

UFCW Local 653 Grocery Workers Ratify a New Contract



UFCW Local 653 grocery workers ratify a new two-year contract.

Members of UFCW Local 653 recently ratified a two-year agreement with various supermarket chains in the Minneapolis area covering around 10,000 employees at 80 stores.

The contract covers workers from Cub Foods, which is owned by SuperValu Inc.; Rainbow Foods, owned by Roundy's Inc.; Lunds and Byerly's, both owned by Lund Food Holdings; Kowalski's Markets; and several smaller independent markets.

The contract took effect March 2, and expires March 5, 2016. It includes hourly wage increases for certain workers for the first time in four years, and new pay progressions for others.

The new contract also includes a commitment from employers to make an effort to provide consistent scheduling for full-time and part-time workers. Employers must give all workers two weeks' advance notice of their upcoming work schedules. **OP**

Walmart CEO Acknowledges Lack of Opportunities for Workers

A recent *Associated Press* article by Josh Boak finds that Walmart does not provide its employees with enough opportunities for professional advancement or a pathway to a middle class life. As a result of the Great Recession, many older and more educated workers are turning to the retail giant as a way to support their families. Despite Walmart's self-promotion as a source for professional opportunity, Bill Simon, CEO of Walmart U.S., suggests that workers look elsewhere if they want to make more money and have access to better benefits.



Walmart U.S. CEO, Bill Simon, recently suggested that Walmart workers should look for jobs elsewhere if they want good wages and access to better benefits.

"Some people took those jobs because they were the only ones available and haven't been able to figure out how to move out of that," Bill Simon, CEO of Walmart U.S., acknowledged in an interview with *The Associated Press*.

If Walmart employees "can go to another company and another job and make more money and develop, they'll be better," Simon explained. "It'll be better for the economy. It'll be better for us as a business, to be quite honest, because they'll continue to advance in their economic life."

Simon's suggestion that many Walmart employees might be better off leaving for other jobs surprised Walmart cashier Joanna Lopez. A 26-year-old single mother, she owns no car and lives with her church pastor near Fremont, Calif. She collects food stamps and receives insurance through California's version of Medicaid.

Lopez started at Walmart as a temp in August 2011. Her pay has risen from \$8 an hour to \$9.20, after she moved from part-time to full-time. The suggestion by a Walmart executive that some employees might be staying too long offended her.

"To me, that's an utter humiliation," Lopez said. "How can you sit there and have management say that we should find other jobs because this place is 'no bueno?'"

The full article can be read at <http://bit.ly/APWalmart> and an accompanying video report can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/APWalmartVideo>. **OP**

UFCW Submits Petition to DOL on Behalf of UFCW Local 540 Cargill Plant Workers

A petition has been submitted to the Department of Labor on behalf of 2,000 workers formerly employed at the shuttered Plainview, Texas, Cargill meatpacking plant. The petition seeks assistance in the form of extended unemployment insurance, health care subsidies, job retraining, and other benefits for workers who were laid off on February 1, 2013 when the plant closed. The Trade Adjustment Assistant Program provides such assistance to mitigate the negative impacts on workers, farmers, businesses and communities due to increased imports under trade agreements.

UFCW Local 540 workers at the Plainview plant produced boxed beef; tissue pallets; offal; grease; hides; and rendering products such as tallow, bone meal, blood meal. An investigation showed that total U.S. beef imports of these products increased by \$99.7 million dollars in 12 months preceding the closure – during which time a severe drought forced packers to import more beef to try to secure enough supply to keep their plants operating at full capacity.

At the time of the closure, UFCW Local 540 worked to minimize the economic disaster to workers brought on by the plant closure, ensuring that Cargill fulfilled financial obligations to workers under their union contract, and under the WARN Act. They also worked together with Cargill to give workers the opportunity to relocate to other Cargill plants, including in Friona, Texas, ensuring that people would not be brought on as “new hires” but would keep their benefits and eligibility for pensions. **OP**

President Obama, Flanked by UFCW Member, Pushes to Expand Overtime Pay

President Obama ordered the Department of Labor to expand federal rules so that more salaried workers would be able to qualify for overtime pay. Currently, any salaried employee making more than \$455 per week is not required to be given overtime pay when they work more than 40 hours in a week.

The current \$455 per week salary threshold has failed to keep pace with inflation. It was \$250 in 1975, equivalent to roughly



UFCW Local 400 member Rob Trotter (standing in back with blue shirt and glasses) stands by as President Obama orders an expansion so more salaried workers qualify for overtime pay.

\$1,000 today. This expansion will give millions more workers across the nation the chance to earn extra pay when they do extra work.

UFCW Local 400 member Rob Trotter, a meat cutter at Giant in Annandale, Virginia, stood next to President Obama as he signed the memorandum.

“I have worked in retail for over 20 years for an hourly wage,” he said. “I have depended upon overtime to pay school tuition for my children, or to get out from under a financial hardship. The opportunity to earn overtime has always been helpful and comforting to me.”

It is not yet clear by how much the salary threshold will increase. The President’s order instructs the Department of Labor to come up with an expansion plan following a period of input and study. With the stagnation of wages and the increase in corporate profits, actions like this give workers a better chance to provide for their families.

“There have been years when 20 percent of my income was comprised of overtime,” Trotter said. “Going above and beyond expectations at work takes a toll physically because you’re working harder and emotionally because you’re away from your family for a longer period of time. Every employer should fairly recognize and reward this sacrifice.” **OP**

OUR Walmart Members and Making Change at Walmart Campaign in the News



Since its inception, former and current Walmart workers who are members of OUR Walmart have called on the retailer to publicly commit to raising wages and increasing access to full-time

OUR Walmart and Making Change at Walmart campaigns highlighted in the media as workers push for better jobs and working conditions.

hours. OUR Walmart members have also asked the retailer to stop its practice of retaliating against workers who are simply exercising their right to speak out for a better life and improved working conditions. Over the course of the last few weeks, OUR Walmart members, Making Change at Walmart, and campaign allies have had some great stories in the news.

- An op-ed by Robert Greenwald entitled “Walmart’s newest big lie: Another misleading ad campaign from a job-killing behemoth.” The op-ed is related to Walmart’s latest P.R. manufacturing push featuring Mike Rowe the host of the cancelled show *Dirty Jobs*. The op-ed on *Salon* can be read at <http://bit.ly/SalonWalmart>.
- An article about President Obama’s call to let more workers collect overtime pay. The article features a Walmart assistant manager who is also member of OUR Walmart. The manager is quoted as saying, “Walmart made \$17 billion last year. They paid the CEO \$18 million and a bonus. They can afford to pay me some overtime.” The article can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/ObamaWalmart>.

- A *Huffington Post* article which features a quote from UFCW International President Joe Hansen about the Gap’s announcement that it is raising its wages. President Hansen is quoted as saying, “The time is now for Walmart to show leadership and responsibility to its workers and our communities [and] follow the Gap’s example and raise wages for every hourly worker.” The article can be read at <http://huff.to/1j0GDPh>.

Along with reading and sharing the articles, local unions can continue to support Walmart workers by downloading and sharing campaign infographics found on the Making Change at Walmart Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/MakingChangeWMT>. **OP**

UFCW OUTreach Meets with Congressman to Discuss the Importance of ENDA



UFCW OUTreach executive board members met with Congressman Mark Pocan (D-WI), where they talked about the importance of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) and UFCW OUTreach’s commitment to fight for its passage.