



*Institute for Women's Policy Research Report Summary*

## **The Benefits of Unionization for Women In the Retail Food Industry**

### **Cashier Moms are Entering the Workforce in Record Numbers**

Cashier and clerk moms—most of them without college degrees—are and will continue to be one of the fastest growing workforce segments in the next decade.

Employment projections show that the retail trade and service sectors—not high tech industries—will account for the largest job growth in the U.S. through 2010. U.S. Labor Department projections show that 73 percent of all new jobs will be generated in these two sectors.

Women already fill 55 percent of retail food jobs.

### **Women Workers Want Union Representation**

While overall union membership has declined, the percentage of women union members has increased from 17 percent of all union members in 1954 to 41.6 percent of all union members in 2001, according to the latest Bureau of Labor Statistics numbers.

Women as a percentage of union members increased from 41.1 percent in 2000 to 41.6 percent last year — a total of 93,000 members. Union membership among white, African-American, and Latina women grew in 2001, while the number of male members decreased in all those groups.

In 1980, only 31 percent of non-union workers polled thought the advantages of union representation outweighed the disadvantages. But in 2000, 63 percent expressed positive views about union representation.

This positive change in attitude toward union representation is due in large measure to women, who—along with minorities and new immigrants—have entered the workforce in record numbers over the last two decades.

## **The Union Advantage for Women in the Retail Food Industry is the Difference Between a Middle-Class Lifestyle and Borderline Poverty**

### ***The Advantage in Health Care Coverage***

UFCW-represented women in the retail food industry are ***twice as likely to have health insurance coverage*** as women who have no union representation.

UFCW-represented women who work ***part-time are more than twice as likely to have health insurance coverage*** as women who aren't represented.

UFCW-represented ***single moms who work part-time are three times as likely to have health insurance coverage*** as single moms who aren't represented.

***Employers contribute three times the amount to health care premium costs*** for women represented by the UFCW than for non-union women.

Employers contribute ***four times the amount to health care premium costs for part-time UFCW-represented women and six times the amount for part-time UFCW-represented single moms*** as for counterpart non-union part-time, and non-union part-time single moms.

UFCW-represented women don't have to gamble on the health of their families in order to use their paychecks to meet routine monthly bills.

### ***The Advantage in Wages***

UFCW-represented women in the retail food industry make ***31 percent more in wages*** than their non-union counterparts.

That's a difference of ***\$5,616 a month for full-time women workers*** and ***\$2,704 for part-time women workers*** compared to their non-union counterparts.

Over the course of a working career, a 31 percent union wage advantage going into the pockets of UFCW-represented women would provide a nest egg for retirement of:

- < \$700,000 for full-time women workers; and
- < \$335,000 for part-time women.

Or that money could go to:

- < Finance a mortgage on a new home;
- < Send kids to college;
- < Buy new cars;
- < Get season tickets to see professional sports teams play every year;
- < Remodel a house on a yearly basis; or
- < Buy a new computer every year.

### ***The Advantage in Pensions***

UFCW-represented women in the retail food industry are ***two-and-a-half times as likely to have pension coverage*** than women who have no union representation.

***Part-time UFCW-represented women are three times as likely to have pension coverage*** as their non-union counterparts.

***Full-time UFCW-represented women workers get \$800 a month, \$9,500 a year, and \$100,000 every 10 years more in retirement benefits*** than their non-union counterparts.

The money from a defined benefit union pension plan could be used to:

- < Help send grandchildren to college;
- < Move closer to kids who may have relocated;
- < Take retirement vacations;
- < Buy a new or vacation home;
- < Purchase a new car;
- < Refurnish the house;
- < Buy the latest entertainment systems;
- < Have peace of mind about rising prescription costs;
- < Help with family financial emergencies; or
- < Provide sustained contributions to charities.

### **Joining a Union is the Most Important Factor in Whether Women Workers Will Have a Middle-Class Lifestyle or Be Left Behind**

Women currently make up nearly half the workforce, and their participation will continue to grow. Their wages, health care, and pension benefits are vital to the livelihood of working families.

Union representation brings women workers—especially those without college degrees—and their families into the middle class.

In the supermarket industry, consolidation and competition from non-union discounters like Wal-Mart are already causing stagnation in wages and benefits.

Organizing cashier and clerk moms is the key to building the UFCW in order to end this stagnation, gain the wages and benefits our members deserve, and improve the lives of working families in our core UFCW-represented industry.

Right now there are 18 million unrepresented workers in UFCW jurisdictions—and one million of them are working at Wal-Mart. Nearly three-quarters of Wal-Mart's employees are women.

With more workers expressing positive views about unions today than at any time in the past 30 years, UFCW activists have an unprecedented opportunity to build and strengthen the UFCW.

*The information in this report is based on a study conducted for the UFCW by the Institute for Women's Policy Research in 2000 and 2001, using data from Current Population Survey, prepared by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau. For a full copy, please contact the Working Women's Department at International Headquarters.*

**January 2002**