

Fountain Valley Hospital Workers Picket for Better Working Conditions

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMAN

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Hundreds of healthcare workers wearing red union shirts and holding signs demanding a fair contract walked the picket line yesterday afternoon in front of Fountain Valley Regional Hospital. The picketers, members of the National Union of Health Care Workers (NUHW), sought to draw attention to job conditions at Orange County's largest for-profit hospital. The union charges that Tenet Healthcare Corporation fails to provide comparable wages while relying on an increasingly part-time and on-call workforce.

“One of the problems that we’re facing is that they’re hiring part-time employees, working them full-time, but only giving them part-time benefits,” said Joshua Jesus, a radiology department worker at the hospital for the past four years. “We’re here for patient care. We want a full-time staff that’s here all the time to care for our patients.”

Hospital workers, who only unionized a year ago, took shifts on the line chanting slogans throughout the three-hour action while a taquera prepared lunch on a sidewalk grill. Private security kept a watchful eye from the parking lot and commuters passing by honked in support of the picket.

NUHW points to state records in reporting Fountain Valley Regional's \$50.7 million in profits last year. Despite this, the union claims that 42 percent of

Tenet Healthcare Corporation new hires over the past two years have been on-call workers with no health benefits. The two sides last sat at the negotiating table on April 11, but no future meeting dates are set, despite NUHW's desire to talk increased wages and benefits.

The healthcare workers enjoyed political support and union solidarity at their picket. Speakers from Unite Here Local 11, the Orange County Labor Federation, Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice and the Coalition of Labor Union Women all rallied the cause. Santa Ana city councilman Jose Solorio also walked the picket line wearing a red NUHW shirt underneath a sports coat with a United Farm Workers lapel. He invited the Weekly to get to know the real Jose Solorio—um, okay...

“Although this hospital isn't in Santa Ana, I feel it's important for leaders to stand by workers,” Solorio said. “I want to make sure everyone has fair contracts, livable wages and benefits in OC.”

