

HEALTH LAW

Update

NEWS FOR THE CLIENTS AND FRIENDS OF BASS, BERRY & SIMS PLC

Union Organizing Efforts in Healthcare May Be Increasing

July 5, 2007

Healthcare employers should be alert to possible increased union organizing. Recently, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) launched SEIU Healthcare, known as its “union within a union.” The focus of that group? Organizing healthcare workers in this country, including nurses, physicians, technicians, home health workers, maintenance workers and others.

SEIU Healthcare recently had its founding convention in Baltimore June 22 - 24. There, Dennis Rivera was officially named chair of this new union. He said that SEIU Healthcare has an annual budget of approximately \$120 million and has 4,000 organizers at its disposal.

Mr. Rivera is the former president of the New York City based SEIU Local 1199, during which time he was widely viewed as the state’s most powerful labor leader. During Rivera’s presidency, Local 1199 used its resources to run advertisements attacking local political officials in an attempt to drive down their popularity ratings and pressure them to accept union proposals or to shy away from policies that would, in its view, harm the union’s workforce.

Employers in healthcare should remain attentive to possible warning signs of union organizing efforts. With today’s technology, such warning signs can be difficult to detect. Much organizing takes place on the Internet, particularly on blogging sites, which employers should read on a regular basis. Other possible warning signs include more aggressive questioning of policies, such as those related to shift assignments, patient-staff ratios, on call duties, and overtime scheduling.

Bass, Berry & Sims has a labor and employment team who can assist you in evaluating your business and its susceptibility to organizing efforts, or who can provide effective management training prior to or assistance during any such campaign. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact one of the members of our Labor and Employment Practice Area listed below.

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