

Repeal of Senate Bill 5 in Ohio Is a Victory for Workers



Last week's repeal of Ohio Senate Bill 5, also known as Issue 2, was a victory for workers everywhere. A year after Ohio Governor John Kasich and legislative Republicans were swept into office, voters in Ohio struck down the centerpiece of their anti-worker agenda—a bill to strip collective bargaining rights away from teachers, first responders and other public employees.

“The repeal of Senate Bill 5 is bigger than just one law or one state. It sends a message to all those who would try to silence the voice of American workers: you do so at your own peril,” said President Joe Hansen in a press statement on November 8. “It shows that the right to bargain collectively for a better life is fundamental—not some perk that can be stripped away on a whim. The votes cast today in Columbus and Cleveland and everywhere in between will have aftershocks in Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, and Washington, D.C.”

When Senate Bill 5 was passed, the “We Are Ohio” campaign collected 1.3 million signatures to get the bill on the ballot to be overturned. The UFCW was deeply

involved in this effort. Twenty lost-timers from UFCW Locals 75 and 1059 were engaged in in-store member mobilization in Columbus, Cincinnati, Dayton, Toledo and in communities across Ohio. These lost-timers, along with dozens of International staff, were embedded in the joint “We Are Ohio” and Labor Get Out the Vote program, where they ran phone banks and canvassed homes to urge Ohioans to stop Senate Bill 5 by voting “No on Issue 2.”

Other Election Day victories included the re-election of Governor Steve Beshear (D) in Kentucky, who is also an advocate for workers' rights; the recall of state Senate President Russell Pearce (R) in Arizona, who was the author of the state's controversial anti-immigration legislation; and the rejection of “Question 1” in Maine, which overturned a same-day election registration repeal signed by Governor Paul LePage (R) in June. **OP**

A&P Local Unions Stick Together as Grocery Chain Proposes Bankruptcy Plan

On November 14, A&P filed its proposal to pay creditors and complete its restructuring with the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in White Plains, N.Y. Despite numerous hurdles, UFCW Locals 27, 100R, 152, 338*, 342, 371, 464A, 1034*, 1245, 1262, 1360, 1500, and 1776 have continued to stay unified as they work with A&P and Yucaipa to help bring the embattled grocery chain out of bankruptcy. A&P asked the UFCW for accommodations to assist the grocery chain in exiting bankruptcy. The local unions' unified stance with the company and the financiers was key to their ability to fight off certain proposed changes to their contract language, and to guarantee their ability to represent their members.

The locals are now in the process of ratifying a new contract which will help 35,000 workers keep their jobs and union voice at A&P. The UFCW and RWDSU District Council local unions are in close contact with their members and are committed to staying united to serve members and to keep the company financially viable. **OP**



Bob's Discount Furniture Workers in Freeport and Glendale, N.Y. Vote "Union Yes" with Local 888

Employees at Bob's Discount Furniture continue to organize and win. The workers' latest victory came on November 14, when a majority of workers at Bob's Discount Furniture stores in Freeport and Glendale, N.Y., voted for a voice on the job with Local 888—joining their coworkers in Manchester, N.H., and Stamford, Orange and Manchester, Conn., who voted UFCW "Yes" with UFCW Locals 1445 and 919 earlier this year.

Bob's Discount Furniture was formerly a privately held company, but is now controlled by the London-based private equity firm Apax Partners. Apax Partners also has substantial interests in a variety of American retail outlets, including DKNY, Van Heusen and Tommy Hilfiger. **OP**

Making Change at Walmart Builds Global Alliances with Chilean Labor Organizations

Last week, members of U.S. and Chilean labor organizations met to continue building a global alliance to call on Walmart to be a better employer. Chilean Walmart workers, trade union representatives and suppliers discussed the latest issues concerning the retail industry in Chile. During these meetings, various speakers addressed Walmart's attempt to expand in the U.S. and how Walmart has systematically mistreated workers in the U.S. with low wages that make it difficult for workers to support their families. In Chile, issues like these are beginning to develop and these meetings focused on strengthening the bonds between U.S. and Chilean Walmart workers in order to continue the fight for social justice and better living conditions.

Chilean unions and NGOs gave reports on the deterioration of Walmart's worker wages and benefits in Chile. Various stakeholders also analyzed Walmart's potential

negative impact on the Chilean retail industry. In addition to Chilean workers, trade union representatives and suppliers, small business groups, Chilean women's organizations, economists from various universities, and labor lawyers were present. **OP**

Locals 5 and 648 Stand with Walmart Associates in San Francisco Bay Area

On November 15, UFCW locals 5 and 648, along with San Francisco Supervisor Eric Mar and a coalition of community, labor and faith groups and others, announced support for the Organization United for Respect at Walmart (OUR Walmart). OUR Walmart consists of current and former Walmart associates who are organizing for respect and better working conditions at the nation's largest retailer as it prepares a major expansion in the San Francisco Bay area and other urban communities around the country.

UFCW locals 5 and 648 are also standing with allies by calling for a hearing with the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to discuss the potential impact of Walmart's expansion into San Francisco and the overall growing presence of corporate chain stores on small businesses, workers and the economy. This announcement kicked off the Campaign for Good Jobs and Healthy Communities, which includes Jobs with Justice, OUR Walmart, UFCW locals 5 and 648, South of Market Community Action Network, Young Workers United, People Organized to Win Employment Rights, small business owners, labor, clergy and other non-profit groups and organizations.

"We are pleased to stand with OUR Walmart as big box retailers attempt to move into San Francisco communities," said Ellouise Patton, UFCW Local 5 special projects and San Francisco Walmart coordinator. "OUR Walmart has our support and we proudly applaud their efforts for better wages and equality in the workplace." **OP**

Local 880 Members Approve Contract, End Strike

On November 9, Rite-Aid workers from Local 880 voted to approve a contract which ended a strike that ran for more than seven months. The contract covers approximately 225 workers in 26 stores, including seven that went on strike in the Greater Cleveland area. Workers went on strike in March because of company proposals



Rite Aid Worker Lessie Smallwood went on strike to save health care benefits for herself and her family.

that would have drastically increased health care costs for members. The contract provides substantial wage increases, protects worker pensions, and maintains affordable health care coverage for the term of the three year contract which expires in 2014.

A group of working grandmothers from the striking stores took to Facebook and the web to explain the injustice of the company's proposal. Through their website www.thesegrandniesshowshow.org

and their Facebook page, the women told stories of their families and the toll that increased health care costs would have on their household budgets and on their families.

"I [went] on strike to protect my health care insurance so that one day my children and grandchildren will not have to worry about the cost of health care. I want the younger generation to understand the meaning of unions and how they help protect their members," said Lessie Smallwood from the Lorain store.

Rite-Aid workers in a separate bargaining unit that includes workers from Youngstown, Akron, and Northeastern Ohio will vote on their contract soon. **OP**

America's Best Workers Say "Union Yes" with Local 653



Workers at America's Best Contacts and Eyeglasses voted for a voice on the job with Local 653.

Workers at the America's Best Contacts and Eyeglasses store in Burnsville, Minn., recently voted overwhelmingly for a better workplace by unionizing with Local 653. The seven workers voted in a National Labor Relations Board-supervised election held on November 4.

This is the first organizing victory for the UFCW at America's Best retail stores. The company owns more than 300 eyeglasses and contact lens stores in 27 states and the District of Columbia, including 15 in the Twin Cities area alone. Workers at the Burnsville store, along with Local 653, have already begun the process of reaching out to the other stores in their area to talk about how they can come together for a real voice at work. **OP**

Southern California Members Thank Community for Support During Contract Negotiations

On November 14, more than 150 volunteers from Local 1428, together with community and religious leaders, engaged in a Day of Service action in several locations around Inland Empire. The Day of Service was designed to thank local communities for the support shown to members during the eight months of negotiations which

led to a contract in September. The support of customers, local community partners and elected officials was a big factor in pushing the companies to do the right thing.

At Trinity United Methodist Church and Kingsley Elementary School, members helped pack bags of socks, toiletries, and groceries for people in need; at St. John the Baptist Church they painted a community services building and planted a garden; at Ability First, in Claremont, they decorated a facility for Thanksgiving celebration; and at Feed the Children, in Ontario, they helped pack food for holiday distribution.

Rachel Almazan, a Rite-Aid employee and union member for 39 years, was one of nearly 20 members volunteering at Kingsley Elementary School, "We just want to give back to our community for their support," she said.



Members of UFCW Local 1428 painted a community services building to say "thanks" for the community support during their contract negotiations.

UFCW Local Unions Gear Up for 2012 Work, Unified Messaging, and State Legislative Battles

Legislative and political representatives from 12 UFCW Locals (2, 227, 655, 876, 880, 951, 1059, 1189, 1445, 1473, 1776, and the ICWUC) attended the Unified Labor Table's state battles meeting on Monday and Tuesday

this week in Cleveland, Ohio, to prepare for upcoming attacks on workers in the state legislatures. Participants learned strategies for engaging allies, maintaining solidarity amongst public and private sector unions, building support in the business community, and shared best practices for communications, messaging, and new media.

On November 15, 30 members from UFCW Locals 700 and 881 took part in a community discussion forum at the University of Notre Dame's Higgins Center in South Bend, Ind. The program was entitled "The Jobs Crisis and the Threat to Our Living Standards." and the discussion centered around the anti-worker legislation that's likely to be introduced in the Indiana Statehouse in 2012.

On the same day, communicators from UFCW Locals 464A, 1500, 227, 5, 700, 1546, 367, 881, 876, 951, 75, 1996, 23, 400, 21, 1776, 328 and UFCW Canada joined International communications staff and Making Change at Walmart to share communications strategies, tactics, success stories, and lessons learned from our organizing, political, collective bargaining and state-level legislative campaigns and to hear new messaging research that should guide the UFCW's media strategy.



On November 15, the UFCW and Smithfield delivered 120,000 servings of protein to the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana. Strack & Van Til Supermarkets, a longstanding retail partner of Smithfield and a dedicated supporter of the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana, also participated. The event was part of the "Feeding the Hungry" tour, a joint program of the UFCW and Smithfield to donate and help deliver 20 million servings of protein over three years to food banks around the country.