

# UFCW announces deal to block strike by 45,000 California grocery workers

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*Build a movement against this sellout! Fill out the form below to learn more about building a rank-and-file committee.*

On Wednesday, the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) announced a tentative agreement (TA) covering 45,000 Southern California grocery workers at Albertsons, Ralphs, Vons and Pavilions.

The announcement is in defiance of the members' vote to strike by a 90 percent margin. For weeks, the UFCW loudly pretended that it was prepared to call a strike, even holding "practice pickets" outside of select stores. Last week, it claimed that Friday was the last day of bargaining, claiming they were on the brink of a strike—only to keep workers on the job. This unexplained delay helped management to make further preparations to break a strike by hiring scab labor.

As is frequently the case with the union bureaucracy, the TA was announced with zero details and a few empty phrases. According to the union, the agreement supposedly includes "higher wages, more money for pension contributions, additional health and welfare improvements, staffing and more," without explaining what these supposedly are. In the announcement, union officials also patted themselves on the back, citing an "intense 40-plus hour bargaining session."

Workers cannot accept this betrayal! They must organize themselves in rank-and-file committees at groceries across the region to overturn this decision, reject the contract and impose their will to strike. They must appeal for unity with their brothers and sisters across the country and break through the isolation the pro-management UFCW officials are trying to impose.

Within minutes of the announcement, UFCW Local 324's Facebook page was flooded with angry comments.

Rebecca, one commenter, wrote, "It would be crazy

to accept anything less than wage increase of \$3.00 an hour every year for the next three years."

Michael added, "Why do we agree with it if we don't know the contract? I hope we get to see it before we agree to it."

If the contract included major gains, they union would be shouting them from the rooftops. But their evasion on the details show this can only be a miserable sellout. "Higher wages" in this context likely means a pay increase only slightly higher than the \$3 an hour, stretched out over three years, which the companies had originally proposed. Wages for grocery workers range from \$16.25 to \$26.75 per hour in one of the most expensive regions in the country.

The union is trying to pass the contract under cover of darkness as quickly as possible, denying workers time to adequately study and discuss the agreement. Workers will be granted a mere two Zoom meetings to review the agreement—one on Monday, July 7, at 6 p.m. and another the following morning at 9 a.m. The vote will begin the following day, on Wednesday, July 9, and run until Friday, July 11.

The agreement is an act of deliberate sabotage of a potential nationwide strike wave of grocery workers. Around 100,000 UFCW members have contracts expiring this summer, from California and Washington state to Colorado and Indiana.

But the UFCW in every case is doing as much as possible to disrupt workers' unity and block or limit strikes. In Colorado, the UFCW has called out only a portion of Albertsons workers (although they were recently compelled to call out dozens more stores). The same local is keeping workers at the King Soopers chain on the job, without a contract, past the expiration of a 100-day "labor peace" agreement which the union had used to shut down a strike earlier this year.

This opposition must be organized. The bureaucracy has made its position clear: it stands with the corporations, not the workers. The struggle must be taken out of their hands.

Rank-and-file committees must be formed in every store and distribution center. These committees—democratically controlled by workers themselves—must demand:

- **Full disclosure of the tentative agreement** immediately, with printed copies made available to all workers and sufficient time for discussion and debate.

- **At least two weeks after the distribution of the full contract** to ensure workers have time to carefully discuss and debate it.

- **Rank-and-file control over the voting process** to prevent any attempt at manipulation or voter fraud.

- **An immediate strike deadline**, set and enforced by the rank and file, not union officials, and coordinated with other workers around the country. Once workers vote down this contract, a strike must take place immediately.

The starting point for negotiations must not be based on what the corporations are willing to offer but on what workers actually need to live.

- **A starting wage of no less than \$30 per hour** to account for skyrocketing living costs in California. This is the bare minimum needed to escape poverty and insecurity.

- **Fully funded health care and pensions** for all workers—no tiers, no cuts, and no out-of-pocket traps.

- **A guarantee of full-time employment** for all who want it. End to precarious, part-time scheduling and poverty hours.

- **No surveillance, no harassment and full protection from Trump's ICE raids** and state repression. Many grocery workers are immigrants, and their workplaces—and homes—must be protected from state violence.

The bureaucrats want workers to think there is nothing they can do to stop this, but that is a lie. The conditions are emerging for a powerful mass movement in America, pitting the working class against the corporate oligarchy, Trump and his Democratic Party enablers.

On Tuesday in Philadelphia, 9,000 city workers launched a strike. The city is one of many across the country with massive budget deficits, including Los

Angeles, where the city council has declared a fiscal emergency over a \$1 billion funding hole, which they are proposing to begin filling through at least 600 layoffs.

In LA and every city, local Democrats claim nothing can be done to stop these cuts in some of the wealthiest cities in the world, home to major corporate headquarters and billionaires. At the same time, Congress is on the verge of passing over \$3 trillion in tax cuts for the wealthy, and the military budget has swollen to its largest level ever. The social looting operation is connected with Trump's deployment of troops to Los Angeles and his plans for dictatorship.

But the mass demonstrations against Trump and the growing push for strikes shows isolated the corporate elite really are. The working class immense power, but only if it is organized and acts independently.

The Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site* stand ready to assist workers in this fight. We urge you to contact us to begin the process of building a rank-and-file committee at your workplace.



To contact the WSWs and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**