing safe staffing standards, those standards in the collective bargaining agreement protect the community.

There is one more question that needs to be asked of CHRISTUS regarding negotiations:

Why is CHRISTUS insisting on new contract language that eliminates protection of the Union Contract if St. Vincent Hospital is sold?

Are they planning something the rest of us are unaware of?

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