

Select Foods Workers Ratify First Contract After a Six Year Fight for a Voice on the Job

Almost 550 UFCW Local 6 members who work at the Select Foods meat processing plant in Southern Minnesota have ratified their first union contract.

The deal provides for wage increases of \$2.15 over the course of the contract which expires in 2018. In addition to the pay raises, Select Food workers now have the option of joining a company-sponsored health plan with different options for different needs. And, workers negotiated contract language which provides for job security and a fair process for solving problems at work.



A Select Foods worker celebrates outside the plant after her co-workers voted to join the UFCW for a voice on the job.

Before the contract, workers lacked a grievance procedure, job security, reliable pay raises, and affordable health insurance.

The agreement comes after workers spent six years fighting for the fundamental right to join together in a union. In 2006, motivated by the desire to have better conditions on the job and respect and dignity from their employer, the workers began holding union meetings. The company fought them every step of the way, until it ran out of options and finally had to sit down at the bargaining table and negotiate with the workers.

“I know our members are extremely pleased. After a long, hard fight, workers are now moving on to defending their contract and taking an active role in their union,” said Patrick Neilon, president of UFCW Local 6. **OP**

Union Membership Numbers Remain Steady Amidst Political Attacks and Economic Trouble

After falling by almost 1.4 million workers between 2008 and 2010, union membership hit a plateau in 2011. The total number of union members (up about 50,000) and the share of workers in a union (down 0.1 percentage point) were essentially unchanged last year.

The numbers, reported from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, show a slight uptick, in spite of the unprecedented number of partisan political attacks on workers’ fundamental right to band together in a union. In fact, Indiana is poised to become the first state in more than a decade to enact a “right to work” law. The new data has led some pundits and economists to suggest that growing income inequality has sparked workers to rethink the role unions play in creating the middle class.

UFCW membership has stayed steady at about 1.3 million members. However, in the beef slaughter sector, our union density has increased by 10% in the past three years - now at 64%. In the pork slaughter sector, UFCW density is 74% - also up 10% in the past three years. **OP**



Members of Local 135 Join San Diego Chargers to Feed Hungry

On Thursday, January 19, members from UFCW Local 135 showed their support for the UFCW and Smithfield Foods' joint Feeding the Hungry program. Members joined representatives from Smithfield Foods and retail partner Vons to unload 30,000 pounds of hams from the donation truck to the Cushman & Jacobs Food Bank. The San Diego Chargers sent some extra muscle to the event: corner backs Shareece Wright and Antoine Carson joined UFCW members to move the donated hams. **OP**



OUR Walmart Calls for CEO to Clarify Plan for Workers

Workers from the Organization United for Respect at Walmart (OUR Walmart) recently expressed concern about Walmart's apparent decision to eliminate the position of greeters - the employees who welcome customers to stores and watch exits for shoplifting. The workers have called for Walmart CEO Mike Duke to clarify the company's plan for greeters.

"Walmart's recent decision to reassign greeters has left us uncertain about our job security, concerned about our ability to provide customers with quality service, and nervous about increases in store theft," said OUR Walmart in a statement.

"We believe Walmart can regain its market strength and revive same store sales by investing in us, the Associates, who are the backbone of this company, not by cutting back and compromising customer service and security."

Already, thousands of Walmart Associates have seen significant cuts to their hours. It appears that the company may reassign greeters to fill in the gaps where these employees used to work.

"This is very troubling for the thousands of people who work as greeters across the country," said Jerome Allen, who works as a greeter in a Walmart in Fort Worth, Texas. "Our customers are used to seeing a friendly face when they enter the store. What would Sam Walton think about eliminating these positions?"

Sam Walton, Walmart's founder, first started the tradition of hiring greeters in 1980. Since then, the position has become synonymous with the Walmart brand.

To learn more about how you can get involved and support Walmart Associates, please go to www.makingchangeatwalmart.org **OP**

UFCW SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

A union is about more than a paycheck and benefits.

That's why each year the UFCW awards several SCHOLARSHIPS of up to \$8,000 each to UFCW members or their unmarried dependents.

The application will be available online from January 16 - April 16, 2012.

www.ufcw.org/scholarship

UFCW
Scholarship Program