

UFCW Activists Engage in Civil Disobedience, Get Arrested at Massive Immigration March



UFCW activists were arrested outside of the U.S. Capitol last week while protesting the failure of the House to pass immigration reform.

On October 8, four UFCW activists were among those arrested last week outside the U.S. Capitol while protesting the failure of House Republican leaders to pass comprehensive immigration reform with a path to citizenship. The march, which included tens of thousands of people from across the country, followed over 180 similar actions in 40 states three days prior.

“Today we sent a message to House Republicans loud and clear,” UFCW President Joe Hansen said. “First and foremost, open this government. Secondly, once it is open, give us a vote on comprehensive immigration reform with a path to citizenship.”

The UFCW activists who were arrested spoke about the power of civil disobedience and the importance of standing together for comprehensive immigration reform.

Efrain Aguilera of UFCW Local 5 in San Jose, Calif., said: “I’m a Hispanic born in Michoacán, Mexico who came to this country legally but without knowing a word of English. The immigrant community has to struggle to find work and when it does, they face humiliation because of being undocumented and live in fear of being deported and separated from their families. We need comprehensive immigration reform now so that more than 11 mil-

lion undocumented immigrants can get out of the shadows, work legally, pay taxes and stop being treated like second class citizens.”

Rigo Valdez of UFCW Local 770 in Los Angeles, Calif., said: “I was arrested today to stand up for the workers who cannot stand up for themselves. In 20 years of organizing, I have witnessed exploitation of workers because of their immigration status. We can no longer allow the abuse of any workers in our country, and must fight and demand that all of us are treated with dignity and according to our rights. Comprehensive immigration reform is not only morally right, but necessary to guarantee the long term economic and social health of our nation. If our lawmakers will not act, then we will.”

Celestino Rivera of UFCW Local 540 in Dallas, Texas, said: “I was arrested today because I stand with America’s meatpacking and food processing workers to demand that Congress fix our broken immigration system. I have witnessed the price of keeping working families in the shadows. All workers should be able to exercise their fundamental rights on the job, regardless of immigration status. Now is the time for reform that preserves and protects these rights.”

Idalid Guerrero of UFCW Local 540 in Dallas, Texas, said: “I came to Washington today as both a worker and a mother. I know firsthand that women bear a huge burden because of our broken immigration system. We deserve reform that is humane and just and keeps families together. I was arrested in solidarity with all immigrant women who are calling on Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform now.” **OP**

Dispensary Workers Sign First Contract with UFCW Local 770

Workers at two medical cannabis dispensaries are celebrating the ratification of their first union contract with UFCW Local 770 this week. Workers at Greenhouse Herbal Center and LA Wonderland-Hot Zone in Los Angeles have negotiated contracts that will raise standards at their dispensaries while ensuring that the dispensaries adhere to labor laws and industry standards.

Workers said they view the contract as a victory not only for themselves, but also for their patients and for the future of their industry.

Beyond their workplace organizing efforts, these workers joined with UFCW Local 770 to help pass a city-wide voter initiative,



Medical cannabis workers in Los Angeles celebrate ratifying their first union contract with UFCW Local 770.

Proposition D, that regulates medical cannabis dispensaries. Signing their first collective bargaining agreement is the next step in bringing dignity and order to a still volatile industry and ensuring the enforcement of basic labor laws and industry standards.

Workers also secured regular raises, paid time off and a grievance procedure. The contract language improves regulatory standards and defines respect in the workplace.

“My favorite part of the contract is having regular raises,” said Ksenia, a worker at LA Wonderland-Hot Zone. “It makes me feel more serious and secure about this job.”

The UFCW represents medical cannabis workers in six states and the District of Columbia. UFCW members in the cannabis industry work predominantly in dispensaries, coffee shops, bakeries, patient identification centers, hydroponics stores, and growing and training facilities. **OP**

UFCW Local 455 Maximus Coffee Group Workers Go On Strike to Protect Wages and Benefits

On October 10, more than 250 Maximus Coffee Group workers in Houston, went on strike to protest the company’s plan to reduce wages from 25 to 50 percent per hour, reduce retirement benefits, increase insurance premiums, and eliminate overtime pay. A majority of workers are members of UFCW Local 455.

“Maximus Coffee workers in Houston are simply trying to protect



UFCW Local 455 Maximus Coffee Group workers are on strike in protest of the company’s plan to dramatically reduce wages and slash benefits.

middle class jobs and their benefits after working hard to make their company profitable,” said UFCW Local 455 President Bill Hopkins. “I hope this strike sends a strong message to the company and moves the negotiation process to a successful conclusion.”

“I’ve worked at this plant for 41 years and for Maximus Coffee since 2006 when they purchased the plant from Maxwell House,” said worker Robert Barnes. “I haven’t gotten a real raise since 2009, and don’t know how I’ll be able to support my family if my wages and benefits are reduced.”

Workers decided to strike after three months of negotiations did not produce an agreement. They’re currently picketing the company’s facility in three round-the-clock shifts.

Maximus Coffee Group is a seven-year-old company run by Carlos de Aldecoa Bueno that processes, roasts and packages coffee for some of North America’s largest coffee sellers, including Folgers and Starbucks. **OP**

OUR Walmart Holds Online Action to Call on Walmart Board Member to Respect Walmart Strikers

Last week, members of OUR Walmart and community allies held an online action focused on Walmart Board Chair Rob Walton. Walton and the other members of the Walton family have repeatedly ignored efforts by Walmart workers, including those illegally fired by the company, to have their concerns heard.



OUR Walmart members and community supporters held an online action directed at Walmart Executive Board Chair Rob Walton.

Walmart workers and their supporters reached out to Rob Walton via social media last week through Conservation International, where Walton serves as the Chair Executive Committee of the Board of Directors.

Walmart and the Walton family use corporate-funded “environmental” groups like Conservation International to help with greenwashing of the company’s image.

During the online action, participants left messages on Twitter and Facebook for Walton and Conservation International:

“CI Executive Committee Chairman Rob Walton is hosting a fundraiser for CI in SF today. Rob Walton & Walmart profit from poverty. That’s not sustainable. #WalmartStrikers”

“Tell Rob Walton he can’t ignore #WalmartStrikers”

Conservation International was eventually forced to respond to the online action and claimed that their work with Walmart was not a “stamp of approval.” **OP**

UFCW Executive Vice President Pat O’Neill Elected President of UNI Commerce

UFCW Executive Vice President and Director of Organizing Pat O’Neill was unanimously elected President of UNI Commerce at

the UNI Commerce Global Conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He received unanimous support from the 400 delegates to be elected the new President of UNI Commerce. There were 34 countries represented at the conference along with 49 different commerce unions.

Bones Skulu, the President of UNI Africa, paid tribute to O’Neill’s leadership skills which had taken him from a meat kill floor in Iowa to a top level union post where his organizing initiatives changed the lives of thousands of workers.

O’Neill told the delegates, “I will do my best to fulfill the trust UNI Commerce has shown by electing me president. Together we will fight for the 99 percent and force the one percent where the decision making power lies to change their behavior in commerce and across all sectors.”

“UNI is breaking through everywhere. The establishment of the first union in Carrefour in Colombia was a breakthrough for the whole country. Here in Buenos Aires, we have heard about successes which were built on the solidarity of the whole UNI family of affiliates,” O’Neill said.

“The best anti-poverty program is a union contract,” he said. **OP**



UFCW Executive Vice President Pat O’Neill was elected President of UNI Commerce at the UNI Commerce Global Conference.



UFCW Grocery Workers Prepare for Dominick's Exit from Chicago Market



UFCW Local 881 and 1546 Dominick's workers prepare for the grocery chain to exit the Chicago market.

Last week, Safeway announced that it will dispose of its 72 Dominick's stores and exit the Chicago market in early 2014. Safeway Inc. operates 72 Dominick's stores in the Chicago area and is speaking with multiple potential buyers. Thousands of UFCW Local 881 and 1546 members work in Dominick's grocery stores across the area.

Safeway said that four Dominick's stores had been sold to New Albertsons, which is owned by investors led by Cerberus Capital Management and operates Jewel-Osco grocery stores.

"Local 881 represents all of the Jewel clerks throughout the Chicago metro area, and will continue to represent these Dominick's employees once the transaction with Jewel has been completed," UFCW Local 881 President Ronald E. Powell said.

As for the other Dominick's stores represented by Local 881, Powell said, "We don't know yet the status of those stores. But, once we know who the new owners are, UFCW Local 881 will sit down and negotiate a collective bargaining agreement that will be fair to the new employers and, importantly, will fairly compensate the employees who will be charged with building the business."

Powell continued, "Local 881 will also sit down soon with Dominick's to negotiate the effects of their exit from the Chicago market

on our members."

UFCW Local 1546 President Ken Boyd stated, "Our top priority is to our members and their families. Our union will be working closely with the company to ensure that members are being treated fairly and equitably as this process moves forward."

"At a time when the economy is just beginning to recover it is unfortunate that Safeway is choosing to take this step," said Boyd. "We hope that whoever buys these stores will be more committed to these workers and their communities."

For more information about Dominick's closing and its impact on workers, visit http://www.local881ufcw.org/PDF'S/Dominicks_Store_Closings_10.11.2013_Release.pdf and <http://ufc-wlocal1546.org/2013/10/14/dominicks-updates/>. **OP**