

Local 555 Members Ratify Contract that Raises Living Standards



Yvette Washington, a Local 555 member and a Fred Meyer Gateway CCK checker, during the ratification vote.

Last Saturday, 90 percent of Portland, Ore. area grocery workers and union members voted overwhelmingly to ratify a new contract between their employers and United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 555. Workers stood strong and stood together for over a year to guarantee necessary improvements to the contract, which covers over 6,000 workers at Albertsons, Safeway, and Fred Meyer.

The 2½ -year contract includes:

- Real wage increases—retroactive for the last 12 months;
- Funded pension with increased contributions;
- Affordable, quality health care coverage with minimal out of pocket for members;
- Same-sex domestic partner coverage; and
- Establishment of a health and care management program. **OP**

New Report Shows Need for Labor Law Reform

A new report released last week by the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that during 2009 union membership in the private sector decreased from 7.6 percent to 7.2 percent, while public sector union membership increased from 36.8 percent to

37.4 percent. The proportion of all wage and salary workers who belonged to a labor union held roughly steady at 12.3 percent.

This new report shows how weak labor laws, and a documented increase in anti-union retaliation by corporations against workers, contributed to the decline.

By contrast, union membership increased in the public sector, showing that America's workers do choose unions when strong labor laws protect their rights in part due to stronger laws protecting public sector workers. With laws in 13 states protecting the rights of public employees to form unions through majority sign-up, many public sector workers have a path to form a union without interference from their employer.

Workers need labor law reform that would level the playing field, so they can join unions and have access to better wages and benefits. **OP**

Urge Senators to Finish Health Care Reform

Emphasize the Following Points in Your Call

We have come so far in fighting for health care reform. It is within our grasp.

Once the Senate and House come to agreement on dealing with the issues, we strongly support using Reconciliation to make fixes to the Senate bill as the House passes that bill.

Two key issues **MUST** be addressed in the Reconciliation Process:

- Include part-time workers in coverage and in the calculation of fees on employers.
- Ensure that the recent agreement on changes that reduce the Excise ("Cadillac") Tax must be part of the bill.

These changes will address workers' concerns and bring more progressive financing to the bill.

For more information, contact Barbara Gilbert-Chen in the Strategic Resources Department. **OP**

Walmart Sam's Club Continues to Lower Standards



Walmart launched another assault on living and working standards in communities across the country, by laying off more than 10,000 thousand Sam's Club employees. The company is outsourcing jobs, many of them part-time, to a company based in Arkansas.

Workers report that Walmart called them into mass meetings where they were offered boxes of tissues and told they were no longer needed by the nation's largest private employer.

"I got laid off regardless of my outstanding year-over-year performance, or having been the employee of the month multiple times," said Sally Grueling, a worker laid off by Walmart.

The mass layoffs raise serious questions such as whether or not older and more senior workers were targeted for lay off.

Why hasn't Walmart made a clearer path to employment with Shopper Events for these 11,000 associates – which they clearly have the power to do? And for workers hired by the outsourced company, what kind of jobs will Shopper Events provide to the new applicants? Why is Walmart telling workers they must agree not to pursue age discrimination claims in order to qualify for severance pay?

Walmart and Sam's Club workers seeking additional assistance and answers are encouraged to contact Walmart Workers for Change at (866) 587-2299 or log on to <http://www.walmartworkersforchange.org/>. **OP**

Muscatine Company Sues Iowa Governor to Avoid Meeting with Locked-Out Workers

Grain Processing Corporation (GPC), a Muscatine, Iowa company, has locked out more than 300 members of UFCW Local 86D since August 2008 and is now refusing to participate in a state-ordered conciliation program to help resolve the dispute and restart Muscatine's struggling economy.

More than 17 months have passed since GPC locked workers out of the plant, and still the company is stonewalling all attempts to resolve the dispute. After repeated failed attempts by a federal mediator to find some resolution and a request by the Muscatine County Board of Supervisors, Iowa Governor Chet Culver invoked his powers to charge a non-binding board of arbitration and conciliation to investigate and try to resolve the dispute.

GPC then filed suit against the Governor and the State of Iowa in an attempt to avoid participating in the board.

"GPC's refusal to participate in the Governor's program is a sign of their disrespect for the people of Iowa and Muscatine," said William Poggemiller, president of Local 86D. "Rather than trying to stand up for their hometown and their home state, they are fighting to keep local workers out of good jobs and on unemployment. That damages our whole community, and our whole state."

UFCW locals can show their support by sending a letter to GPC CEO Gage Kent and by joining the "End the Lock-Out in Muscatine" group on Facebook. Both are available through www.muscatinefirst.com. **OP**

Local 222 President Marvin L. Harrington Elected International Vice President

Marvin L. Harrington, Local 222 President, was elected UFCW International Vice President last week at the UFCW Executive Board meeting. **OP**