

Over 1,100 Workers at Hyrum JBS/Swift Plant Join UFCW

More than 1,100 workers at the JBS/Swift beef plant in Hyrum, Utah, have voted overwhelmingly to join the UFCW.

“This victory means we’ll have a voice at work,” said plant worker Adalberto Soto. “We voted ‘UFCW Yes.’ It was an easy decision, and it was the right decision for our families and our future.”

The Hyrum plant has been in operation for over 70 years and became part of the JBS family with their acquisition of Swift meatpacking almost two years ago. It had been the only JBS/Swift plant in the United States that did not have union representation.

After the nationwide raid on Swift plants in December 2006, the five locals representing Swift workers (UFCW locals 7R, 22, 540, 1149, and 1161) cooperated on issues like relief and workers’ rights.

This unprecedented cooperation led the locals to commit to organize the one remaining unorganized Swift plant in Hyrum. After almost two years of careful planning, the locals judged the time was right and exercised the right to an RC election—in which workers overwhelmingly voted for UFCW representation.

“When we sit down with management to negotiate that first contract, we won’t sit down alone,” said Soto, “We’ll stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our ten thousand brothers and sisters at all the JBS/Swift plants across the country, and with all workers in the packing and processing industry. The more workers who unite in our industry—the more powerful we are to make better lives for our families.”

UFCW Locals 7R, 22, 227, 540, 1149, and 1161 coordinated with the Food Processing, Packing and Manufacturing Division, and the Global Strategies Department on the Hyrum victory. This kind of strategic, coordinated, core-industry organizing has the potential to bring 10,000 non-union packinghouse workers under a UFCW contract.

President Hansen and UFCW Honored for Leadership on Immigration Issues



International President Joe Hansen spoke about worker justice and immigration reform at historic Riverside Church in New York City on November 18, 2008. The Sowing the Seeds of Justice Dinner, which was sponsored by the Rural & Migrant Ministry, Inc., and the Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition,

helped raise awareness and resources for the Justice for Farmworkers Campaign. At the event, President Hansen and the UFCW were honored for their leadership on immigrant worker issues. During his remarks, President Hansen talked about the inspiring victory of President-elect Obama, the need to continue our efforts to ensure justice for all workers across the country and the UFCW’s proud history of being at the forefront of racial and social progress in our nation.

Expanding Democratic Majority in the Senate is a UFCW Priority

UFCW members worked hard to get Barack Obama elected because of his support for legislation that will help working families—like Employee Free Choice, health care reform, and immigration reform.

But President-elect Obama can’t do it all on his own. He will need to work with Congress to ensure that we have the votes we need on these important issues. Since the November 4 election, we’ve had another victory in the Senate—Democrat Mark Begich recently won his close race against the incumbent Republican Senator Ted Stevens in Alaska.

Our majority in the Senate continues to improve. The Begich win brings Democrats to a 58 seat majority and two races are yet to be decided. Democrat Al Franken, a vocal supporter of Employee Free Choice, and Republican Senator Norm Coleman are in the middle of a recount after a close race in Minnesota.

And in Georgia, Democrat Jim Martin is in a tough runoff against Republican incumbent Saxby Chambliss. Chambliss has been bad for working families; he voted against raising the minimum wage, against protecting overtime rights, and against protecting workers' right to choose a union. Martin, on the other hand, will work with President Obama and Senate Democrats on an economic recovery plan and tax cut for working families. That's why we need to get Martin elected on December 2.

UFCW members and staff are already working hard in Georgia to turn out the union vote for Martin. **We need all hands on deck to turn this Senate seat blue. UFCW staff wanting to help with the election should contact the International for details.**

UFCW Local 951 Members Ratify New Agreement with Rite Aid

UFCW Local 951 members recently ratified a new agreement with Rite Aid, covering about 770 members at 74 stores. Members negotiated the agreement by working together with Locals 880, 876, and 911, all of whom recently negotiated agreements with Rite Aid.

Local 951 members were able to learn from the other UFCW locals what to expect in terms of the company's bargaining strategy and proposals. With this information, they achieved a good contract that includes:

- Wage and longevity increases
- Maintenance of Health and Welfare coverage with minimal co-pay increase
- Reestablished 401K plan to supplement the existing defined benefits pension plan
- Enhanced vision plan

Next up to bargain with Rite Aid: Local 1099, whose members will be working together with Local 951, as well as 880, 876, and 911 to achieve a good contract.

Retail Workers Express Themselves With "Common Threads"



Retail Madness: The Register, by Joey Rodriguez, relates to the pressure of working in a retail shop

Over 20 artists are exhibiting paintings, drawings, collage, sculpture, and poetry inspired by and in critique of the retail industry in "Common Threads: Artists in Spite of Retail," a group show in downtown New York City. The show draws community attention to workplace injustices experienced by retail workers, and was initiated by a young group of

members of the UFCW's Retail Wholesale and Department Store Union's Retail Action

Project. Members solicited art and recruited volunteers from the communities to help run the show.

"Art and creative expression have always been an important part of the labor movement," said RWDSU President Stuart Appelbaum. "We are proud to be involved with a project that allows these retail workers to communicate their art with the public." The exhibition runs through November 30 at the Brecht Forum at 451 West Street, New York, NY.

UFCW on Strike

Members of UFCW Local 1D ended their strike last week, ratifying a good contract with Empire Merchants. The workers had been on strike since November 1. The contract improves wages and working conditions for Local 1D members working for the liquor distributor.

Members of UFCW Local 86D and officials from Grain Processing Corp. (GPC) of Muscatine, IA, have yet to reach a contract agreement; UFCW Local 86D has been locked out since August 22; and UFCW Local 880 members in Winesburg, Ohio, continued their strike in an effort to reach a first contract with Case Farms' poultry plant.