



Federation of Hospital and University Employees

Locals 34, 35 and GESO, HERE • District 1199, SEIU
129 Church Street, Suite 521 • New Haven, CT 06510

News Media Advisory for
Thursday, February 28, 2002

Contact:
Deborah Chernoff, 203/624-5161 x 302 or 203/215-7612 (cell)

More than 1100 Hospital Workers Sign Petition Calling for Neutrality at Yale-New Haven Hospital

Health care workers ask Y-NH Board for card count process for unionization

NEW HAVEN—More than 1100 workers at Yale-New Haven Hospital have signed a petition to Yale University and Yale-New Haven Hospital, calling on Yale administrators to “forge a new partnership ... based on mutual respect” with hospital employees, through a process for unionization known as card count neutrality.

“We signed this petition because we want a fair process that will let us make up our own minds about a union,” said Monica Osborn, an Operating Room Technical Associate. “We don’t want to be ordered by management to listen to only one side of the story, when we should be taking care of patients.”

A delegation of hospital workers, members and leaders of other unions at Yale, and community leaders delivered oversized copies of the petition to Yale President Richard Levin and Yale-New Haven Hospital CEO Joseph Zaccagnino. Levin serves on the hospital’s board with other university officials and helped broker a card-count neutrality agreement at the Omni Hotel at Yale.

The petition bears 1190 signatures of patient care, housekeeping, dietary, clerical and other service employees of Yale’s teaching hospital. The document challenges the Yale Corporation and the Board and Officers of Yale-New Haven Hospital to:

- Refrain from threatening workers and holding meetings to discourage unionization;
- Maintain a working atmosphere free of pressure, intimidation and harassment; and
- Agree to recognize the union when a majority of workers have signed union cards.

Major national employers like Kaiser Permanente and AT&T have signed similar agreements to assure a fair process for unionization, minimizing conflict. New York Governor (and Yale alumnus) George Pataki recently supported a “card-check” bill – legislation that enables workers in New York to choose a union to represent them after a majority in the workplace signs union cards.

“The National Labor Relations Board election process is inherently flawed,” said Yale office assistant Laura Smith, President of Yale’s union of clerical and technical workers. “As a recent Human Rights Watch report revealed, the laws do little or nothing to protect our rights as workers. That’s why most employers now support the labor board elections they once fought against bitterly. Those elections have become a mechanism to prevent, rather than to allow, unionization.”

Last year, the National Labor Relations Board issued a formal complaint against Yale-New Haven Hospital after workers were threatened with arrest by armed hospital police for distributing union newsletters at the hospital – a clear violation of federal labor law. Despite an agreement the hospital reached with the Labor Board to settle that complaint, another federal complaint against hospital administrators is pending, this time for threatening to discipline workers for wearing pro-union stickers.

“As long as management is free to pressure us into voting against unionization, a labor board election will not protect our rights,” said Lynn Eimutis, a Registrar at the hospital. “That is why Yale-New Haven Hospital should agree to card count neutrality – so that we can truly make our own decisions, in the spirit of democracy.”