



UFCW's Push to Improve Affordable Care Act Continues

UFCW International President Joe Hansen is out with an op-ed (<http://bit.ly/17YQgvB>) in today's edition of *The Hill* calling on the Obama Administration to fix the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

"The ACA offers a subsidy to lower-income individuals and families so they can afford to purchase this insurance. As many of our members fall into this category, we believe the subsidy can and should apply to nonprofit plans. All we want is equality—where our plans are treated the same as for-profit insurers," he writes.

In addition, *The Hill* published a front page story (<http://bit.ly/17XCjOk>) on the ongoing efforts to improve the ACA.

"We just want to keep what we already have and what we bought at tremendous cost," Hansen says in the piece.

For over two years, the UFCW has been lobbying the Obama Administration to recognize Taft-Hartley funds as Qualified Health Plans eligible for subsidies under the ACA. In its current form, the ACA gives employers incentives to dump part-time workers currently in UFCW plans onto the exchanges where many will pay more and get less.

In addition, some employers have been either reducing hours below 30 or discontinuing part-time health coverage altogether, a cut in pay and benefits workers cannot afford. Over the last several weeks, Hansen along with the UFCW's partners at the AFL-CIO, the Teamsters, the Building Trades, and UNITE HERE held a series of meetings with the top Democratic leaders in Congress to stress the severity of this problem and the need for a simple,

common sense solution. Even in the face of pressure from these top Democrats, the Administration has refused to budge.

The UFCW is ramping up its public campaign on this issue. On June 18 and 19, there will be a Legislative Meeting and National Lobby Day in Washington D.C. focusing on the ACA and Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CIR). Details will be available soon. The UFCW is committed to fixing the ACA so it can achieve what it was originally intended to. **OP**

UFCW Legislative Meeting and National Lobby Day

Save the date for the UFCW Legislative Meeting and National Lobby Day - Fixing the Affordable Care Act & Passing Comprehensive Immigration Reform.

The lobby day will be in Washington, D.C. on June 18-19. More details will be available soon.

OUR Walmart Members Prepare Caravans and Actions Leading up to Walmart Shareholders Meeting

Following a five-day training and strategy summit in Birmingham, Ala., members of OUR Walmart announced a plan to send civil rights movement – style caravans of workers from around the country to converge at Walmart's June 7 annual shareholders' meeting in Bentonville, Ark. There, they plan to speak out about Walmart's failure to honor its public commitments about working conditions and pay, as well as Walmart's retaliation against workers who speak out about these issues, directly to executives and shareholders.

Citing Walmart's \$16 billion in profits every year, associates made the announcement during a Sunday afternoon live stream broadcast that workers were calling on the company to raise wages and increase access to full time hours so that no worker at Walmart makes less than \$25,000 per year.

Los Angeles Walmart worker Tsehai Almaz said that she and other OUR Walmart leaders were inspired to follow the example of the 1961 freedom riders. "I feel like we're facing many of the same issues," said Almaz, "it's about respect, and being able to feed our families, and having good working conditions."



UFCW International President Joe Hansen called on President Obama to fix the Affordable Care Act in an op-ed in *The Hill*.



OUR Walmart members prepare to travel in caravans to the Walmart shareholders' meeting to fight for workers' rights.

“While the Walton family has the wealth of 42 percent of American families combined, many associates like me can’t even support our families without relying on government support,” said OUR Walmart member Mary Pat. “In addition to low pay, the company’s scheduling practices leave many of us with inadequate and erratic hours.—making it impossible to afford even basic necessities, or even find a second job.”

Several days before the shareholder meeting, caravans will leave from cities across the country. Cities include Seattle, Bay Area, Los Angeles, Chicago, Denver, Miami, Orlando, and Baton Rouge among others. As OUR Walmart members make their way to Bentonville, Ark., they will hold actions at Walmart stores, talk to associates about OUR Walmart, and also stop to meet with local unions and supportive community organizations. **OP**

John Morrell Locals in South Dakota and Illinois Coordinate Bargaining, Ratify New Contracts

Recently, workers at John Morrell meatpacking plants from UFCW Local 304-A in Sioux Falls, S.D., and UFCW Local 1546 in St. Charles, Ill., voted to ratify new contracts. Local unions and members worked together and stayed in close contact during the negotiating process to raise the bar for workers at both local unions, ensuring workers at both locations made equitable gains.

The new four-year contracts increase wages and maintain affordable healthcare with no increase in weekly contributions from workers. Workers also ensured that the contracts protected seniority status.



Workers at John Morrell pork plants in S.D. and Ill. voted to ratify new contracts.

Approximately 2,400 workers in the Sioux Falls plant and over 200 workers in the St. Charles plant are covered under the contracts. John Morrell Food Group is part of the Smithfield Foods family of companies. Workers at the St. Charles plant make dried sausage products and the plant in Sioux Falls is a full pork processing plant. **OP**

UFCW Submits Comments to EPA Against Tyson and Dangers of Hazardous Chemicals to Workers

Last week, the UFCW submitted comments about a recent EPA action against 23 Tyson plants that use hazardous chemicals. The EPA recently fined Tyson close to \$4 million and required the company to take extra steps to improve their ammonia refrigeration safety programs.

While the EPA’s action is a step in the right direction, the comments pointed out that the settlement agreement failed to include the people who are closest to the problem – the workers who operate and maintain the refrigeration systems.

UFCW members work in almost 900 different facilities across the country that use anhydrous ammonia for refrigeration. Although these refrigeration systems are covered by very strict environmental and safety standards, many of them fail to comply with these standards. The UFCW Occupational Safety & Health Office has an educational program available for any interested Locals to help determine if plants are in compliance and to help develop an action plan to protect members.

The UFCW Occupational Safety and Health Office will continue to fight for workers and their representatives to be included in the process of improving and evaluating Tyson’s ammonia safety program. **OP**