

Puget Sound Grocery Store Workers Overwhelmingly Ratify Contract



For over nine months of contract negotiations, grocery workers and **UFCW Local 21 and 81** members across Puget Sound took action and stood up together to protect good jobs. The big chain grocery stores had gone into negotiations proposing serious cuts to nearly every part of the contract, for current and new employees. Those efforts to gut the contract were stopped as the fight to secure a fair contract led to the brink of a strike in mid-November.

“This shows how regular working people – when they stand together – can make their boss sit down and agree to a reasonable compromise,” said Tasha West-Baker, a Safeway worker from Seattle. “They wanted to use the tough economy as an excuse to cut our pay and benefits, but we didn’t let them. We secured a better future for ourselves and our families.”

The tentative agreement was reached just prior to Thanksgiving. The grocery store workers’ many months of negotiations were bolstered by strong support from dozens of labor unions and community organizations across the region. Additionally, the daily show of support by customers as the potential for a looming strike approached was an important factor for members.

“We work hard for these companies, but they were trying to

use the tough economy to gut our pay and benefits,” said Lynnette Larson a Fred Meyer worker from Kent. “But because we stuck together, we showed them we weren’t going to accept that and even made some important improvements for our jobs, protected our health and pension plans, and our wages.”

Negotiations began with Safeway, Albertsons, QFC and Fred Meyer in mid-March with the original contract expiration in May. Thousands upon thousands of workers took actions for months as they fought for a fair contract. Unfortunately, by mid-October the employers’ proposal still included severe cuts to pay, and health and pension benefits. On November 10, an almost unanimous vote rejected that proposal and authorized a strike.

The employers and the union member bargaining team went back into negotiations on November 18, that continued for three days, and finally reached a tentative agreement just prior to midnight on November 20.

The new contract covers UFCW Local 21, UFCW Local 81, and Teamsters Local 38 members at Safeway, Albertsons, QFC, Fred Meyer, and various independent grocery stores in the region. **OP**

San Diego City Council Overturns Mayor’s Veto, Requires Supercenters to Study Community Impact

After an animated City Council meeting, over a year of debate, and the hard work of **UFCW Local 135**, the City Council of San Diego has taken a stand to ensure retailers conduct business in a socially responsible way that doesn’t harm local communities.

On December 2, the City Council overturned Mayor Jerry Sanders’ veto of an ordinance requiring retailers to finance an independent study to assess the impact of new store openings on the local economy with regards to job creation and displacement, traffic, and local wages in order to obtain a city permit.

Councilman Todd Gloria, who proposed the ordinance, said the veto override is a win for communities.

“This ordinance does not determine where customers can shop. In fact, its intent is to protect small, neighborhood businesses, thereby increasing consumer choice,” he said at Thursday’s hearing.

Big-box retailers are defined as stores with more than 90,000 square feet and more than 10 percent of their floor space dedicated to nontaxable items such as groceries and prescription drugs.

Critics of Walmart said the company should not fear the studies if their stores are such a boon to communities.

“This was a good compromise,” Lorena Gonzalez, head of the San Diego-Imperial County Labor Council, said Thursday. “I can sit and say what I think Walmart does, and Walmart will sit and say what they think they do, but this is an independent review of the effect of supercenters on neighborhoods and on jobs.” **OP**

Help Us Fight for Good Jobs: Big Y’s Treatment of Workers, Shoppers and their Communities

Earlier this year, A&P sold six stores in Connecticut to Big Y, a regional grocery chain located in Massachusetts and Connecticut. Big Y is now in the process of reopening them as Big Y stores.

Most of the workers and UFCW members in those stores have worked there for years and have developed solid relationships with shoppers. They know their jobs, their stores, and their customers better than anyone, yet Big Y hasn’t hired back most of those longtime A&P workers to work in the reopened stores.

“I’ve given these customers, this job, my life,” said former A&P worker Sammie Grable. “I’ve been here 53 years and I love working here. I love my customers. I’ve known them forever. One of my customers even wrote a letter to Big Y asking them to hire me. But they haven’t hired hardly any of us back, it seems like. It’s just sad.”

Big Y also laid off many of its own employees in New England—even though the company is expanding, and has since held job fairs for positions in their stores.

Workers and shoppers are asking Why, Big Y? Why get rid of experienced workers from our communities, only to hire new ones to replace them? What kind of company does Big Y want to be? The kind that creates good, middle class jobs in our communities, or the kind that offers only low wage, dead end jobs?

“Big Y should have hired us back. I’m a florist, and I’ve done events for my customers’ families for years and years. They’re just devastated that Big Y isn’t keeping me around, and they want to know why? Who would do my job better than me?” said Mary Ellen Scott, another former A&P worker. “I feel especially sorry for the young people—they have families they need to take care of. What are they going to do?”



“Big Y should have hired us back”

-Mary Ellen Scott, former florist at A&P

These laid-off workers-- and all Big Y workers-- need our help to fight for good middle class jobs. Tell Big Y they should do what’s best for the company, for shoppers, and for workers and their families in our community—keep Big Y and A&P workers in their jobs this holiday season and beyond.

Please join us in asking the tough questions on Big Y’s Facebook page and Twitter feed.

You can find Big Y’s Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/bigy-worldclassmarket>

Big Y’s Twitter feed is @BigYFoods and the

hashtag we’d like to use is #whybigy **OP**