

Columbus, Ohio Kroger workers: Now is the time to organize an independent fight against both management and the UFCW!

Kroger Workers' Rank-and-File Committee
1 August 2022

The following statement was ratified by the Kroger Workers' Rank-and-File Committee. To contact the committee and for information on how to join, fill out the form at the bottom of this article.

Dear brothers and sisters of UFCW Local 1059, Kroger workers in the Columbus, Ohio region:

The Kroger Workers' Rank-and-File Committee stands behind your courageous rejection, by 71 percent, of the UFCW-Kroger sellout contract and supports your continued struggle for the best contract possible. But the question you now face is: What next?

The UFCW can only be expected to keep you in the dark about bargaining after you voted down the contract. Expect little to no information from your reps or stewards, and they will not give you any idea when they will present the next proposal, whether in the next two weeks or four. While you have not seen the new proposal yet, do not assume it's going to be good enough just because you've voted down the first deal. The fact that they responded to the vote by immediately extending the old contract, without consulting even one Kroger worker, shows what they have in store is another betrayal.

For this reason, the Kroger Workers' Rank-and-File Committee encourages workers at Columbus stores to start organizing with your coworkers to fight back against both management and the UFCW's betrayal NOW. Join our rank-and-file committee and form one in your own store.

Local 1059 may be silent now, but they are likely to use the same tactics they used in Indianapolis and in countless other instances. Stay strong! You must decide yourselves what your own strategy must be. To begin, we suggest:

Demand an end to contract extensions and that the UFCW begin preparations for a strike immediately. Demand that UFCW end the closed-door negotiations with Kroger and replace the mediator with oversight by the rank-and-file workers themselves through livestreaming all negotiations.

- **Demand full pay and benefits from the strike fund you are entitled to in the event of a strike.** You already have been paying dues into your own strike fund. Do not allow the UFCW to scare you with financial threats. The union is likely to target those who didn't vote "correctly" the last time. They may mislead them on the ratification bonus. Younger workers may think they're only here temporarily, but talk to them to help them understand that this is their struggle too; whether they return later or move into another job, the contract they fight for now can make a difference for the conditions for the whole working class in the years to come.

- **Organize your coworkers to support one another to resist pressure from management and the union and to fight for a contract that will benefit us all.** In the last vote, you organized to fight for the "no" vote in spite of the UFCW's best attempts to make it difficult, when you formed your own carpools. Make plans to do so again and find one or two people in your store willing to be carpool captains who can start a list of willing drivers and people who will need rides. Use social media to make connections with people from other stores to plan and share information.

- **Make plans to organize rank-and-file workers to**

oversee the next round of voting. Workers may elect a vote captain or two from the shop floor of each store who are willing to lead workers to watch the counting and report any suspicious procedures. Make plans to meet up with vote captains from the other stores and organize private means of communication that are not allowed to be infiltrated by UFCW officials.

Time and time again we have seen the union take the side of the company after we tell them to take a hike with a “no” vote. While you are waiting for the next company-friendly offer that the UFCW is going to try to push through, prepare for these actions NOW so that you have your own strategy to counter theirs. Reach out to us and let us know what you are doing. We offer our support to you, from Indiana to Georgia to Arizona and Tennessee. Our members represent several different stores within the Kroger umbrella and we work in different departments, and our aim is to unite the hundreds of thousands of Kroger workers who are all fighting against the same corporation.

This statement is not only written in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Columbus, but with Kroger workers facing struggles in the near future across the US: Fort Wayne, Indiana; Toledo, Ohio and Nevada, and more.

We stand behind you and will offer you organizational and political support for your struggle for better wages and working conditions and a future for yourselves and the generations to come.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact