



# CHRIS LARSON

## STATE SENATOR

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**Contact:**

Senator Chris Larson  
(608) 266-7505

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Ho-Ho-Horrible: Ascension leaves a lump of coal in its workers' stockings, earns a spot on the naughty list**

**Milwaukee, WI** - Barely one week before Christmas, Ascension Health informed caregivers at the labor and delivery unit at Saint Francis Hospital that they had two choices - take a job at a new facility, without the benefit of union representation they currently enjoyed, or find a new place to work. Not only are about a dozen medical workers facing unemployment right before the holidays, families on the South Side of Milwaukee are now left without a single birthing center to welcome their children into the world.

Such a brazen cost-cutting measure as this would be bad enough for a for-profit company, but Ascension is organized as a nonprofit, has \$18 billion in cash reserves, and wears the faith of its founders on its sleeve. The following is Ascension's mission statement, taken directly from its website:

*"Rooted in the loving ministry of Jesus as healer, we commit ourselves to serving all persons with special attention to those who are poor and vulnerable. Our Catholic health ministry is dedicated to spiritually centered, holistic care which sustains and improves the health of individuals and communities."*

The ruthlessly capitalist, union-busting tactics Ascension's decision-makers have used at Saint Francis Hospital are hardly emblematic of the admirable mission it proclaims to maintain as an organization. Sadly, this is nothing new for Ascension. As a recent [New York Times expose](#) noted:

*"As recently as 2019, Ascension was trumpeting its success at reducing its number of employees per occupied bed, a common industry staffing metric. At one point, executives boasted to their peers about how they had slashed \$500 million from the chain's labor costs."*

While Ascension's hypocrisy is worthy of the criticism it will surely receive for this decision and others yet to come, it would be a mistake to claim that Ascension is unique in its ruthless pursuit of cost savings. As the American healthcare industry continues its march toward rapid growth and consolidation, it is healthcare workers - and the patients they care for - who stand to lose the most.

WISCONSIN STATE CAPITOL  
P.O. BOX 7882 • MADISON, WISCONSIN 53707-7882  
(608) 266-7505 • (800) 361-5487 • FAX: (608) 282-3547  
SEN.LARSON@LEGIS.WI.GOV • SENATORCHRISLARSON.COM

We don't have a healthcare system so much as a profit machine that punishes the sick and rewards the greedy.

In the short term, I sincerely hope that Ascension realizes the error of their ways and re-opens the labor and delivery unit at Saint Francis Hospital. I hope it ends its pattern of allocating resources away from their union hospitals, many located in low-income neighborhoods in major cities like Milwaukee, Chicago, and Saint Louis, to their non-union counterparts.

Beyond this particular incident, it is worth pointing out that the United States is the only wealthy nation on earth without true universal healthcare and, not surprisingly, is also the only country where medical debt is the number one cause of personal bankruptcy. It's past time we change that and in the process relegate the illness profiteers and hypocrites to the dustbin of history.