

Seattle Grocery Store Workers Avoid Strike and Overwhelmingly Support New Contract



Grocery workers across the Seattle area approved a new contract that protects benefits and pensions and includes wage increases.

Grocery store workers in the Seattle area from UFCW Locals 21, 367, and Teamsters Local 38 voted by an overwhelming majority to pass a new contract. The final proposal by the big national chains Safeway, Albertsons, and Kroger (which operates Fred Meyer and QFC) dramatically changed in the final hours of negotiations and a tentative agreement was reached less than two hours before a strike would have gone into effect on October 21st at 7 p.m.

“I started working in the grocery business over 40 years ago. The proposals we saw this time from the employers were some of the worst I have ever seen. They tried to turn us into Walmart. They did not succeed,” said Dave Schmitz, President of UFCW Local 21.

Workers retained high quality affordable healthcare with no cuts to workers’ benefits and no increases to premiums, deductibles, or out of pocket expenses. Pensions plans are secured for meat department and grocery store workers.

There will also be a modest wage increase for workers at the top rates of pay and grocery chains agreed to pay increases for workers at the lowest rates of pay. There are also pay rate increases for the second and third years of the contract.

During the contract campaign, workers successfully defeated the proposals that threatened to eliminate healthcare coverage for part-time workers and increase healthcare costs. Workers also defeated the proposals to cut holiday pay and freeze the pay for grocery store workers for three years. **OP**

Las Vegas Guitar Center Workers Vote to Join RWDSU



Guitar Center workers from the Las Vegas store are the first in the West to vote and join the RWDSU.

Workers from the flagship Guitar Center location in Las Vegas voted to join the RWDSU. Workers in Las Vegas now join workers in Manhattan and Chicago Guitar Center locations who voted overwhelmingly to join RWDSU earlier this year.

Doug Simpson, an employee who spearheaded the effort to have a union voice at the Las Vegas location, initially reached out to the RWDSU after his wife read about the Manhattan victory via social media.

“It feels great to now be a part of the RWDSU,” said Simpson. “With this vote, we are aiming for better job security, better health benefits and more respect from management. It feels really good, like there’s hope to turn this into a decent job. It all boiled down to a lack of respect and the company trying to get more out of us for less money.”

The Guitar Center chain is owned by Bain Capital, and the vote makes the workers at the Las Vegas Guitar Center the third location at the world’s largest musical instrument retailer to join a union. The the workers’ successful election in Las Vegas is the first Guitar Center store in the West to have a union voice as the campaign continues to expand throughout the country.

Guitar Center workers and the RWDSU, kicked off an online petition back in April asking for fairness as they sought a union voice to fight for improved wages and treatment on the job. **OP**

UFCW Local 1500 Grocery Workers Vote to Authorize a Strike of Stop & Shop Stores



UFCW Local 1500 Stop & Shop grocery workers voted to authorize a strike in response to management's attempt to cut or eliminate healthcare benefits.

UFCW Local 1500 Stop & Shop grocery workers voted to authorize a strike on October 28th in response to their employers' attempts to drastically reduce employee healthcare benefits and, for some workers, eliminate them completely. A ground swell of public support for the Stop & Shop employees seeking a new contract was disregarded by management as the company refused to sign a two-week contract extension.

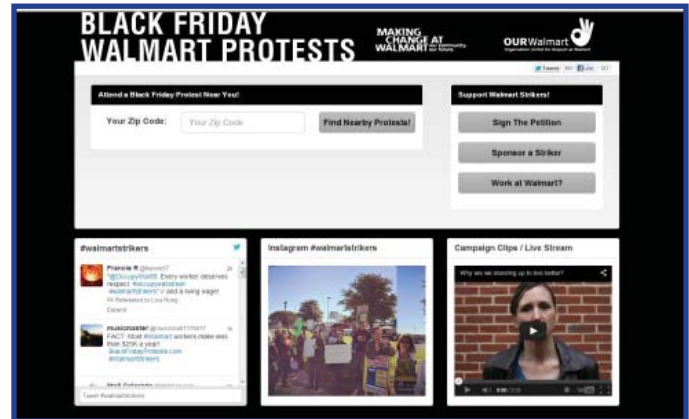
Currently members are negotiating without a contract and the strike authorization remains in effect until an acceptable agreement is reached. If the 5,500 workers strike, it would shut down stores in the New York City metro area.

"Stop & Shop management fails to understand that shoppers who come to our stores are not just customers but are also friends and neighbors," said Greg Pasquale, Produce Manager for Stop & Shop in Beekman, New York. "My co-workers and I do not want to inconvenience shoppers, lose pay or create economic hardship for our communities. However, management must come back to the table with a new attitude and partner with us to reach a fair agreement to avoid a strike," Pasquale concluded.

Members launched a public information campaign that includes press outreach, social media, and labor to neighbor organizing. They are also engaging elected officials via meetings, phone calls, and emails.

For the latest updates on negotiations and to support UFCW Local 1500 workers, members can visit <http://www.ufcw1500.org/> or Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/UFCW1500>. **OP**

Making Change at Walmart Launches Black Friday Website Featuring Upcoming Actions and Tools



The new Black Friday Protest website provides all the information and materials needed to support Walmart workers this Black Friday.

For the upcoming Black Friday 2013 actions, the Making Change at Walmart campaign launched a website that combines all the information locals and members will need in order to support Walmart workers this upcoming holiday season.

On <http://blackfridayprotests.com/>, members can enter their zip code to find, attend, or host an event near them. The site will redirect to the Action Network where members can also download all the materials that might be needed.

Additionally, buttons on the right side of the Black Friday Protests page will direct to petition and donation pages in support of workers. This section will always be updated with the most current ways to support the strikers.

The bottom of the page will feature live discussions on Twitter, any live stream videos from events, and photos from events. The site should provide an easy one-stop shop for anyone looking for a way to support #WalmartStrikers this Black Friday-November 29th.

The first OUR Walmart actions leading up to Black Friday will take place in the Los Angeles area on Wednesday and Thursday. At the rallies, hundreds of workers and community supporters will call on Walmart to publicly commit to ending illegal retaliation, and a minimum of \$25,000 a year along with full-time work. **OP**

Trifecta Meeting in Chicago Focuses on Passing Pro-Worker Bills at State Level

Last week in Chicago, more than 35 UFCW leaders from eight states attended a trifecta meeting to discuss ways in which UFCW locals and members can be more politically proactive.

A trifecta is a state where the Governorship and both legislative bodies are controlled by Democrats. These states offer the best opportunity for workers to see political gains in the near future.

Throughout the day, the group heard from four unique panels filled with UFCW leaders and guest speakers who had experience passing or attempting to pass pro-worker legislation at the state level.

These panels offered a road map that locals can use in their efforts to pass bills that will benefit UFCW members.

In total, the panels laid out six pieces of legislation that trifecta states are being encouraged to focus upon.

- Minimum Wage Increase
- Paid Sick Leave
- Corporate Responsibility (legislation which penalizes large corporations for forcing workers onto Medicaid)
- Unemployment Insurance (legislation to ensure locked out workers receive this critical assistance)
- Cannabis (legislation and ballot initiatives legalizing medical marijuana to grow our union)
- Voting Rights (protecting and strengthening the right to vote)

In the coming weeks, talking points and sample flyers for all of these issues will be available at www.ufcwworker.com. Locals will then be able to have these materials printed and shipped to them at no cost. These materials will help members and legislators become more engaged with the bills the UFCW hopes to see passed in their state. **OP**

NYC Car Wash Workers Strike to Demand Opportunity to Join RWDSU



Car wash workers in New York City when on strike in protest of the store owner refusing to recognize their efforts to join the RWDSU.

Workers at Off-Broadway Car Wash in Queens, New York, walked off the job last week to demand that the owner recognize their efforts to join a union. The owner has been avoiding the efforts of the NLRB to set up an election despite a government subpoena being issued.

The “carwashers” left their posts after clergy, elected officials, RWDSU members, community supporters, and advocates from New York Communities for Change and Make the Road New York held a press conference denouncing the owner for ignoring federal regulators. After striking, the workers left the shop to attend a hearing at NLRB offices to schedule a union election.

Workers report being paid less than the minimum wage with no overtime, and are subjected to horrendous working conditions. They worked with the RWDSU to file a petition for an election in late September, but the owner has been unresponsive.

“I believe it’s about time that the owner values our work and respects our efforts,” said Refugio Denicia, 35, who has worked at the car wash for 12 years. “We are demanding what we deserve respect, dignity and fair wages,” he added.

“I want all the workers at Off-Broadway to get the benefits that we deserve and work hard for. We are giving our lives away to this car wash,” said Juan C. Estaban, who is 22 and has worked at the car wash for three years.

The strike comes on the heels of a major worker victory last week. In the space of 24 hours, four car washes, owned by the two largest car wash owners in the city, signed contracts to have a voice on the job and join the RWDSU. **OP**

UFCW OUTreach Holds First Executive Board Meeting



Members of the UFCW OUTreach Executive Board convene their first meeting hosted by RWDSU-UFCW in New York.

Last week, OUTreach, the UFCW's new LGBT constituency group, held its first board meeting at the headquarters of the RWDSU in New York City. Board members from Los Angeles, Toronto, Houston, Seattle, St. Louis, Philadelphia, and elsewhere were in attendance.

The board laid out plans for the next year, including a lobby day in Washington, D.C., and a presence at WorldPride 2014 in Toronto. The board heard from speakers with Freedom to Marry and the Human Rights Campaign about the important legislative issues facing the LGBT community. Chief among them was the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), which would ban workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Last night, ENDA cleared an important procedural hurdle in the Senate and OUTreach is mobilizing to get it passed in the House. Individuals can join and locals can sponsor UFCW OUTreach by visiting <http://ufcwoutreach.org/join-outreach/>. **OP**

2013 UFCW International Scholarship Winners



Every year the UFCW International offers scholarships to union members or their immediate family who want to further their education and demonstrate a commitment to their communities and to UFCW values. The scholarship winners for 2013 are:

- Nicholas Chun
- Jennifer Franklin
- Elizabeth Gore
- Sara Guittar
- Abigail Marshall
- Jordan Panza
- Laura Robusto