

Editorial: After the Tufts strike

[Boston Herald editorial staff](#)

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Tufts Medical Center nurses went back to work yesterday — but the financial hit to the hospital from last week’s strike, the financial hit to nurses from the lockout that followed, and the raw nerves that inevitably come with such labor disputes linger on.

There still is no contract. The hospital was forced to spend at least \$5 million on replacement nurses — dollars that could have been put to better use as part of a contract settlement. And the Massachusetts Nurses Association should be held accountable for the thuggery done *in their name* to replacement nurses en route to the hospital Sunday morning.

None of that contributes to a healthy atmosphere for resuming collective bargaining.

Also not helpful, the blatant demagoguery of some elected officials who decided to take sides in this fight. Sure U.S. Reps. Stephen Lynch and Michael Capuano are good Democrats, but does it go without saying that they have to toady to every union?

“We need to stick together,” Lynch told picketing nurses Saturday. “When you stick together you will win.”

Memo to Lynch: These aren’t ironworkers and the economics of running a hospital in this wondrous new era of Washington-dominated health care are considerably more complex than some construction project.

Or are Lynch and Capuano so in thrall to organized labor that they fail to see the connection?

And did they and the MNA fail to notice that on the very day the Tufts nurses picked to strike, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Lahey Health announced an agreement to merge their two organizations? If approved by state officials that would unite 13 hospitals under one umbrella organization.

It is that atmosphere in which Tufts is fighting to remain competitive.

Mayor Marty Walsh, who also appeared at the rally, struck a more realistic note when he called for both sides to return to the bargaining table and reach an agreement that is “fair and equitable for both sides.”

The time for demagoguery is over. The time for realism is at hand.