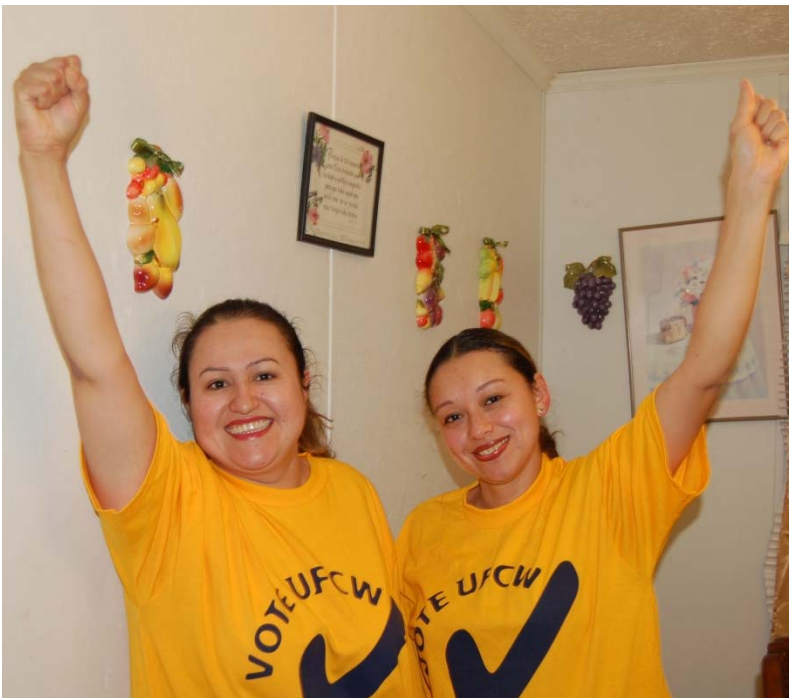


Smithfield Tar Heel Workers Choose UFCW Voice on the Job

After nearly two decades of struggle, workers at Smithfield's Tar Heel plant won UFCW representation, voting 2041 to 1879 for a union voice last week.



"This is a win for the new UFCW," said International President Joe Hansen. "It moves the UFCW growth program down the field in terms of building worker power—company and industry-wide."

"The Tar Heel victory is the first exclamation point on the UFCW Unity Agenda."

Smithfield's Tar Heel, North Carolina, operation is the world's biggest pork slaughter and processing facility, with approximately 5,000 workers. The victory is the

largest UFCW win in history and one of the largest labor wins at a single location in a decade.

"It was a monumental struggle," said UFCW Organizing Director Pat O'Neill. "It was a struggle built on the determination of the UFCW to raise living and working standards for workers in our industries. The focus and discipline of the UFCW Unity Agenda set the stage for gaining this victory. It has brought a systematic approach to UFCW growth, and put us on the road to victory in Tar Heel. It's the first exclamation point on the UFCW Unity Agenda."

"We are thrilled. We have waited a long time for this moment."
-Ronnie Ann Simmons, packaging dept.

Settling the law suit brought by Smithfield against the UFCW was an important step on the path toward victory.

"We had to look at the suit like we look at every other factor in our industries and decide how we could manage the situation to best promote UFCW growth, build density and bargaining power for UFCW members," said O'Neill. "It was a risk for any number of reasons. But it was a risk we needed to take because the settlement gave the workers a chance to win. And it gave the UFCW an opportunity to re-confirm our leadership in the packing and processing industries."



Winning in the Deep South—where attitudes toward unions are extremely unfavorable—was also significant and due in no small measure to the support of community, religious and civil rights groups that were on the front lines of this struggle.



“The history of this campaign makes our win significant for all of labor,” said President Hansen. “Almost everyone at the UFCW played a part. I can’t say enough about the unprecedented team of International and Local Union organizers we had on the ground in Tar Heel over the final weeks of the campaign. They did a terrific job, the workers stuck together, and we prevailed.”

“People came together. People wanted fair treatment. We fought so long to get this, and it finally happened.”

-Lydia Victoria, kill floor

Anti-worker lawmakers and commentators are already claiming that the Tar Heel vote is evidence that Employee Free Choice is unnecessary. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Public details about the Tar Heel vote show that the election was unlike a traditional NLRB election.

The company could not bar organizers from plant property, all information communicated to workers had to be fact-based, neither side could denounce the other, and messages had to be approved by each side, among other safeguards that an NLRB process does not provide.

The 17-year history of the campaign demonstrates exactly why workers need Employee Free Choice.

“It’s like how Obama felt when he won. We made history.”

-Wanda Blue, livestock

