

Strikes Are Your Right Not a Privilege

What a Strike Authorization Means

- A strike authorization vote does not mean a strike happens immediately.
- It empowers WSNA leadership to call a strike if bargaining fails.
- By law, WSNA must provide at least 10 days' written notice to Kadlec and the Department of Health before nurses walk out. (This comes from the National Labor Relations Act and additional notice requirements for healthcare facilities under the Taft-Hartley Act.)

Protections for Union Members

1. Right to Strike

- Protected under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA).
- Kadlec cannot legally fire or discipline nurses for participating in a lawful strike.
- Strikers are considered employees and keep seniority and benefits, though wages stop during the strike.

2. Return-to-Work Protections

- At an unfair labor practice strike, employers must reinstate nurses when the strike ends.
- At an economic strike, employers can hire permanent replacements but this is rare in healthcare. Generally, RNs return to their positions once the strike ends.

3. Health Insurance & Benefits

- Often maintained during a short strike, but this depends on contract language and bargaining strategy. Unions sometimes set up strike funds to help.

4. Legal Protections

- Retaliation (discipline, threats, harassment) for participating is illegal.
- Nurses are also protected from retaliation if they choose not to strike (WSNA usually enforces solidarity, but legally members cannot be forced).

Responsibilities of Union Members

1. Picket Line Participation

- Members are expected to participate in strike duties picketing, communications, support.
- WSNA usually assigns shifts so coverage is broad and visible.

2. Notice & Compliance

- Once a strike notice is filed, members must comply with the plan (walk out together at the designated time).
- Nurses cannot individually “wildcat strike” outside of the official action.

3. Patient Care & Ethics

- Nurses must leave in an orderly transition at the start of the strike to avoid patient abandonment. WSNA and Kadlec are both legally required to coordinate safe patient handoff when a strike begins.

4. Solidarity & Communication

- Nurses are responsible for staying informed, attending strike prep meetings, and helping educate coworkers.
- WSNA often requires members to update contact information so strike logistics can be communicated.

Practical Considerations for Nurses

- If a nurse crosses the line, the hospital may assign them to work, but WSNA would likely treat it as strikebreaking.
- In prior strikes, unions have kept detailed records of who honored the line and who didn't.
- Once the strike ends, those who crossed may face union fines and reputational fallout within the bargaining unit.

Union Rules & Consequences

- While the employer cannot discipline you for refusing to strike, the union can enforce internal union rules:
 - Most unions, including WSNA, allow for fines or sanctions against members who cross the line.
 - These penalties are enforceable under labor law, because union membership is voluntary and subject to union bylaws.
 - Fines vary but can equal the wages earned while working during the strike.
- Socially and professionally, crossing the line usually causes serious loss of solidarity and trust among coworkers. This can have long-term consequences in the workplace and within the bargaining unit.

Non-Members & Religious Objectors in a Unionized Facility

1. Union Representation Still Applies

- Even if an RN is a non-member or a religious objector, they are still part of the bargaining unit.
- That means they are covered by the contract, represented by WSNA, and affected by the strike.

2. Right to Strike or Not Strike

- Under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), all bargaining unit employees — members, non-members, and religious objectors have the right to strike and the right not to strike.
- They cannot be forced by the employer to cross the picket line or to participate in the strike. It is an individual choice.

What the Facility May Expect

- Hospitals often expect non-members and religious objectors to work during a strike because they know those nurses are not subject to WSNA's internal union rules (like fines).
- Practically, management may pressure them to take shifts during the strike to keep operations running.