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[00:00:24] **Speaker 1** Leading up to this Labor Day picket lines in Janesville. That's where more than 130 healthcare workers are on strike in a contract dispute with Mercy Health. The workers are members of UAW Local 95. Local 95 President Judy McRoberts joins us now. And thanks very much for being here, Judy. No, thank you. So this strike started July 2 and is now coming into month three. Why are your members on strike?

[00:00:55] **Speaker 2** Well, one of their main concerns is safety and the security of their building and themselves and the patients. We have an urgent care in this building and it's open until the evening and we've had people out in the parking lot panhandling and asking for rides and so on and it is scary for the women who are leaving this facility at night. We've also had, one of our nurses come in for an urgent care shift and went into the break room and here's somebody was staying in the breakroom. And so that there was no security in the building. And that's not only unsafe for employees, that's unsafe for our patients. And so what is...

[00:01:42] **Speaker 1** If you ask for.

[00:01:42] **Speaker 2** We've asked to invest for at least security cameras or security cameras, security officers to be in the building in the morning and at least in the evening to make sure the building is secure and people can get out safely.

[00:01:58] **Speaker 1** Why is it proving so hard to settle with Mercy Health over that issue?

[00:02:05] **Speaker 2** I have no idea, but one thing I do want to point out is the first day that we had our picket set up, our peaceful picket line has had no problems whatsoever. They've had security out there for their people coming in the building and worrying about their building being vandalized, which is pretty sad.

[00:02:26] **Speaker 1** Are there issues around pay and benefits as well, or is it most specifically about safety?

[00:02:33] **Speaker 2** No, no, we, they did ask for a wage increase, but the wage increase that they asked for has barely cost the cost of everything that's gone up in our country, everybody sees that, but also they raised their premiums for their MercyCare health insurance, which is their insurance, Mercy's insurance, and they raised the rates, and with the wage increased, it barely covers.

[00:03:03] **Speaker 1** How long could this strike last?

[00:03:09] **Speaker 2** It could last as long as it needs to. I mean, the UAW is backing these people. We're not asking for anything that's unreasonable, we're just asking for a fair agreement. And the last negotiations we had, they actually offered us less than they offered in the initial negotiations, which is a slap in the face. A lot of people might be wondering... It looks like a union bus detected to me.

[00:03:40] **Speaker 1** A lot of people might be wondering, why are health care workers represented by the United Auto Workers?

[00:03:49] **Speaker 2** Well, what happened was they organized, I don't know why they organized. We all, this is an amalgamated union. We have credit unions. We have a factory in Whitewater that makes meat slicers. So UAW goes in a lot of different ways. There's a lot people in nursing and credit unions and all over that are different. Being amalgamed, you could do that.

[00:04:19] **Speaker 1** Are the issues that you're pressing common concerns among health care workers generally?

[00:04:27] **Speaker 2** I believe so. I mean, they've had, I've seen lately in the paper, and I don't know if it's, if this is the coming trend, I mean my gosh, the way the world has come to, you have to worry about everything all the time with guns and so on, but they've had, they had several issues at the hospitals that people have been unruly. I mean, what happens if you're in an urgent care at night and somebody becomes unruley? I mean you have nobody there, you know, Most of those people are not equipped to fight off someone who's violent. So I think it's a coming thing that security should be in medical facilities everywhere.

[00:05:06] **Speaker 1** What will happen to patient care if this strike stretches on?

[00:05:11] **Speaker 2** I don't know, patient care right now, we've had a lot of complaints from a lot of people that had appointments. Like we tell people, they ask, well they don't want to cross the picket line. If you need to be seen, you need to go. You know, you take care of yourself first. I mean, we don't promote them to cross the line and go there. But people who have gone there have felt that their care that they're getting is not what it used to be. They have tables set up so that they do makeshift receptionists are taking their personal records and talking and there's somebody right there. You have no privacy.

[00:05:59] **Speaker 1** What about for your striking members, how are they faring as the weeks go on?

[00:06:07] **Speaker 2** Some are more worried than others. You know, some have spouses that have jobs. They are getting strike pay. But, you know, you have the singles and the single mothers and maybe single fathers. I'm not sure about that. But, that issue is that they are concerned, but they're not willing to give up the fight. We're a 95% union facility. And, um, like I said, we're just looking for a fair agreement. We're not asking for anything unbelievable. I mean, we, we are talking about a CEO in a non-profit that is making 13 million dollars a year. And has 12 vice presidents that are making 450,000 dollars a year plus their perks. That's, that's, that's horrible when you don't want to pay these people a decent living rate, living wage.

[00:07:07] **Speaker 1** Judy McRoberts, president of Local 95. Thanks very much for joining us.

[00:07:13] **Speaker 2** Okay, thank you.

[00:07:14] **Speaker 1** When asked for comment, Mercy Health provided their original statement released in late June from Vice President Jenny Hallett, saying, quote, throughout our negotiations with the union, we have always treated our 137 partners at Mercy Health East in a fair and equitable manner, consistent with our other 8,000-plus employee partners. Unfortunately, the union has rejected our offer. Well, thank you. Thank you, Judy. I really appreciate you joining us, and we will...

[00:07:54] **Speaker 2** Thank you very much as well.

[00:07:55] **Speaker 1** We will keep up on what is going on with your work action. Thank you.

[00:08:22] **Speaker 2** Okay, thank you very much. I'll get those to you. I hope it turns out well. Okay, and you as well. Okay, have a good weekend. Okay, okay, bye.

[00:09:01] **Speaker 1** On camera or not. When asked for comment, Mercy Health provided their original statement released in late June from Vice President Jenny Hallett, saying, quote, throughout our negotiations with the union, we have always treated our 137 partners at Mercy Health East in a fair and equitable manner, consistent with our other 8,000-plus employee partners. Unfortunately, the union has rejected our offer.