

After 10 Months of Talks, 62,000 Southern California Grocery Workers Reach Agreement



Grocery consumers across Southern California stood in support of grocery workers' efforts to get a new contract.

Members of the Locals 8GS, 135, 324, 770, 1167, 1428 and 1442 working at Ralphs (a Kroger banner), Vons (a Safeway banner) and Albertsons (a Supervalu banner) in Southern California reached a tentative agreement yesterday with the companies.

The tentative agreement was reached after 8 months of negotiating and strong involvement and activism by 62,000 grocery workers and widespread support of customers and allies across the region. UFCW members across the country took action online to support the Southern California negotiations, sending thousands of messages via email and Facebook to the grocery companies.

UFCW members will vote on the proposals in meetings over the coming week. The agreement increases wages, protects health care and pension benefits throughout the life of the three-year contract.

The new contract, once ratified, will cover 62,000 UFCW grocery workers, the largest bargaining unit in the UFCW. An additional 28,000 grocery workers at regional chains like Stater Brothers, Food 4 Less, Gelson's Market and

other markets are covered by the successful resolution of the Southern California contract. The contract covering 45,000 grocery workers in Northern California expires in October.

Look for more details on the Southern California contract here in *OnPoint* once Southern California UFCW members have voted on the agreement. **OP**

Members of Five UFCW Locals Ratify New Contract with Hormel



Hormel workers like Thomas Pulaski, Local 1473 (pictured here with his wife), ratified a new four-year contract.

Members of the Locals 6, 9, 293, 1473 and 1996 who work at Hormel Foods Corporation in five states, voted this past Tuesday to accept a new four-year contract with the company.

The new collective bargaining agreement provides for, among many other significant gains, a substantial base wage increase of \$1.50 over the term of the agreement, significant improvements in health care including 100 percent coverage for transplants and an increased allowance for hearing aids, improved retirement security including a 401(k) match increase from \$300 to \$500 and a pension increase to \$27.

"The strong contract that we secured with Hormel is a pretty big deal," said Dick Schuster, who has worked at the company's Fremont, Neb. facility for the past 38 years. "At a time

when pensions are under attack nationwide, we were able to bargain for significant improvements to our retirement security. Our contract is a testament to why sticking together and speaking with one voice benefits all workers.”

“Our communities need good jobs with pay and benefits that can support a family,” said Vincent Perry, a four-year veteran at the Hormel plant in Algona, Iowa. “Good union contracts like ours help build more stable and secure communities.”

Nationwide, the UFCW represents 8,000 Hormel workers. This new agreement covers about 4,000 workers at the company’s facilities in Austin, Minn.; Algona, Iowa; Fremont, Neb.; Beloit, Wis.; and Atlanta, Ga. **OP**

Poultry Workers Settle Lawsuit with Tyson Foods



More than 17,000 Tyson poultry workers in 41 plants, in 12 states settled a \$32 million lawsuit in a 12-year struggle to get paid for work already performed, including workers at more than a dozen UFCW plants. The UFCW, as the leading union for meatpacking and food processing workers, initiated the suit against Tyson and played a critical role in obtaining justice for Tyson poultry workers and thousands of UFCW members affected by the suit. On Thursday, the United States District Court in Georgia approved the settlement.

“Every American deserves to get paid for the work they do,” said Joe Hansen, UFCW International President. “We’re changing the way meatpackers do business and

making them pay thousands of workers correctly.”

The lawsuit charged Tyson with violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Meatpacking and food processing workers wear specialized protective gear while they work to protect both themselves and the food we eat. Before these UFCW-initiated lawsuits began, meatpacking companies didn’t pay workers for time spent taking the gear on and off, adding up to thousands of dollars of lost pay over years of work.

“We’ve already made a change in the way meatpackers pay their workers,” said Hansen. “While this settlement is long overdue, our efforts have ensured that thousands of workers have been paid correctly for years now.”

The lawsuit will result in payments, averaging around \$1,000 per worker, to current and former Tyson workers across the country. These payments will inject much-needed money into America’s rural economy and reward a hard-working and dedicated group of poultry workers. The affected Tyson poultry workers work at plants in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas.

This lawsuit and the new pay practices in the meatpacking industry are just one way union workers raise standards for every worker in their industry, regardless of their union status. **OP**

Local 951 Meijer Members Ratify New Contract

Last week, more than 27,000 members of Local 951 who work at Meijer stores and distribution centers ratified new contracts lasting up to five years.

In addition to wage increases for all members and greater affordability of health insurance, the new agreements include: a reduction in the work hours required to receive paid time off for all members, increases in paid time off for most members, pension security for long term members, a new 401(k) program featuring an employer contribution and match, and a retirement incentive for long-term members.

“I was expecting the worst, especially with how bad the



Members of Local 951 vote to ratify their new contract with Meijer.

economy is right now,” said Rebecca Aguilar, a member of Local 951 who works in the Meijer store in Rockford, Mich., “but I’m really proud of what my union was able to achieve.”

The new contracts cover members who work in the retail stores, distribution centers and as part of the property management and services division and vary in length from 53 to 61 months. The Universal Benefits Agreement for all contracts has a five year term. **OP**

Members of Local 27 Save Jobs with New Contract with Allen Foods

On June 9, 2011, Allen Family Foods, a poultry producer and processor, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy and gave more than 900 members of Local 27 a 60-day notice of their intent to cease operations at their Harbeson, Del. processing plant.

While uncertainty reigned, Local 27 members stood together and had faith in their strength as a union.

After awhile, Harim USA, a South Korean company, expressed interest in acquiring Allen Family Foods. Rumors escalated: would the Harbeson plant stay open, would it be union and would the employees keep their jobs, hourly rates of pay and benefits?

On July 26, 2011, it was officially announced that Harim USA was the successful bidder for Allen’s. Local 27 members were able to stand together and negotiate with their new employer for a collective bargaining agreement.

As a result, a new three-year contract was reached and took effect September 6, 2011 and closely mirrored the previous agreement. Very few changes were made and the jobs of the Local 27 members were protected. The contract also saved members’ seniority rights, hourly rates of pay, working conditions and benefits.

“I have been working for this company for 19 years,” said Rose Scher, a member of Local 27 who works at the Harbeson plant. “There have been a lot of changes over the years, but when Allen’s Foods went out of business a lot of people were afraid of what the new company would do. But our union stood together and we could keep our jobs and our benefits.” **OP**

Local 23 Kroger Workers Ratify New Contract



Members of Local 23 vote to ratify their new contract with Kroger.

More than 1,100 members of Local 23 who work at more than a dozen Kroger stores in Western Ohio and West Virginia have overwhelmingly ratified a new contract with their employer.

The new contract includes pay increases and continued health care and pension protections.

Local 23 members stood together through months of negotiations and took dozens of actions for a new contract, including a Facebook “flash mob” as well as demonstrations at local Kroger stores. **OP**

Local 21 Members Instrumental in Passing Seattle Paid Sick Days Requirement



Tasha West-Baker, a Local 21 member, rallies a crowd in support of paid sick days in front of the Seattle City Hall.

Last week, Seattle became just the third city in the nation to require all businesses with more than a minimum number of employees to provide paid sick days, and members of Local 21 played a key part in advancing this critical worker-friendly legislation.

“I need paid sick days, but I am not alone,” said Tasha West-Baker, a member of Local 21 and a clerk at the Rainer Valley Safeway store. “Over 100,000 workers in Seattle don’t have paid sick days, so they have to choose – come to work sick, or lose a day’s pay. It’s the same across this country – in hospitals, grocery and retail, food processing, coffee shops.”

West-Baker fought for, and won, better paid sick days in her union, but knew the situation had to change for all of Seattle’s workers.

Retail and food workers like West-Baker across the country

know the critical importance of paid sick leave to the health of their communities. They know that when workers are forced to come to work sick, they put the safety of their customers and the food they handle or produce at risk.

“Coming to work sick is not good for anyone. So I am proud that working people stood up together in Seattle and politicians heard us,” said West-Baker. “Now we will be able to stay at home when we’re sick. Paid sick days are good for workers and all the people we serve every day.”

Now, West-Baker is playing a critical role in the nationwide effort for paid sick days, starring in a new video tied in with the hit movie *Contagion*. To view Tasha’s video, visit Family-ValuesatWork.org. **OP**

Making Change at Walmart Stands Up for Walmart Women

Walmart’s announcement last week that they would spend billions of dollars in the next five years to train female workers around the world and support women-owned businesses was greeted with skepticism across America. The Making Change at Walmart campaign released a statement about Walmart’s latest news stating that Walmart causes systematic economic harm to women in the U.S. and around the world, and that is precisely why Walmart is trying to sell us on a new image.

“While Walmart’s supply chain oppresses communities, women and children abroad, its practices have bankrupted countless small businesses in the United States...”

“For decades, Walmart has shown that when it “invests” in a community, that community can expect lost jobs, depressed wages, bankrupt local business, and lowering of labor standards to follow quickly. Women in the U.S. and around the world would be far better served if Walmart would improve its labor practices, raise its wages, and use its power to stand up for human rights instead of undermining them through its day to day business practices.”

To read more of the statement or to learn how you can join with Making Change at Walmart to improve conditions for women at the world’s largest retailer, visit MakingChangeatWalmart.org. **OP**