



DISCUSSION

The Public Employees' Collective Bargaining Act, Chapter 41.56 RCW, specifies that the Commission is responsible for election arrangements. In the instant case, the parties' sole disagreement concerns the method by which an election is to be conducted. They do not disagree over any substantive issue concerning the bargaining unit composition or the eligibility list.

The Commission has conducted numerous elections by mail ballots, with satisfactory results. In the Commission's experience, mail ballot elections generally draw substantial voter turnout. Where voters are scattered over a wide area or work split shifts, it is much more efficient to send the ballots to the eligible voters than to expect them to come during off-duty time to the place where an on-site election is to be conducted. Of very practical concern during a time when the Commission has limited resources and is working under legislatively-imposed restrictions on state employee travel, mail balloting often permits the determination of representation proceedings in a more timely manner than an on-site election.

The Commission's mail balloting procedure is designed with safeguards against improper activity. Security for the balloting procedure is inherently provided by federal law, which makes it a felony to tamper with the U.S. Mail. Just as in an on-site election, the Commission will hear objections based on alleged misconduct, and may set aside the election result.

In this case, the employer's facility (and service area) are at a distance from the Commission's offices, requiring substantial travel expense to conduct an election involving less than 20 employees. The circumstances are of the type where mail balloting is commonly used under current Commission practice.

DIRECTION OF ELECTION

1. An election shall be conducted, under the direction of the Public Employment Relations Commission in the appropriate bargaining unit described as:

All full-time and regular part-time registered nurses of the Ferry County Memorial Hospital, excluding supervisors, confidential employees, all other employees of the employer,

to determine whether a majority of the employees in that bargaining unit desire to be represented for purposes of collective bargaining by United Staff Nurses Union, Local 141.

2. The election shall be conducted by mail ballot.
3. The employer is directed to provide the Commission with the eligible employees' home mailing addresses on or before May 5, 1994.

ISSUED at Olympia, Washington, this 27th day of April, 1994.

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS COMMISSION

MARVIN L. SCHURKE, Executive Director

This order may be appealed by filing timely objections with the Commission pursuant to WAC 391-25-590.