NURSES UNIONS TO MERGE TO FORM THE NATIONAL NURSES UNITED

Three nurses unions that plan to merge to form a new national union of registered nurses announce that the National Nurses United (NNU) will be the name of the new 150,000-member organization, and the founding convention will take place December 7-8 in Scottsdale, Arizona. The NNU will combine the California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee (CNA/NNOC) representing 80,000 RNs, the United American Nurses with 45,000 RNs, and the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) representing 23,000 RNs. Prior to the founding convention, each of the three unions will hold national conventions to ratify the pending unification. The goal of the new national union is to organize nurses across the country. Meeting in Minneapolis in August, the three unions’ interim executive committee continued a unification process leading to the convention. “This represents another step forward in the growing movement of direct-care nurses to finally claim a national voice with true national power,” Ellen Smith, a member of the MNA board of directors states. As the debate over healthcare reform takes center stage, it’s essential that direct-care nurses, those who spend the most time with patients, have the ability to make their positions known and their voices heard.”

Martha Kuhl, secretary-treasurer of the CNA/NNOC, says she looks forward “to working nationally with nurses for a single standard of pediatric care, along with a single standard of care for all patients.” The NNU “will have enormous influence to fight for that reality.”

A more powerful national movement of direct-care registered nurses is expected to spur representation campaigns for nonunion nurses, protect and expand patient rights and RN professional practice, and strengthen the voice of nurses in the national health care debate, according to the three unions. They also will promote the National Nursing Shortage Reform and Patient Advocacy Act (S. 1031), federal legislation modeled after the California law establishing RN-to-patient safe staffing ratios.