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Press Release

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Doctor Union in Washington State Will Be a First

Tacoma - The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) is expected to certify the results of a union election on Thursday, October 20th, creating a new union for doctors working at Auburn Medical Center (AMC) in Tacoma, Washington. At the vote count conducted on October 13 at the NLRB Region 19 offices in Seattle, a strong majority of the ballots cast by AMC doctors were in favor of the union. The new union will include a range of specialists including hospitalists, pediatricians, surgeons, and OB/GYNs.

This is believed to be the first time a group of private sector doctors in Washington State have unionized. Doctors in California have been union members for decades, but the trend is only now starting to spread to the Pacific Northwest. Last year, a group of hospital doctors in Springfield, Oregon joined the union that represents other health care workers at their facility. The Union of American Physicians and Dentists, which will represent Auburn Medical Center doctors, is speaking with other doctors in the region who are interested in forming unions of their own. According to UAPD President Stuart Bussey, MD, "Doctors now realize that only by unionizing can they stand up to hospital administrations that focus on efficiency and cost-cutting at the expense of patient care."

Reflecting on the vote, Dr. Bussey continued, "There's obviously a good deal of solidarity among the physicians who work at Auburn. Other physicians thinking about unionizing should feel encouraged by what they've been able to do. "

Virginia Stowell, MD, a surgeon at the nearby Tacoma General Hospital, was pleased to hear the news from AMC. "We were watching the election closely, and we are thrilled with the results. We will continue to organize more physicians and fight for physician-directed care in Washington."

After the election results are certified on Thursday, AMC doctors will begin preparations for their first negotiations with their employer, MultiCare Health System. MultiCare, which purchased AMC in 2012, owns and operates five hospitals and multiple clinics in the Tacoma area.