

UFCW ignores strike deadline for 45,000 California grocery workers: Workers must organize to override stalling tactics and launch a strike!

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Grocery workers, take up the fight for rank-and-file control! Sign up below to learn how to build a rank-and-file committee at your workplace.

Following an overwhelming strike authorization vote by 45,000 Southern California grocery workers, the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) remains locked in negotiations with Ralphs, Vons, Albertsons, and Pavilions. Talks have stretched over the weekend beyond the originally scheduled June 25–27 sessions.

For weeks, the UFCW has been holding “practice” pickets and noisily declaring that it is preparing to strike. Indeed, it said that last week’s round of talks were supposed to be the last such discussions. But as of this writing, neither a strike nor an agreement has been announced—and no details of talks have been shared with the rank and file.

This is a flagrant violation of the democratic will of grocery workers. The UFCW bureaucracy is collaborating with management, determined to defuse anger and suppress any independent initiative from below. Whatever contract emerges from these conditions can only be a miserable sellout.

Workers cannot accept this. They must take control of the struggle themselves by forming a Grocery Workers Rank-and-File Committee to impose the decision which workers have already made and carry out a strike.

Time is of the essence. This delay only benefits management. While workers are being left confused and in the dark, management is using the time to recruit scabs to improve their position if a strike does occur.

Conscious sabotage

Even the union’s own press materials admit what’s at stake. UFCW Locals 324 and 770 stated, “Tens of thousands of

additional union grocery workers across the country who are employed by Kroger and Albertsons ... also voted to authorize a strike last week, bringing over 100,000 grocery workers to the brink of a strike at the same time. Should the workers call a strike, it could create the largest grocery strike in modern history.”

But the bureaucracy is stalling precisely *because* grocery workers are in a powerful position, not in spite of it. They do not want to do anything that threatens their cozy ties with management. One of the most appalling examples of this was during the start of the pandemic, when the UFCW not only refused to close the meatpacking plants but worked out an “attendance bonus” at one Tyson plant, with managers taking bets on how many workers would get sick. Six workers are confirmed to have died at the facility.

All of the 100,000 workers on the brink of striking are members of the UFCW. But instead of laying the groundwork for a powerful nationwide strike, the bureaucrats are deliberately isolating each section from the others. These include:

- **Colorado (Local 7):** Limited “stand-up” strikes leave key demands unanswered.
- **Albuquerque, New Mexico (Local 1564):** Details of a tentative agreement remain secret.
- **Indianapolis, Indiana (Local 700):** 14,000 Kroger workers rejected a deal and authorized a strike.
- **Washington state (Local 3000):** Quiet negotiations at Sea Wolf Bakers continue.
- **Pennsylvania/West Virginia (Local 1776):** 5,000 workers ratified a weak contract with minimal wage increases.
- **Minnesota (Local 1189):** Bargaining drags on with no signs of action.
- **Northern California (Local 5):** Strike threats boxed into a ULP framework.
- **Mid-Atlantic (Local 367):** Strike authorized.
- **JBS Meatpacking:** UFCW hails a “historic” deal that

formalizes labor-management partnership.

•**Puget Sound, Washington (Local 3000):** Agreement was ratified.

•**Healthcare Sector (various locals):** The UFCW touts vague “quality-of-life” wins, while nurses burn out and flee the profession.

For years, grocery workers have been fighting betrayals by the bureaucracy. In 2022, the Indianapolis UFCW local pushed through with sub-inflation wages, and when workers protested, the local responded by deleting its entire Facebook page to shut them up.

Also that year, the UFCW shut down a powerful King Soopers strike in Colorado at precisely the point when it began to win major support. Earlier this year, it shut down another strike at King Soopers without a contract, and have kept those workers out even after the start of the Colorado Safeway strike and after the expiration of a 100-day “labor peace.”

But already there are signs that the union’s grip is beginning to weaken in the face of rank-and-file opposition. In Colorado, a strike by Safeway workers, which the UFCW initially limited to only a few locations, expanded over the weekend to include 38 more stores.

The demands everywhere for grocery workers are the same: major pay increases to allow them to live decent lives, an end to understaffing and protection of healthcare benefits. Many rely on public assistance or work multiple jobs to survive. They report illegal surveillance, intimidation and retaliation when organizing. The company’s previous “best” offer—a \$3 wage increase stretched over three years—is not enough to keep up with the region’s skyrocketing cost of living.

A nationwide movement developing

Grocery workers are not fighting alone. A mass movement is emerging in America against the Trump administration’s mass deportations, shredding of democratic and constitutional rights, and launching of new imperialist wars. On June 14, tens of millions protested across the country in opposition to fascistic attacks on immigrants and democratic rights—a sign of growing resistance and a readiness to confront not only the far right but the capitalist system as a whole.

This is connecting with a growing fight in the working class against impossible conditions. USPS employees are being pushed to their physical limits—forced to work through record-breaking heat with no relief, no air conditioning, and punishing schedules. The recent deaths of Dan Workman in Colorado and Jacob Taylor in Dallas highlight a disturbing pattern: As temperatures climb, more workers are collapsing, experiencing heat stroke, and dying while on the job.

Similarly, nurses face catastrophic staffing shortages and

burnout created by for-profit health conglomerates slashing costs at the expense of patient and worker safety. In cities all over America, including in Los Angeles, city and school district budgets are being slashed to the bone in what are increasingly being described as “doomsday cuts.”

The UFCW’s shabby maneuvering, calling “practice pickets” to get out in front of workers only to refuse to call the real thing, is drawn word for word from the playbook of the Teamsters in 2023, when they used an identical “strike ready” campaign to present a contract at UPS as the product of a “credible strike threat.” But within weeks of the passage of a supposedly “historic” agreement, the company began tens of thousands of layoffs, which the Teamsters no doubt knew about but deliberately concealed.

Forward to the Grocery Workers Rank-and-File Committee!

What could and should be a national movement of over 100,000 grocery workers can only be carried out from below. This must be organized independently because their fight is not just against management but their toadies in the UFCW.

Workers must take matters into their own hands. That means forming independent rank-and-file committees in every workplace—committees democratically controlled by workers themselves, not the bureaucracy. These committees must demand full transparency, seize control of the negotiation process and reject any backroom deal that sells out the rank and file.

Every effort must now be directed toward organizing a general strike—uniting grocery workers, postal workers, nurses, teachers, logistics workers, and every other section of the working class. The forces exist as well as the determination to fight. What’s needed is political clarity, organization and a fighting leadership.

No improvement will take place without a frontal assault on the ill-gotten wealth of the corporate oligarchy, democratic workers’ control of production and the reorganization of society to meet human need, not private profit. There is no shortage of money—only a system designed to keep it in the hands of a parasitic elite.



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