



Incredibly, the CNA has even seen fit to attack the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Sister Carol Keehan of the Catholic Health Association. This comes at a time when the AFL-CIO, SEIU, AFSCME, and AFT have been working together to try to reach a national understanding with Catholic health care. Unfortunately, we have no hope of fulfilling that goal now that Sister Carol and the USCCB have been subjected to the CNA's unconscionable action.

What kind of message does it send when an employer that actually does the right thing — by agreeing to fair organizing rules — is then attacked by the labor movement for making a “back room” deal? The last time I checked, all unions shared the same goal of trying to raise the standards for employer conduct in organizing campaigns above those allowed by the NLRB. In fact, the process we established for CHP hospital employees is ethical, principled, and legal — and in no way justifies the CNA's outlandish accusations about company unions. (The CNA has organizing agreements with several large health systems, including Catholic Healthcare West and Tenet. Are these back-room “company union” deals too?)

Perhaps even more disingenuous is the CNA's repudiation of the CHP agreement on the grounds that it does not provide a choice of unions. Should the CNA's agreements with CHW and Tenet have included a choice of unions for registered nurses? If CWA works to achieve an agreement with Verizon Wireless for a valid union election, should other unions jump in at the last minute? CHP nurses and other hospital employees have been working with SEIU organizers for years. These workers made their choice a long ago. Just because the CNA showed up a week before the elections doesn't mean they belong on the ballot (or that it's acceptable to mislead nurses into thinking that a “no” vote will automatically result in a “yes” vote for the CNA).

The situation in Ohio is not the first, and won't be the last, unless the rest of the labor movement decides to stop these union-busting tactics by CNA and hold them accountable. Unfortunately, our attempts to persuade the top national and state AFL-CIO officers to intervene have been rebuffed. We have also asked Sal Rosselli to intervene directly with CNA's president, Rose Ann DeMoro. We believe Sal is uniquely qualified to influence CNA decision-making because of his long history with DeMoro, including the time we understand he spent with her last week at the AFL-CIO Executive Council in San Diego.

Given our need to grow as movement, we as SEIU leaders must stand up and oppose this and any other attempt to prevent workers in this country from gaining union representation. Keep in mind that, while 100,000 registered nurses in California remain unorganized, the CNA is only attempting to organize nurses in other states by raiding other unions or interfering in legitimate, ongoing campaigns. I recognize that institutional rivalries are a fact of life. But there is a difference between legitimate contests between unions and an outright attempt to deny workers the opportunity to organize with any union.

The victims of this tragedy are not the institutions involved — they are the hard-working nurses and other hospital employees who want nothing more than to join together in a union and participate in decisions that affect them, their patients, and their livelihoods. Now, their opportunity for an election free from interference and misrepresentation has been shattered.

I hope you will join me in condemning CNA's actions and opposing their attempts at union busting. We have an obligation to do all we can to rebuild the American Labor Movement. It is now clear that to do so means we must actively oppose the action of an organization as elitist and anti-union as the CNA.