

1,000 UFCW RWDSU Local 1102 Members at H&M in Manhattan Ratify First Union Contract

More than 1,000 workers at several H&M clothing stores in Manhattan ratified their first-ever union contract on May 22. The new UFCW RWDSU Local 1102 members first won the right to negotiate with the Swedish-based retailer in November 2007 after the company agreed to majority sign-up.

The three-year agreement guarantees a three-percent wage increase in the first year, with wage re-openers in the second and third years. An additional merit-based increase is included for each year of the contract. The new contract also guarantees workers know their schedule a week in advance, and it cannot change without the employee's consent.

"This agreement represents a win-win for both the workers and H&M. Workers at H&M know they have the union in their corner and that creates a better working environment," said UFCW RWDSU Local 1102 President and International Vice President Frank Bail. **OP**

Local 5 and Berkeley Bowl Announce Win-Win Agreement in California

UFCW Local 5 and Berkeley Bowl recently announced the company's agreement to majority sign-up at the company's second store set to open in June. The company is an independent grocer in Berkeley, Calif., that specializes in fresh produce and organic foods.

According to the pact, the UFCW agrees not to do any organizing during the store's first 90 days. After that, Berkeley Bowl agreed to remain neutral and the UFCW agreed to run a positive campaign throughout the 45-day sign-up process. Both agree to federal mediation if disputes arise.

"The workers at Berkeley Bowl view this achievement as groundbreaking," said Local 5 President and International Vice President Ron Lind. "The ability to



A UFCW Local 5 member checks out a customer at a Berkeley Bowl in California.

come to an agreement with the company on such an important issue and avoid the acrimony built up during the last organizing drive is a huge victory for the workers, the community, and indeed, management."

While workers at the current store have UFCW representation, it came only after a three-year battle and bargaining order issued by the NLRB in 2005. For years, Berkeley Bowl had taken a hard line against the prospect of union representation at its new store. But a combination of events led the company to a change of attitude, such as the merger of seven local unions into a more powerful Local 5, which has built great community and political support behind fairness for workers. **OP**

New Study Underscores Need for Employee Free Choice Act

A new study released last week by Cornell University Director of Labor Education Kate Bronfenbrenner shows companies have intensified the severity and frequency of tactics used to punish and intimidate workers trying to organize a union. The study, *No Holds Barred*, underscores the need for Employee Free Choice.

Based on a random sampling of 1,004 union elections, a review of NLRB cases and documents, and surveys with union organizers and workers, the report shows that

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during elections:

- Nearly 60 percent of employers threaten to close the workplace;
- Almost half threaten workers in one-on-one “sweat sessions;”
- About a third retaliate by firing workers.



Rite Aid worker Angel Warner (left) sits next to Cornell labor scholar Kate Bronfenbrenner while speaking at a briefing of the report, *No Holds Barred*.

The study also found that more than half of workers who win a union election still don’t have a contract a year later, and more than a third still don’t have a contract two years after winning an election. California Rite Aid worker Angel Warner talked about her struggle to form a union and get a contract at a briefing on Capitol Hill.

“We wanted to form a union so we would be treated with dignity and could speak up without fear of losing our jobs. Now we finally fight through the harassment to form a union, and we still don’t have a contract. It shouldn’t be like this. If my co-workers and I want a union, we should have one.”

View the full report at www.ufcwforfreechoice.org under the “Tools and Materials” section. **OP**

HCAN Report Spawns Request for Probe into Health Insurance Market

Health Care for America Now (HCAN) released a report last week revealing that a handful of health insurance companies dominate control of the private health

insurance market in most states. HCAN issued a request to the Justice Department to investigate the state of the private health insurance market.

According to the report, more than 94 percent of all insurance markets in the U.S. are “highly concentrated,” a term defined by the Justice Department as a market in which one company holds more than 42 percent share.

The report states, “Without competition among insurers, insurers have no reason to drive costs down, and without additional choices in the marketplace, consumers have no choice but to continue to pay inflated prices.”

Americans have watched health insurance premiums skyrocket 120 percent from 1999-2007 while wages grew only 29 percent. At about the same time, profits at the country’s 10 largest publicly traded health insurance companies have jumped 428 percent, from \$2.4 billion to \$12.9 billion. In 2007 alone, the CEOs of these companies earned an average of \$11.9 million each.

Go to www.healthcareforamericanow.org to view the report. **OP**

Cure CVS Campaign Releases Report Slamming Drugstore, Holds Rallies in Nine States

The UFCW joined labor and community supporters in rallies across nine states to protest CVS’s business practices. The protests were organized for May 21 in conjunction with the release of a report by Cure CVS, a campaign led by Change to Win.

The report found that CVS stores across the country have a pattern of violating health codes and selling expired goods, such as milk, baby formula, and medicine.

For more info on the campaign, to read the report, or to sign the petition, go to www.curecvsnow.org. **OP**