

SoCal UFCW Grocery Workers Ratify New Contract

UFCW members at Vons, Ralphs, and Albertsons grocery chains in southern California have ratified a new contract, avoiding the possibility of a strike.

The new contract that expires in March 2016, covers 60,000 members from UFCW Locals 8GS, 135, 324, 770, 1167, 1428, and 1442. The two-year agreement provides members with a fair wage increase and bonuses. Health insurance coverage will continue with no increase in employee premiums and no increase in out of pocket expenses to members for the full two-year period. Retirement benefits are also secured through additional contributions by the employers. The contract is designed to protect members through the instability of the merger process between Albertsons and Vons.

After four months of negotiations, the agreement was ratified by all seven locals just one week after a final marathon session of seven consecutive days and nights of back-to-back bargaining between representatives of the UFCW locals and the corporations that own Ralph's, Albertsons and Vons, with the assistance of Federal Mediators.

During negotiations, workers from across the region showed their solidarity by wearing "Stand Together" buttons and sharing photos with "Stand Together" signs at work. **OP**



More than 60,000 UFCW grocery workers in Southern California ratified a new contract agreement with Ralph's, Albertsons, and Vons that increases wages and protects benefits.

Walmart Moms Announce Strikes in Protest of Illegal Firings



Walmart moms are walking off the job in protest of illegal firings of co-workers.

Walmart moms announced last week that many will walk off the job in protest of the illegal firings of co-workers who have been calling for more hours and better pay. This Friday, OUR Walmart members will take their concerns and calls for change directly to the company at its annual shareholders meeting and to board chairman Rob Walton.

Workers plan to walk off the job in more than 20 cities nationwide throughout the week. Citing the company's retaliation against workers, striking Walmart moms will join fellow workers, families, and community supporters nationwide who are calling on new Walmart CEO Doug McMillon to take the company in a new direction, one that will respect workers' rights and help strengthen families and the economy. Locals who are interested in participating in an action can visit <http://bit.ly/1kFuldD> for more information.

The annual shareholders meeting will begin as Walmart workers make significant strides in changing policies of the country's largest employer, particularly in its treatment of women. Recently, Walmart improved its pregnancy policy after OUR Walmart members, who are also shareholders, submitted a resolution to the company about its pregnancy policy. Walmart rolled out a new system nationwide that allows workers to sign up for open shifts in their stores online in response to OUR Walmart members' growing calls on the retailer to improve access to hours.

"We know that change is possible at Walmart. That's why I'm joining other moms at Walmart and going on strike. We have the right to speak out for better futures, and when we do it together—we make progress," said Lashanda Myrick who is a

mother of two and works at Walmart's Denver store No. 2752. "But when Walmart continues to fire my co-workers for standing up for good jobs and hundreds of thousands of us are paid less than \$25,000 a year, there's more work to do." **OP**

NLRB Finds Merit to UFCW Local 1500 ULP Filed Against Mrs. Green's



A NLRB Regional Director found merit to the ULP filed by UFCW Local 1500 that eight Mrs. Green's Natural Market workers were illegally fired for trying to have a union voice on the job.

After an internal investigation by a Regional Director of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), the Director found merit to UFCW Local 1500's unfair labor practice charges alleging that Mrs. Green's Natural Market unlawfully terminated eight employees because they supported having a union voice on the job.

The Regional Director also revoked a previous settlement of unfair labor practices (November 2013) between UFCW Local 1500, the NLRB, and Mrs. Green's. In that settlement, Mrs. Green's agreed to cease their anti-union conduct, promising to create a safe, intimidation-free work environment for the workers. The company also agreed to post a notice in their store for 60 days that informed all employees of their basic rights at work, including the right to form and organize a union.

In a complete disrespect for the settlement with the government and workers' rights, during a one week span in January,

Mrs. Green's abruptly fired eight leading union supporters, some of whom had met with local politicians about their campaign. The company then removed the required notice from the walls of their store prior to the end of the 60-day period.

A Federal Labor Complaint was then issued against Mrs. Green's, alleging that Mrs. Green's violated the law when it terminated union supporters. The trial will be heard before an Administrative Law Judge of the NLRB in July.

"We're confident that we will receive justice," said David Ramirez who worked at Mrs. Green's in Mt. Kisco, New York, for nearly ten years until he was fired this January, "We could not have gotten this far and received this decision without the support from UFCW Local 1500 members and the Mt. Kisco community, who have walked the picket line with us during a cold winter. That meant a lot to all of us and gave us support and energy to continue to hold strong and fight for our rights," said Ramirez.

UFCW Local 1500 is urging the company to reinstate all unlawfully fired workers. Since January, the fired workers have received an outpour of support from community and politicians who have called for a boycott of the store. The picket line remains up at 666 Lexington Ave. Mt. Kisco, NY. Last week, days after the federal complaint was issued and after 18 months on the job, Mrs. Green's parent company, Natural Market Food Group CEO Robin Michel was ousted.

Updates on the workers and the case can be found at ufcw1500.org/greenismean. **OP**

Common Sense Economics Training Available for Leaders, Stewards, and Activists

As a way of giving workers a voice so that the economy starts working for all workers, the AFL-CIO has developed Common Sense Economics (CSE), a flexible organizing tool. It's a workshop and curriculum designed to help participants (union and non-union workers, stewards and local union activists) understand that working people can and must change the direction of our national economy; that economic outcomes are a result of political choices; and that working people can impact political choices through voting, volunteering, and activism.



CSE complements what the UFCW is already doing with our organizing, bargaining, and political programs to try to change the national discussion about working people and low wage workers. It's particularly relevant to the UFCW's work to raise the bar for workers in the retail industry.

The core module of the workshop is an hour and fifteen minutes. It includes:

- A "lived experience exercise" in which participants will explore how the economy is affecting their lives.
- A presentation of facts, an interactive "inequality exercise" that helps participants visualize how wealth is distributed in our country.
- A "victory video" that shows that when people work and fight together, we win and create change in public policy.

There is also a section at the end designed to connect with local organizing, bargaining and political campaigns.

Additional modules that cover other important topics using an economic lens (each module is approximately one to two hours in length) include:

1. Women and Families
2. Young Workers
3. Globalization
4. Immigration
5. Mass Incarceration

The AFL-CIO is sponsoring Regional Train-the-Trainer Workshops

- Northwest Region
June 4 – 5: Vancouver, WA (Portland airport) Contact: Randy Parraz at rparraz@afcio.org or (602) 284-9745
- Southern Region
June 9 – 10: San Antonio, TX Contact: Carmen Rhodes at crhodes@afcio.org or (720) 849-2758
- Southern Region
June 12 – 13: Orlando, FL Contact: Lorenzo Scott at lscott@afcio.org or (678) 644-0392

Two UFCW staff have already been trained in using the CSE tool and UFCW will be training more staff this summer in order to assist local unions and regions who want a CSE program at a region conferences, stewards conferences, or other activist trainings. Local unions can contact their region director for more information. **OP**

UFCW Local 555 Members Celebrate Passage of Bill that was Focus of Lobby Day



UFCW Local 555 shop steward Sarah Demerritt holds a signed copy of SB1546, that eases the penalty for people who unknowingly or inadvertently sell alcohol to a minor for the first time.

UFCW Local 555 members celebrate Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber signing SB1546 into law. The law eases the penalties for the unintentional sale of alcohol to a minor from a misdemeanor to a Class A violation. This bill was the focus of UFCW Local 555's Lobby Day in February.

UFCW Local 555 shop steward Sarah DeMerritt testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee in support of legislation that would lessen the charges for those who unknowingly or inadvertently sell alcohol to a minor for the first time.

In June of 2013, while working as a checker at Safeway in Lake Oswego, Oregon, she sold a six-pack of beer to someone she believed was of legal drinking age. But instead the customer was part of an Oregon Liquor Control Commission sting. A police officer interviewed and cited DeMerritt in her check stand as customers looked on.

Despite having more than 12 years on the job and no previous offenses, DeMerritt was fired and charged with a Class A misdemeanor. DeMerritt stressed that she takes her responsibility to keep alcohol out of the hands of minors very seriously and had passed all previous stings. Senate Bill 1546 will now make penalties for first time offenders more proportional. **OP**

UFCW Locals from Western States Council Participate in Successful Lobby Day



UFCW Locals from the Western States Council held a successful lobby day in California that saw five UFCW-sponsored bills pass through their houses.

Last week, members and staff from UFCW Western States Council, Locals 5, 8, 648, 1167, 1442 and worker activists from OUR Walmart traveled to the California State Capitol to lobby for issues and legislation important to workers and working families.

The week began with a reception held at the Capitol and provided an opportunity for members to meet and speak with lawmakers. Members and staff began lobbying at the Capitol the next day and visiting 80 Assembly members' offices. During their time there, five UFCW-sponsored bills passed their houses and will be moving forward through the legislative process.

The bills that passed are:

- AB1792, the Public Benefit Report, would require that an annual report be done on private and public employers who have 25 or more employees on the state's public assistance programs such as Medi-Cal and CalFresh.

- AB1897, the Accountability for Labor Contractors bill, addresses the abuse of third-party labor contractors violating labor laws.
- SB945, the Minimum Wage Fairness Act, authored by Senator Mark Leno, would increase the minimum wage in consecutive years from 2015 thru 2017 to \$11, \$12, and \$13 dollars per hour, and begin to align workers' worth with the immense rate of productivity that workers have delivered to companies across industries in the state.
- SB270, the bill that would eliminate single-use carryout plastic bags statewide.
- AB2418, the Improving of Patient Medication Adherence bill. **OP**

UFCW Local 23 Giant Eagle Grocery Workers Show Solidarity Before Contract Negotiations



*Leading up to the start of bargaining, UFCW Local 23 members working for Giant Eagle's Pittsburgh Division have been pledging to "make Giant Eagle the best company it can be," by sticking together to make it better. Workers called on Giant Eagle to join them in this commitment to improve their communities with a solidarity button action. **OP***