

UFCW Local 1500 and Gourmet Grocery Workers Serve Up Justice at Amish Food Markets

Five hundred and fifty gourmet grocery workers will receive nearly \$1.5 million in unpaid wages, thanks to the efforts of gourmet grocery workers and UFCW Local 1500.

In 2008, several workers at Amish Markets and related stores Zeytinia, Zeytinz, and Zeytuna approached UFCW Local 1500 because they wanted to form a union at their stores.

The UFCW soon discovered that many workers were not being paid proper overtime and brought the violations to the attention of the New York State Department of Labor (DOL). The DOL conducted a sweep of nine locations and confirmed widespread wage and hour and labor violations, including:

- X** Employees who had worked up to 60 hours per week who were not paid time-and-a-half for their overtime as required by law;
- X** Workers paid less than the minimum wage as part of a “trial period”; and
- X** At least one whistleblower who was terminated in retaliation for providing information to the New York State Department of Labor.

Bruce W. Both, president of UFCW Local 1500 said, "The New York State Department of Labor and the workers from Amish Markets, a gourmet grocery store serving high-end food products, deserve the gratitude of every taxpayer in the city because they had the courage to stand up and say: ‘This is wrong!’"

Local 1500 and the Building Blocks Project play a leading role in bringing good food, good jobs, and good health to New York’s neighborhoods by promoting and establishing policies that preserve existing supermarkets, develop new supermarkets and ensure the ability of grocery workers to form unions. **OP**

Economists: Employee Free Choice Act Good For Economy, Good for America



Forty prominent economists, including three Nobel Laureates, have signed on to a statement sponsored by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) in favor of the Employee Free Choice Act. Economists say labor law reform is essential for rebuilding our middle class.

Download the statement at: <http://www.epi.org> **OP**

HHS Secretary Choice a Longtime Champion of Working Families

President Obama’s commitment to ensuring that all Americans have access to quality, affordable health care was reaffirmed yesterday, as he announced his choice of Gov. Kathleen Sebelius as the next Secretary of Health and Human Services.



Gov. Sebelius is well-respected on both sides of the aisle and understands the challenges confronting America’s health care apparatus. During her tenure as Kansas insurance commissioner, she demonstrated both the tenacity and technical expertise needed to overhaul a system paralyzed by insurance companies and special interests. The voters of Kansas have long known Gov. Sebelius as a champion of working families and as a dedicated public servant, and the UFCW is eager to join her as she works to realize the dream of a stronger, healthier America. **OP**

Corazon de Justicia Award Goes to Union Supporter Working at Bashas'-owned Food City



Fernando Aguilar, a union supporter and worker at Bashas'-owned Food City, received a Corazon de Justicia Award for his efforts to form a union with his coworkers in Tucson, Arizona. The event, the Sixth Annual Corazón de Justicia Awards: A Celebration & Recognition, was hosted by Coalición de Derechos Humanos to honor community organizers for their commitment to justice and social change.

Aguilar has worked in the grocery industry for over 30 years in union and non-union stores with ABCO, Bashas', and currently with Bashas'-owned Food City. He has been working closely with UFCW Local 99 to organize his coworkers. Close to retirement, Aguilar has made it very clear that he is not fighting only for himself; he is fighting for respect and a better future for the company and its employees.

He has spoken in front of the Tucson Board of Supervisors on the importance of health and safety in our grocery stores. He believes union members have an important role in improving our communities when we have input in critical decisions on health and safety.

Bashas' has responded to Fernando's efforts by harrassing and unjustly disciplining him. But Aguilar has emerged as a leader and will not be silenced. He and his coworkers will continue to stand together to demand the respect on the job that they deserve. **OP**

The Case for Employee Free Choice: Local 555 Members at Fred Meyer Bargaining for First Contract Agreement

The Dalles Fred Meyer employees in Oregon know firsthand why we need the Employee Free Choice Act. The non-food workers voted to join UFCW Local 555 in November 2007, and began to bargain for a contract in February 2008.

To this day, thanks to Fred Meyer's stalling of the bargaining process, these Local 555 members still don't have a union contract.

If the Employee Free Choice Act were law, those workers would have a contract by now. That's because under Employee Free Choice, if no agreement has been reached on a first contract after 90 days of bargaining, either the employer or employees can request assistance from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. If there is no agreement after 30 days of mediation, the issues go to binding arbitration.

Even when employees overcome the many obstacles to forming a union, management frequently denies them the benefits of collective bargaining by refusing to agree on a first contract. Non-food workers at The Dalles Fred Meyer wanted to join the union so they could bargain for better wages and benefits—but because our current laws are so weak, the company has kept these workers from doing so with few or no repercussions.

That's one reason that Local 555 members, along with 250,000 UFCW members nationwide, have signed cards in support of the Employee Free Choice Act—and many have made calls, written letters and op-eds, and sent emails to their members of Congress asking them to support this important legislation.

To learn more about the Fred Meyer workers, go to: www.groceryworkersunited555.org.

For more about how to support the Employee Free Choice Act, go to: www.ufcwforfreechoice.org. **OP**