

## UFCW Members Weigh In on the State of the Union

President Obama will deliver his annual State of the Union (SOTU) address this evening at 9 p.m. ET.

Through social media and text messaging, UFCW members have been sharing which issues they would like President Obama to discuss and take action on. Here are the top responses:

**Increase the minimum wage.** Many members feel that the federal government should take a page from states like New Jersey and California and raise the minimum wage nationwide. UFCW member Maria Rose put it well when she said that “I want to see the minimum wage raised to an amount that allows people to actually live.”

**Create more and better jobs.** UFCW members want to see the creation of full-time jobs that pay well enough for them to provide for their families. People are tired of employers cutting hours and forcing them to find second and third jobs just to make ends meet. UFCW member Roger Grobstich summed up his frustration by saying, “Creating good paying jobs has to be the number one priority for the President.”

**End right to work for less laws.** UFCW members would like to see an end to right to work for less laws which shrink wages and make workplaces more dangerous. UFCW member Daniel Risner would like to see President Obama mention right to work for less this evening, “President Obama needs to push for the removal of right to work for less laws!”



Members can follow along and participate in the live Twitter session during the SOTU tonight by following @ufcw and using #OURSOTU.

**Extending long-term unemployment insurance.** This is especially vital for millions of long-term unemployed Americans who saw their modest benefits disappear when Congress failed to extend unemployment insurance. UFCW member Judy

Daniels described how this failure of Congress is hurting local economies across the country. “Unemployment insurance is paid by all of us when we’re employed to support the common good when unemployment strikes any of us. Unemployment benefits support our economy, especially locally, when there is less income from wages.”

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## Dylan’s Candy Bar Improves Working Conditions After RWDSU Worker Protests, Staff Says

Workers at Dylan’s Candy Bar in New York City, with the help of RWDSU, have been standing for their collective rights. Since then, they have won some important gains at the workplace.

In December, workers began calling attention to health and safety concerns on the job.

They filed OSHA claims and filed complaints with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, reporting concerns over food safety issues. Workers also started an online petition and have held multiple rallies and protests at the store calling on Dylan Lauren to meet



*Dylan’s Candy Bar workers in NYC protest for better wages, schedules, and safer working conditions.*

with her employees to address unfair working conditions, and won some important gains at the workplace. After months of protests and pushes for better working conditions, management at Dylan’s Candy Bar has addressed many of the health and safety concerns the RWDSU and workers raised.

“It was a big risk to speak out publicly, but we’ve accomplished a lot,” said Sales Associate Iris Velasquez.

Since August, several staff members of Dylan’s Candy Bar have accused the management of deliberately cutting hours to keep them from having full-time schedules. They also demanded higher wages and protested unsafe working conditions.

After one of the biggest protests outside the New York City store, workers said that management began to pay attention to their calls for change.

“There have been significant safety improvements,” Velasquez said. “They put bar mats behind the bar to keep people from slipping. They’ve also cleared the exits that used to be blocked with boxes and merchandise.”

Other changes include that schedules go out three weeks in advance instead of just a couple of days, and the employees’ annual review and raise process are now on time.

Despite the changes, workers still don’t have 40-hour work weeks and higher wages. Starting salary at the store is now \$11 per hour, which is still less than a \$13.99 pound of bulk candy, workers said.

Workers will continue to campaign for more hours and higher wages, but applaud the company for starting to listen to them. **OP**

## Walmart Workers to Relaunch Their Petition to President Obama After SOTU Focuses on Inequality

Following President Obama’s State of the Union Address tonight, Walmart workers with OUR Walmart will relaunch their petition calling on the President to meet with Walmart workers. The president is expected to focus on issues of inequality and the minimum wage in his speech.



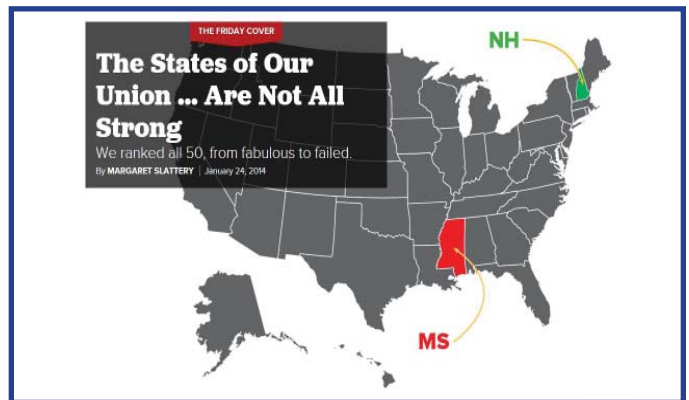
*Following the SOTU tonight, OUR Walmart will relaunch their petition calling on President Obama to meet with Walmart workers.*

Those who work at Walmart have experienced these issues more directly than most, as they work for the richest family in America, the Waltons, and yet many are forced to rely on public assistance to make ends meet. While most Walmart

workers scrape by on poverty wages, the Walton family has more wealth than 42 percent of Americans combined.

Members can support the President’s agenda on addressing inequality and ask him to meet with Walmart workers to hear their experiences and ideas by signing the petition: <http://action.changewalmart.org/page/s/WalmartInequality>. **OP**

## New Report Shows that Life is Worse in Right-to-Work States



*A release from Politico shows that based on different quality of life measures, right-to-work states are ranked at the bottom.*

*Politico* released a new ranking of the 50 states, based on 14 different measures of quality of life, including “graduation rates, per capita income, life expectancy and crime rate.” The average of those 14 measures were used to create one overall ranking of the states.

The outcome suggests the opposite of corporate assertions that “right-to-work” states are doing better than others. According to *Politico*, four of the five best states to live in are non-right-to-work. Right-to-work states account for eight of the ten worst states, and all five of the five worst states.

The full report on the 50 state ranking can be found at <http://politi.co/LjYTs5>. **OP**

## Members Can Share Their Stories, Commemorate Black History Month

The UFCW is proud to continue its yearly tradition of commemorating Black History Month each February. UFCW members have been at the forefront of a movement fighting for civil rights and equality, and justice for workers everywhere.



To continue that tradition, the UFCW is collecting stories from members and local unions that illustrate Black History Month by celebrating vicotries and heros of the fight for equality.

Submissions can include stories about UFCW members, staff members, politicians or civil rights leaders who deserve to be honored during Black History Month. Any stories about local unions, past or present, that showcase the fight for equality and the power of a union are welcomed as well.

Members and local union staff can send their stories, photos, suggestions or thoughts to [submissions@ufcw.org](mailto:submissions@ufcw.org) to possibly be featured on the UFCW website. **OP**

### Union Numbers/Wages Hold Steady

Last week, several news outlets, including the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Associated Press*, reported on the latest findings from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- There are now slightly more union members working for private firms than in government.
- Unions added about 282,000 new members in the private sector as the economy improved.
- Among full-time wage and salary workers, union members in 2013 earned a median salary of \$950 a week, compared to \$750 for nonunion workers.

The full *Associated Press* article can be read at <http://bit.ly/MbgKkT>. **OP**

### UFCW Issues Response Statement to Hearing on ACA Employer Mandate

Today the UFCW released the following statement in response to a House Ways and Means Committee hearing on the Affordable Care Act’s (ACA) employer mandate and its impact on workers’ hours.

“The UFCW appreciates that the House Ways and Means Committee is exploring the very real problem of employers cutting workers’ hours in response to the ACA. However, both the Forty Hours is Full Time Act and the Save American Workers Act are good sounding names for bad policy.”

“Instead of eliminating the incentive for reducing workers’ hours, these bills would make the problem worse by allowing companies to get off scot-free for failing to cover those who work between 30 and 39 hours a week—including many

UFCW members in the retail industry. This is not about protecting workers—it’s about appeasing large employers that want to avoid paying their fair share for health care.”

“An analysis by the UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education found that this approach would put three times as many workers in danger of having their hours cut. For these workers, fewer hours means less money to support their families.”

“There is a better way forward. The House should pass Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky’s Part-Time Worker Bill of Rights which would amend the ACA to impose a pro-rated penalty on employers who do not provide health care to part-timers. This would effectively end the incentive for cutting hours.” **OP**

### World’s Richest Own Same Amount as Bottom Half of Global Population



Oxfam International, an international confederation dedicated to solving poverty issues, released a new report that states that almost half of the world’s wealth is now owned by just one percent of the population. Specifically, the report explains that the world’s richest 85 people have as much wealth as the world’s poorest 3 billion people, and that seven out of ten people live in countries where economic inequality has increased in the last 30 years.

In the report, Oxfam shows how extreme inequality is not inevitable, with examples of policies from around the world which have reduced inequality and developed more representative politics, benefiting all, both rich and poor.

The full Oxfam report can be read at <http://bit.ly/1aDrKR9>. **OP**