

**Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515**

February 17, 2004

Mr. Steven A. Burd
Chairman, President & CEO
Safeway, Inc.
5918 Stoneridge Mall Road
Pleasanton, CA 94588

Mr. Larry Johnston
Chairman & CEO
Albertsons, Inc.
250 E. Park Center Blvd.
Boise, ID 83706

Mr. Dave Dillon
President
Kroger
1014 Vine Street
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Dear Sirs:

As members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), we are writing to express our grave concern about the current labor dispute between Safeway, Albertsons, and Kroger Corporations and the 70,000 grocery workers they employ in Southern California. We urge you to reach a fair and equitable solution to this serious matter in an expeditious manner.

The current labor struggle in Southern California has had a devastating impact on businesses and families alike. It has been particularly detrimental to the thousands of Latino families who have been directly impacted by it, many of whom are represented in Congress by members of the CHC. Nearly one-third of the workers on strike or locked out are Latino. Despite the severe financial constraints, these workers and their families have stood strong throughout this situation, hoping that both sides can secure an agreement that includes affordable health care and fair wages.

We view this labor dispute as a part of the larger national debate on health care. Lack of access to quality health care and escalating health care costs are issues of particular concern to the Latino community which suffers from the highest uninsured rate of any racial or ethnic group in the United States. This lack of insurance is devastating to millions of Latino families. We must make every effort to eliminate this disparity, find ways to extend coverage, and work to end the erosion of employment-based health care coverage because of rising out-of-pocket health care costs that make insurance unaffordable for many workers.

Honorable John Burton
President Pro Tem
California State Senate
State Capitol Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Fabian Nuñez
Speaker of the Assembly
State Capitol
PO Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0046

Honorable Herb Wesson
Speaker of the Assembly Emeritus
State Capitol
PO Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0047

Honorable Kevin Shelley
California Secretary of State
1500 11th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Steve Westly
California State Controller
PO Box 942850
Sacramento, CA 94250-5872

* Honorable Commissioner John Garamendi
Department of Insurance
300 Capitol Mall, 17th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Phil Angelides
California State Treasurer
915 Capitol Mall, Suite 110
Sacramento, CA 95814