

Action Bulletin

A Union Builder's Guide To A Stronger UFCW • Published by the UFCW Communications Department • Vol. 2 No. 5, 2000

NEB. GOVERNOR PROCLAIMS WORKER BILL OF RIGHTS

A week after the UFCW and Omaha Together, One Community launched a campaign to bring decent wages and dignity to the immigrant workforce in Omaha's packinghouse industry, Nebraska Governor Mike Johanns issued a groundbreaking, 11-point Bill of Rights for meatpacking workers. The fact that the governor had to affirm the long-established legal right of workers to organize only exposes the tattered and torn state of federal labor laws. Employer violations of worker rights are widespread and flagrant, especially in industries with large immigrant workforces. Just days before the governor issued his proclamation, a major Omaha packinghouse raided employee lockers, confiscated union materials, and placed workers under video surveillance to identify those who were accepting pro-union materials outside the plant. The coordination of OTOC's efforts on behalf of Omaha's new immigrant workforce with the UFCW's commitment to organize immigrant workers provided the critical driving force behind the governor's effort to issue a Worker Bill of Rights—a movement that's growing nationwide and that elected officials can no longer ignore.

UFCW, OMAHA COMMUNITY STAND WITH NEW IMMIGRANTS

With help from Omaha Together, One Community (OTOC) and AFL-CIO Union Summer students, UFCW has launched a comprehensive, multi-year campaign to organize more than 4,000 workers in Omaha's largely non-union meatpacking industry.

A century ago, when meatpackers were European immigrants, sweating in slaughterhouses, their churches and union rallied to transform their jobs into the mainstay of Omaha's middle class. Today, the industry has come full circle with a new wave of immigrant workers from Central America taking on the most dangerous occupation in the country. Real wages have been cut in half. Annual turnover rates have skyrocketed. Company profits have soared as workers have been pushed to triple production levels.

In announcing the partnership with OTOC, a coalition of 38 churches that promote community activism, Mark

Lauritsen, executive assistant in the UFCW Organizing Department, called on the children and grandchildren of past immigrants to stand with those of today. "Our parents and grandparents faced the same exploitation and the same brutal conditions," he said. "Then, as now, the union is the key that unlocks the door to the American dream."

UFCW has notified the Immigration and Naturalization Service that a labor dispute exists at several Omaha meatpacking plants. Under INS procedures, the agency may not engage in any enforcement or other action that would interfere with workers' legal rights. INS's controversial Operation Vanguard has been notorious for singling out Nebraska packing plants and removing undocumented workers.

UFCW plans to forge community-worker coalitions state by state until packinghouse workers everywhere gain dignity and a decent standard of living. ■

FACTS TO USE

SOCIAL SECURITY is virtually the sole source of income for one-fifth of the elderly, and more than two-thirds rely on it for at least half their income.

THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR shed 17,000 American jobs in May alone.



www.ufcw.org

Read about UFCW members making the news!

- GO TO: UFCW MEMBERS
- CLICK ON: IN THE NEWS

WHAT WORKS

Tell *Action Bulletin* What Works: Fax AB
202-466-1587

UFCW MEMBERS GET ON MESSAGE FOR ELECTION 2000

A group of 25 UFCW members, shop stewards, and staff got “on message” at the first of a series of political media training sessions in Columbus, Ohio. Participants from Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, and Cincinnati attended the daylong session to learn the tools of the trade for communicating a working-family message.

The message is simple: This year, working families—union families—are going to make the difference on Elec-

tion Day. This year, if union members hold candidates accountable, working-family concerns will move to the top of the nation’s political and legislative agenda.



Local 1059 shop steward John Doherty practices interview techniques with a staffer during the media training conference.

The session focused on specific speaking and interviewing techniques necessary to carry the message to working families and mobilize

them to cast their ballots in November. Media experts staged mock television interviews in which participants explained how working families can distinguish pro-worker and anti-worker candidates on the issues. For example:

- Pro-working-family candidates want to use the budget surplus to shore up Social Security and establish separate tax-free personal savings accounts that would help working families build a nest egg; anti-worker candidates want to divert

money out of the fund into risky stock investments and use the budget surplus for enormous tax cuts aimed at the wealthy.

- Pro-working-family candidates want a comprehensive Patients’ Bill of Rights and promise to push for universal health care; anti-worker candidates are backing a measure that would cover only 48 million Americans and put more money into the pockets of insurance companies.
 - Pro-working-family candidates support full funding for OSHA to implement an ergonomics standard as well as proposals to strengthen workers’ right to organize; anti-worker candidates have stymied all attempts to fund OSHA and even to discuss worker rights.
- Members left the training well armed with sound bites about working-family issues to put to use in the break room, with friends and neighbors, and in the local media. ■

ONLINE TOOLS

REGISTER TO VOTE

Register to vote from anywhere in the United States with the National Mail Voter Registration Form. GO TO:
<http://www.fec.gov/votregis/vr.htm>



THE LEGAL SIDE

UNIONS, NOT EMPLOYERS, MAY PHOTOGRAPH OR VIDEOTAPE EMPLOYEES DURING ORGANIZING CAMPAIGN

Reversing 11 years of case law, the National Labor Relations Board determined 3 to 2 that a union may lawfully photograph or videotape employees during a representation campaign, as long as the union does not make any accompanying intimidating statement. In this case, the union was videotaping its representatives as they handed out union literature outside the plant gate so as to document which employees accepted and which rejected the materials. The NLRB



found that there was no difference between videotaping employees and asking an employee to sign an authorization card and recording the response.

It remains unlawful, however, for an employer to videotape workers during a campaign. As the board noted, "It is a fundamental fact that an employer, unlike a union, has virtually absolute control over the employees' terms and conditions of employment." ■

Randell Warehouse of Arizona, Inc., 328 NLRB No. 153 (1999)

HOW THIS DECISION CAN HELP YOU

The NLRB ruling gives union representatives a double opportunity. Organizers can use a videotape or photograph to help identify union supporters in creating a worker-to-worker network during an ongoing campaign. In the event of a successful campaign, pertinent photos and videotapes can be used in union publications and posted on union web sites as positive images of worker and union activism.

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KP BUG



What does "NOVEMBER" bring to mind?
(Besides holidays and eating too much turkey.)

It means it is VOTING time again.

Make sure you are registered to vote.

Know which candidates back
working-family issues and VOTE.



REGISTER & VOTE



BARGAINING TABLE

LOCAL 655 MEMBERS WIN WAGE DEMANDS After hard-fought negotiations that included a narrowly averted strike, 7,000 members of Local 655 who work as clerks, cashiers, and other grocery employees at Schnucks Markets Inc. in St. Louis, Mo., approved a three-year bargaining agreement. Members turned down the company's initial offer and authorized the union to call a strike if necessary, but the parties returned to the bargaining table and worked out an agreement with the help of a mediator. The new contract raises hourly wages by \$1.75 over term, maintains full health care coverage with employer-paid premiums, and improves pension benefits for some job groups. It is expected to set the pattern for the local's upcoming negotiations with Dierbergs Markets and Shop 'N' Save, two other area grocery chains that represent an additional 4,600 workers.



FOOD PROCESSING Local 1059 on behalf of 1,100 hourly employees at Pillsbury Co. in Wellston, Ohio. Increases hourly wage by \$1.05 over three-year term. Significant new language calls for a number of work rule and job-bidding changes.

RETAIL FOOD Locals 135, 324, 770, 1036, 1167, 1428, and 1442 on behalf of 3,000 Food 4 Less workers in southern California. Increases top wage by \$1.60 per hour over four-year term. Significant new language limits how much time utility clerks can be assigned to non-utility work.

MANUFACTURING Local 522-G on behalf of 230 garment workers at Osh-Kosh B'Gosh in White House, Tenn. Increases hourly wage by \$1.10 over three-year term. Significant new language determines seniority

by primary job instead of by work group.

RETAIL RWDSU Local 3 on behalf of 2,100 sales associates and skilled crafts workers at Bloomingdale's department store in New York City. Increases hourly wage by \$1.85 over four-year term.

RETAIL FOOD Locals 408 and 455 on behalf of 12,750 meat cutters and clerks at Kroger Co. Stores in Houston, Tex. Increases wages up to \$1.25 per hour over four-year term. Significant new language provides night premium for stock employees working a regular 9:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. shift.

MEAT PROCESSING Local 6 on behalf of 250 workers at Armour in Mason City, Iowa. Increases hourly wage \$1.20 over three-year term.

MANUFACTURING Local 335 on behalf of 200 hide tanners at

S.B. Foot Tanning Company in Red Wing, Minn. Increases hourly wage \$1.13 over three-year term. Significant new language allows unused vacation days to be paid off at 1.5 times vacation pay rate.

MANUFACTURING Local 406-T on behalf of 29 textile workers at T.P. Corporation in Duryea, Penn. Increases hourly wage 75 cents over three-year term.

MEAT PROCESSING Local 1529 on behalf of 800 poultry workers at Tyson Foods Inc. in Jackson, Miss. Increases hourly wage 55 cents over three-year term. Significant new language allows ABC check-off.

RETAIL FOOD Local 881 on behalf of 553 clerks at Cub Foods, Inc., in Tinley Park/Chicago, Ill. Increases hourly wage by \$1.30 to \$1.65 over three-year term. ■



MAKING IT HAPPEN

MILESTONE WIN FOR CHICKEN CATCHERS From “independent” contractors to union members, chicken catchers at Perdue Farms Inc. on the Delmarva peninsula have traveled a long, hard road. But their struggle to win a voice on the job finally paid off when 69 catchers at plants in Salisbury, Md., and Georgetown, Del., voted on July 7 to join UFCW Local 27—the first such victory ever for Perdue workers. The local is challenging a third election in Accomac, Va., on grounds that management presence in the voting area frightened workers.

Under stifling, stinking conditions, chicken catcher crews work around the clock, snatching an average 50,000 birds per shift in preparation for slaughter. In 1991, after years of classifying the catchers as regular employees eligible for overtime and other benefits, Perdue recategorized them as independent contractors. After a U.S. District Court judge ruled in February that the company’s refusal to pay workers overtime violated federal wage laws, the catchers’ fight to win a voice began in earnest. A threat to replace workers with chicken-catching machines only redoubled their efforts to win a voice on the job.

With help from the Delmarva Poultry Justice Alliance, Local 27 members launched a consumer campaign aimed at Eastern Shore residents, distributing leaflets outside grocery stores and asking them to support the catchers’ cause. Shoppers responded by flooding Perdue headquarters with phone calls and e-mails. Finally, bowing to union and consumer pressure, Perdue agreed to the election.

“There are thousands of chicken catchers in the Chicken Belt of the Delmarva peninsula,” said UFCW organizer Denise Crowe. “This election opens the door to their joining a union.”

Manufacturing

U800 BC Rogers workers in Morton, Miss., for Local 1529.

U26 workers at World Wide Products & FHR in Brooklyn, N.Y., for Local 342-50.

U260 workers at Hadad, Inc., in Babylon, N.Y., for Local 888.

Meat Processing

U60 meatpackers and shippers at Millard Refrigeration Services in Waterloo, Iowa, for Local 230.

U850 poultry workers at Charoen Popkhand Poultry in Eufala, Ala., for RWDSU’s Alabama and Mid-South Council. **Key organizing strategy:** emphasizing successful record of negotiating better wages, benefits, and working conditions.

U650 meat processors at the Carriage Hill Fresh Mark plant in Salem, Ohio, for RWDSU’s Alabama and Mid-South Council.

Public Sector

U1,006 employees at the Puerto Rico Sports and Recreation Department in San Juan for Local 481.

Retail Foods

U128 Smith’s Food workers in St. George and Cedar City, Utah, for Local 711.

U40 Best Foods workers in Pomona, Calif., for Local 1428.

U66 Pack & Save workers in Fresno, Calif., for Local 1288.

U23 workers at Reserve Square grocery in Cleveland, Ohio, for Local 880.

U40 workers at Best Value in Upland, Calif., for Locals 1428 and 1167.

U11 Costco meat department workers in Brooklyn, N.Y., for Local 342-50.

Health Care

U105 residential managers, residential counselors, teachers aides, and activities specialists at Kolburn School in New Marlboro, Mass., for Local 1459.

U35 skilled maintenance workers at UMass Memorial Hospital in Worcester, Mass., for Local 1445.

U56 workers at Beverly Enterprises Boaz Nursing Home in Boaz, Ala., for Local 1657. ■



EYE ON CONGRESS

UFCW PUSHES FOR WORKER PROTECTIONS IN GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Controversial anti-worker provisions are threatening the passage of essential working-family legislation. As Congress prepares to fund the government for another year, the UFCW is leading the fight for worker protection programs. Both the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Wage and Hour Division face obstacles from Congress before their funding is finalized. Anti-worker representatives are still trying to delay OSHA's job safety ergonomics standard. The bill also falls short of the amount required to fund the Depart-

ment of Labor's Wage and Hour Division, which enforces the Fair Labor Standards Act and its overtime, minimum wage, and child labor functions.

"Our members have been waiting nearly ten years for an ergonomics standard," said UFCW President Doug Dority. "Yet another delay merely reinforces the view of so many citizens that our government cannot or will not do what is necessary for ordinary working Americans."

Both the House and Senate versions of the appropriations measure fall short of President

Bill Clinton's \$106 billion request.

"The president's funding level is already at rock bottom," said Dority. "The budgets of low-wage workers will be affected by the way this issue is resolved by Congress."

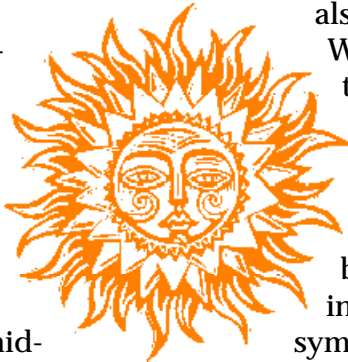
Clinton has promised to veto the legislation if it passes without the essential funding. Let Congress know how important it is to you to protect working families. Write, call, or e-mail your representative to delete the ergo rider and fully fund the Wage and Hour Division. ■

SAFETY ZONE

BEATING THE HEAT

Working in a hot environment can be more than just a nuisance. Summer heat can turn into a serious health hazard, particularly for new or returning employees.

For many workers, heat is a constant and familiar enemy. Meatpackers, for example, face high temperatures and humidity on the kill floor—conditions that only worsen in the summertime. Sweating is one way in which the body rids



itself of excess heat. But sweating also depletes the body of essential minerals and fluids.

When we sweat too much without replenishing these nutrients, a number of increasingly serious symptoms can result. Workers and management should learn to recognize the following signs of heat stress:

- **HEAT RASH**, also called prickly heat, is an uncomfortable but harmless skin condition that occurs when sweat cannot evaporate from the skin. Treat by resting in a cool place and allowing the skin to dry.

- **HEAT CRAMPS** are painful muscle spasms that occur when salt lost through sweating is not replaced. Treat by drinking electrolyte solutions such as sports beverages, which contain salts.

continued on page 7



POST IT

“Maybe, Maybe Not”

—George W. Bush

When asked if future Social Security beneficiaries would receive less in benefits under his system than they would under the current system, George W. Bush answered, “Maybe, maybe not.” *Dallas Morning News 5/15/00*

When you retire, if you’re disabled, if you die, will you and your family get guaranteed benefits that go up with the cost of living? **Maybe, Maybe Not.**

Social Security has provided security for working families and retirees for more than 60 years.

Don’t let George W. Bush turn our Social Security into Social Insecurity.

SAFETY ZONE continued

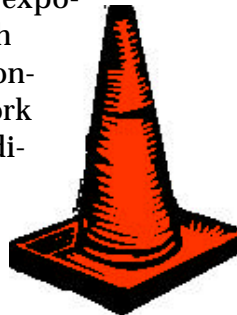
BEATING THE HEAT *continued from page 6*

• **HEAT EXHAUSTION**, which results from prolonged sweating and loss of fluids and salt, is characterized by extreme weakness or fatigue, dizziness, headache, nausea, clammy or moist skin, and sometimes fainting. Treat by moving to a cool area and drinking electrolyte solutions.

• **HEAT STROKE** can be life-threatening. Victims’ skin is hot and dry, and they are mentally confused—sometimes delirious. Without prompt treatment, they may go into a coma or even die. If

you or a colleague experience these symptoms, seek medical help immediately. Move heat stroke victims to a cool area, fan them vigorously, and soak their clothing with cool water.

The best way to prevent heat exposure is through engineering controls in the work area—air conditioners, fans that move air across the skin, and local exhaust venti-



lation. If you can’t beat the heat, though, try to get away from it. Take frequent rest breaks in cool, air-conditioned locations. Drink plenty of water—at least eight full glasses per day—to replenish the liquids lost through sweating. Get used to the heat gradually—it takes the body about a week to adjust to higher temperatures.

For more information, call or e-mail the UFCW Occupational Health and Safety Office. ■



Your Vote Your Choice 2000 MEDICARE

Al Gore

- Would invest \$300 billion in Medicare to extend the life of the Medicare Trust Fund until at least 2030.
- Would put Medicare surplus in a “lock box” to meet baby boomer retirement needs and ensure solvency for future generations.
- Would add guaranteed basic and catastrophic prescription drug coverage.
- Would allow people aged 55 to 64 to pay a premium and receive Medicare coverage.

George W. Bush

- Has not saved one penny of the budget surpluses over the next ten years to fund Medicare.
- Proposes a nearly \$2 trillion tax cut that would have to be financed by raiding social programs such as Medicare and Medicaid.
- Would rely on private insurance companies to offer prescription drug coverage.
- Recommends raising the eligibility age to 67.

TALKING POINTS



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