

Food 4 Less Workers Stick Together, Defend Jobs and Gain Salary Equality in New Contract



A Food 4 Less worker and member of UFCW Local 135 casts his vote.

Last Tuesday, members of UFCW Local 135 who work at 11 Kroger-owned Food 4 Less stores in San Diego, California overwhelmingly approved a new contract that puts Food 4 Less workers on par with other union grocery store workers in California. The new contract also protects affordable health benefits, and preserves the integrity of meat jobs.

A key issue during negotiations was wages. Many Food 4 Less workers were earning \$3 less per hour than workers at Ralphs, another Kroger-owned grocery chain.

In addition, the chain's executives had proposed outsourcing some meat-cutting duties, reducing the hours in the meat department, and allowing grocery clerks to cut meat. Currently, meat department workers go through a two-year apprenticeship, learning to process meat into ground beef and cuts such as steaks, chops and roasts, using five foot band saws.

Workers authorized a strike over wage inequities and the eroding of the meat jobs. They also took coordinated actions, handing out consumer education leaflets at stores in Mission Valley and across San Diego. Local 135 member Mark Obcamp said, "even in a tough economy, our union was able to protect our health benefits and pensions. I am so proud to be represented by the UFCW."

"I am excited for our hardworking members at Food 4 Less, who, through their strength, were able to ensure they would be treated equally with the other grocery store workers at Ralphs, Vons, Albertsons and Stater Brothers," UFCW Local 135 President Mickey Kasparian, said. **OP**

Organizers Gather a Million Signatures to Recall Governor Walker

Yesterday, volunteer organizers, including members, staff, stewards, and legislative and political representatives from UFCW Locals 538 and 1473 turned in over one million signatures in the effort to recall Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker. The move sends a simple message: the ideological war on workers will be met with stiff resistance by people who refuse to let their government be bankrolled by corporate special interests.

The recall campaign needed to gather a little over 540,000 valid signatures. Volunteers collected 185 percent of the required signatures, or 460,000 above the threshold.

The recall effort arose last year after Governor Walker and anti-worker legislators in Wisconsin used a budget shortfall as an excuse to launch an ideological attack on the collective bargaining rights of teachers, nurses, and other public employees.

The Government Accountability Board (GAB) has 60 days to verify the signatures. Although, the GAB has already requested additional time. After the GAB verifies 540,000 valid signatures, Democrats will have six weeks to hold a primary, and four weeks to hold a general election. The earliest Governor Walker could be voted out of office would be late May.

Fun Fact: The weight of all of the signatures collected is 3,000 pounds. That's as much two of the heaviest Wisconsin dairy (Holstein) cows, or 158 really heavy badgers. **OP**



UFCW members joined with thousands of citizens in a rally protesting Governor Walker's attack on collective bargaining outside the Wisconsin capitol last year.

Local Unions with JBS Contracts Meet to Discuss Unified Approach to Safety, Ergonomics

Officers and representatives from eleven UFCW local unions representing workers at JBS plants across the country met on Tuesday to develop a unified approach and pro-active agenda regarding health, safety, and ergonomics with JBS at all its U.S. locations.

The UFCW represents workers at 100 percent of JBS' red meat operations in the U.S.; and this union density offers an unparalleled opportunity to improve contracts and working conditions.



On-the-job safety is a top concern for workers in the meat packing and food processing industries.

"This was about developing a chain-wide strategy and approach to health and safety at this company," said Michelle Kessler, Secretary-Treasurer of UFCW Local 1776. "The UFCW is going to start taking the lead on safety programs, not reacting to company proposals. This meeting was unique because it's the first time local leadership has come together to talk solely about safety. When we all push together, at all our locations, we have a real chance to make this job better for people. What better way to give real results to our members and to organize new members?" Kessler said.

Participants from Locals 7, 99, 227, 293, 435, 540, 951, 1149, 1161, 1473 and 1776 attended. Topics included making plans for an in-depth local union safety and health assessment; a discussion of health and safety issues at the plant and corporate levels; identifying hazards; preventing injuries; ergonomics; the dangers of how to push back against company efforts to take a behavioral approach toward worker safety. **OP**

Petition Tells Walmart CEO Mike Duke to Stop Trampling Rights of Walmart's Warehouse Workers

Walmart moves millions of tons of goods through a vast network of warehouses hidden away on the outskirts of cities throughout the U.S. Warehouse workers do backbreaking work for minimum wage. Although many people work for the same facility for years, they're often contracted through "temporary" work agencies.

This past September, workers in a Mira Loma, Calif. warehouse filed a federal lawsuit against their warehouse operator for not paying enough to meet the minimum requirements of U.S. wage laws. Soon after, the workers were threatened, harassed, and finally told they would lose their jobs on February 24.

A change.org petition circulating today urges Walmart to adopt a Responsible Contractor Policy that would hold contractors to higher standards and demands that Walmart ensure that these warehouse workers are paid a living wage; have safe, steady full-time jobs with benefits; and are guaranteed their legal rights will be respected. Sign the petition at <http://goo.gl/pxyOM>. **OP**

UFCW Members in Arizona



Support Hunger Relief Efforts

On Tuesday, January 17, UFCW members from UFCW Local 99 in Tucson, Ariz., together with Smithfield Foods, delivered 120,000 servings of protein to the Community Food Bank in Tucson. 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. Wearing gold and ready to work, UFCW Local 99 members helped staff from the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona unload 30,000 pounds of Smithfield hams.

The event's featured speakers included Ron Barber, the District Director for Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords; Jessica Shultz, Community Outreach Director, Tucson Mayor's Office; Esther Lopez, UFCW Director of Civil Rights and Community Action; Bill Carnegie, Community Food Bank CEO; and Dennis Pittman, Director of Public Affairs for Smithfield.

The Feeding the Hungry tour has reached the 100 donation milestone, and will continue to deliver much-needed protein donations throughout the year in pursuit of its goal to deliver 20 million servings of protein. **OP**

Workers at Tony Downs and Hormel Plants Ratify New Contracts

Members of UFCW Local 1161 at the Tony Downs plants in Madelia and St. James, Minnesota have ratified a four-year contract which covers nearly 300 workers. The contract maintains affordable health care benefits and provides a \$1.25 raise over four years. In addition, workers who are promoted to premium jobs will immediately qualify for a Quick Start rate. The contract also includes increases in short-term disability and boot allowance.

One hundred and five Hormel workers and members of Local 431 in Knoxville, Iowa have overwhelmingly ratified a new four-year contract. Members of Local 431 engaged in unity bargaining back in September with other UFCW Hormel workers from Austin, Minn.; Algona, Iowa; Fremont, Neb.; Beloit, Wis.; and Atlanta, Ga.

Because of their unified bargaining approach, members of Local 431 were able to secure essentially the same deal: 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.

Nationwide, the UFCW represents 8,000 Hormel workers. **OP**

UFCW Supports Occupy Congress Protesters

The Occupy Wall Street movement celebrated four months yesterday by gathering in Washington, D.C. to 'Occupy Congress.' More than 2,000 protesters came to the nation's capitol to bring the message of the 99 % to Congress on its first day back in session.



Occupy protesters wore UFCW gold at yesterday's Occupy Congress event.

Many UFCW local unions have been strong supporters of the Occupy movement's efforts to fight back against corporate greed and advocate for the middle class. On Tuesday, the UFCW distributed 300 boxed lunches made by our members, and passed out over 250 union-made scarves to keep protesters warm. UFCW also provided tables for the first aid station and for the information centers where protesters could locate their member of Congress. UFCW gold could be seen throughout Occupy's General Assembly. **OP**

UFCW SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

A union is about more than a paycheck and benefits.

That's why each year the UFCW awards several SCHOLARSHIPS of up to \$8,000 each to UFCW members or their unmarried dependents.

The application will be available online from January 16 - April 16, 2012.

www.ufcw.org/scholarship

UFCW
Scholarship Program