



WORKERS' RIGHTS BOARD



A project of Jobs with Justice.

February 26, 2004

To Safeway CEO Steve Burd and Safeway Board Members:

From Jobs with Justice Workers' Rights Board members across the country:

We Support Grocery Workers "Holding the Line" for Health Care

We support the 70,000 grocery workers in Southern California who are on strike or locked out to protect their health care from grocery giants Safeway, Albertson's, and Kroger. We admire their courage and solidarity in standing together for over 100 days. We feel for them and their families as they lose homes and cars and savings. We pray for them and for justice.

We do not believe the grocers' claims that they must cut health coverage to remain competitive. These grocery giants are both profitable and secure in their markets. They amassed nearly \$10 billion in profits in 2002. Their profits have risen 91 percent since 1998, and these chains take in one of every four dollars spent on groceries in America. Yet, the workers wages average only \$19,000 per year.

The grocers' claim that faced with skyrocketing costs, the workers simply refuse to accept minor changes to their insurance co-payments. But the companies are really seeking to eliminate meaningful health benefits for workers and their families and avoid their responsibility to work with labor and other progressive organizations for meaningful health care reform.

The grocers' cynical strategy is summed up in Safeway CEO Steve Burd's comment that forcing the workers out on strike is an "investment in the future." We know that standing with the workers is an investment in our future. If the grocers win, then health coverage for all workers is at risk.

This is about more than dollars and cents. We believe these workers are holding the line for all of America's health care. It's un-American to expect people to work hard everyday and not provide for their health care when they get sick. It's greedy to get rich while workers take less. It breaks the Golden Rule ("Do unto others as you would have them do unto you") to take away workers' health care and then expect to have coverage when you get sick. It's time to save health care and restore justice for America's workers.

Sincerely,

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