

It's another week without a contract agreement between the supermarket chains Vons, Ralph's and Albertsons and the Union representing grocery workers. Which in turn, according to the Union President, this week could prove to be the most pivotal to this point. "We are certainly giving a very careful consideration to giving a 72 hour notice," said Mickey Kasparian, President of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 135.

Which if that 72 hour notice were to come at the earliest Tuesday or Wednesday, grocery workers could be on the picket lines by this weekend. "They're saying we should be at the table negotiating, we shouldn't be talking about a strike," Kasparian says. "But negotiations is about engagement and they are not engaging right now." He adds with the federal mediator they've worked out new details regarding working conditions in the contract, but are essentially still deadlocked when it comes to workers health benefits.

Meanwhile, as negotiations continue up to 15 hours a day with that mediator; a rally for those grocery workers was held in downtown San Diego at 1st Avenue and G Street. "The clock is ticking down and it's only so long these workers can go without a contract," said Lorena Gonzalez, Head of San Diego & Imperial Council AFLCIO. A short time later this same group gathered in support of another Labor Day rally where people called on the creation of more jobs. Which ironically if the call is given and a strike begins, those who are unemployed could find themselves in temporary positions within the three major grocery stores, Vons, Albertson's and Ralph's.

And as for the grocery store chains holding out and never coming to an agreement, the Union has this to say. "That wouldn't happen, I'm convinced," Kasparian says. "In 2003 there was a long strike. In the end of the day there's always a deal at the end and there's always a settlement in the end."

In the end, Kasparian adds he would prefer to avoid a strike entirely. The supermarkets say they lost some \$2-billion during the 2003 strike. With customers choosing to shop at other stores during the strike that number this time around could be larger as stores like Walmart and target expand with larger grocery sections, giving customers more options.

The Union is required to give a 72 hour notification prior to the strike, which union members voted to approve August 19th. Our calls to grocery store representatives were not returned Monday night. However, throughout the process they've insisted the contract on the table is fair.

<http://www.cbs8.com/story/15398633/grocery-union-rep-says-strike-at-closest-point-yet>