

UFCW Rallies Against Big Insurance, Demands Health Care Reform NOW



UFCW workers stand with a 5,000-strong progressive coalition to call on Congress to pass health care reform.

UFCW joined with our partners in the fight for health care reform last week to stand up to Big Insurance. More than 5,000 workers, doctors, nurses, patients, survivors, and activists took to the streets of Washington, D.C. for a march culminating at the Ritz Carleton, where members of AHIP, the health insurance industry's lobbying group, were meeting.

UFCW was there in full force to expose the insurance companies' abuses and to tell Congress to listen to us, not to the insurance lobby. We were proud to stand with our brothers and sisters from Health Care for America NOW, the Teamsters, AFSCME, SEIU, and AFT to send a strong unified message – America can't afford to wait for health care reform. We need an up or down vote on health care now.

At the rally we heard from laid off workers who are living without health care coverage, just one illness away from bankruptcy; we heard from fellow Americans who have seen loved ones lose their fights against cancer because they couldn't afford treatment; and we heard from activists from all over the country who can no longer afford their skyrocketing insurance premiums.

OP

Labor Secretary Solis Kicks Off UFCW Legislative and Political Conferences



Speaker Pelosi Sees UFCW Lobby Efforts Key to Health Care Reform



UFCW leaders come together to hear from elected leaders, lobby representatives, and plan upcoming ground game for 2010 elections at Legislative and Political Action Conference.

Local 1529 Member Receives Woman of Achievement Award for Courage

Local 1529's Teri Craven was honored for her courageous work on the behalf of workers on Sunday by the Memphis-area Women of Achievement. Teri has served as the political representative for her 10,000-member local, representing and organizing Kroger grocery workers in West Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Kentucky. Teri has earned a "Norma Rae reputation," a comparison that rang true during a 1990 strike when she dodged a bullet on the picket line at the Delta Pride catfish plant in Indianola, Miss. **OP**

First-Ever Region 4 Kroger Stewards Unity Seminar Draws Over 1,000



Kroger stewards from Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois gathered in Dayton to prepare for upcoming negotiations with Kroger.

More than 1,000 stewards came together at the Dayton, Ohio convention center on March 9th for the first-ever Region 4 Kroger Stewards Unity Seminar. Representing UFCW members at hundreds of Kroger stores in Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois, they traveled, some more than 400 miles each way, to prepare for the upcoming round of Kroger negotiations.

The seminar was developed under the leadership of the presidents of Locals 75, 227, 700, 876, 951, and 1059. Meeting in 2009, they determined that a more unified approach was necessary in dealing with Kroger, the nation's largest traditional retail grocer. Their overall plan includes: an ongoing quarterly newsletter; contract application and interpretation information exchanges; the sharing of bargaining data, ideas, and strategies; and more training like this seminar.

The common bond among all the stewards was the understanding that UFCW Kroger members must learn together as they stand together in the face of tough negotiations with a smart employer that remains profitable *even in a recession*. As one Steward said, it was a "... great learning experience as well as a wonderful chance to feel the solidarity within the UFCW during contract negotiations." **OP**

UFCW Joins Federal Hearings on Consolidation in Agribusiness

Late last week, dozens of members of UFCW Locals 431, 222, 440, 230, and 1149 participated in two public hearings about the impact of consolidation in agribusiness. On Thursday, community groups gathered in Ankeny, Iowa for a rally, and on Friday the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Justice sponsored a joint public workshop to discuss the issue. Many independent farmers and ranchers have expressed concern that too much of the crop and livestock markets are controlled by small handful of operators, while industry officials have long held that there is plenty of competition.

UFCW members were at the hearings in Ankeny to emphasize that, whatever action is ultimately taken by federal and state governments, the men and women who work in the industry deserve a seat at the table. Marv Harrington, International Vice President and President of Local 222 said, "It's never been more important for our members to have their voices heard in these discussions. We know the pressure that Walmart puts on our employers, and it's important that the Administration looks at how this affects our industry and our communities."

The sea of gold in the audience didn't go unnoticed: Representative Leonard Boswell (D-IA) and Assistant Attorney General for Antitrust Christine Varney both recognized the UFCW members from the podium. The Friday workshop was just the first in a series of public hearings that USDA and DoJ will hold over the coming year. Future topics will include poultry, dairy, livestock, and profit margins in agribusiness. **OP**

Whole Foods Investors Vote to Reinstate Basic Shareholder Rights

In a blow to Whole Foods corporate leadership, Whole Foods investors voted last week to make it easier for shareholders to oust a director for inappropriate conduct, a right previously stripped from them in the wake of revelations about current CEO John Mackey. UFCW applauds the vote, and we are hopeful the shareholders will make use of their new power and hold Whole Foods leadership to a higher standard of responsibility. **OP**