



5th draft

Local 540 News

www.ufcw540.org
"Reaching for the Stars"



United Food and Commercial Workers Local 540
From President Johnny Rodriguez

May, 2006

Organize in 2006!

2005 was a rough year for many unions, but Local 540 came through it with flying colors! Your union representatives faced terrific challenges at bargaining tables throughout the union, but they brought back real gains to the members. I am really proud of these dedicated union leaders, and I am especially proud of the way Local 540 members backed them up to get the maximum benefit.

In 2006, we need to turn our attention to organizing. Like negotiating, union organizing is not just a job for leadership. It takes every member's full participation to sign up new members and keep our union strong.

UFCW 540 members in a number of workplaces can be proud that we have high percentages of union members and very few non-members. Let's make it our goal to bring every unit up to at least 85% membership in 2006!

Effective last December 1st, UFCW International asked for a \$1.00 per month dues increase across the board for all the members with the companies we have under contract, but I have not implemented yet in the entire Local. Furthermore, I intend to continue this "freeze" in the future for all mandated International dues increases, "indefinitely" for all of the members in companies we represent that have an 85% membership rate. We will give the same consideration to the rest of our membership with the companies we represent, if they also achieve the 85% overall membership rate.

Every member makes us a stronger army of labor, and every non-member in our bargaining units drags all of us down. Every

member should be on the lookout for the non-members in our ranks.

The easiest way to find out if the man or woman working beside you is a member is: JUSTASK!

If they aren't members, get the

paperwork from your union rep and sign them up!

Another important task for all of us is to watch out for other workplaces that ought to be getting the benefit of belonging to the United

Food and Commercial Workers. Almost everybody has a friend, neighbor, or relative who works in a non-union shop. Almost all of us can find out about those shops and relay the information to our

local union organizers.

The best way to start an organizing drive is to contact our professional organizers. Do not try to start an organizing drive by yourself, even if the workers in the target shop are asking you to. There are a number of legal issues involved that most people would never think of, but they aren't much trouble for your Local 540 professionals.

Another thing to keep in mind is this: there are good reasons for conducting union drives in secret! Even if your friend or relative is eager to get started on his or her own, we advise against it. Our organizing staff knows how to use the federal protections for union organizing drives, but most people do not.

Start out by gathering information about the target workplace. Organizers want to know things like this:

- How many people work there?
- How many are women, African Americans, or Latinos?
- What are the shift times?
- What wages and benefits do they have?
- What issues do the workers think are important?
- Would the person you know be willing to speak to others?

A good rule to follow is this: if you like the way your union brings you better wages, benefits, and dignity in the workplace, tell everybody about it. If you can think of ways to improve your local union, tell me!

In order to make this local union just as good as it can possibly be, I ordered a questionnaire to be printed in this newspaper. Please take the time to fill it out and get it back to the union hall.

If there are improvements to be made, I need to know about it. Your input is invaluable!

--President Johnny Rodriguez



Unions Were There for Martin Luther King Jr

Union members and supporters marched together in the Jobs with Justice contingent of the Dallas Martin Luther King Jr March and Parade on January 14. Marchers gathered at Dallas City Hall at 10 AM for the 3 mile march.



Individual union members and people who understand the central role of organized unions made up the contingent. Dr. King was working on a union strike in Memphis, Tennessee, when he was assassinated.

This year's march marked a continuous Jobs with Justice presence since 1990. Activists make a point of outreaching to civil rights, community, and church groups that might be able to strengthen our fight for fairness in every workplace.

Throughout all the critical civil rights events of the year, UFCW 540 carries on the fight!



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a drum major for peace and a great friend of labor

How Are We Doing?
Please Take the Survey Inside!

UFCW 540 Hot Topics

Bunge Oils Relocating -- Union Fighting for Recognition

Bunge Oils is in the process of relocating its 400 E. Exchange facility on the North side of Ft. Worth to 6700 Snowden Rd, where the company built a new facility.

The company has chosen to ignore the existing Collective Bargaining Agreement and has offered employment to only twelve bargaining unit employees to fill about thirty positions. The Company is hiring eighteen people from outside.

The Union has filed charges with the NLRB on the Company's actions. The union is also in the process of effects bargaining for the remaining thirty-five bargaining unit employees.

The Union has taken a hard stand during effects bargaining, but the union will continue to represent these members' best interests in mind, because at Local 540, Service and Organizing are priorities number one...

This is a continuing process and we will keep you updated as it progresses.

By Prudencio "Junior" Aguilar, Union Representative Membership Drive is on at Pilgrim's Pride

UFCW Local 540 has been aggressively trying to improve its membership along with providing excellent service to our members at the Pilgrim's Pride Plant in Lufkin, Texas.

The Pilgrim's Pride plant is approximately 97% Hispanic and, because of that, the Union has been team-servicing the plant with English and Spanish speaking Union representatives to enable us to serve all members.

The Union has also been offering free income tax service to members. Since the program began new members have signed, but the Union still has work to do in gaining membership so the Union put together a productive home calling program, which will allow representatives to reach more non-union members in an attempt to get them to become members.

The Union has also taken advantage of the New Hire Orientation... In that process the Union has the opportunity to explain how high membership is essential in the area of bargaining and obtaining good benefits through the collective bargaining process, because there is strength in numbers.

Local 540 has set a goal and we believe we have the strategy and plan to attain that goal. It takes a powerful group of comrades collaborating and working hard to ensure success and dedication to achieve those goals.

—Edrick Mosely, Union Representative

UFCW Helps Wal-Mart Workers

For Halloween, Dallas activists joined a nationwide effort to raise money for health care insurance for Wal-Mart employees. They sold candy in front of two Wal-Mart retail facilities. They also distributed literature explaining that this tight-fisted employer has exploited their own workers while bringing down the wages and benefits of everyone else concerned.



Information is posted at <http://www.wakeupwalmart.com>. The web site denounces Wal-Mart's recent announcement of a watered-down employee health care plan, their support for Congressman Tom DeLay, and the cost of welfare programs for Wal-Mart's employees.

Local coverage is at <http://www.labordallas.org/cand.htm>

Organizing Is "Job One"

In one of the Dallas Television station commercials, the voice in the ad says "Quality is Job One."

With Local 540, organizing is job one - and two and three! Much time, energy and money has been directed at organizing and reorganizing this Local Union.

In recent years, Local 540 has grown from 2,300 members to nearly 8,000, and is still growing. This success has been achieved at a time when many of the experts said it could not be done! They justified their opinions on the basis that many International Unions and Local Unions had lost hundreds

of thousands of members during the hostile, anti-union years. The National Labor Relations Act, which was intended to encourage and promote organization and collective bargaining, was ignored. With dedicated anti-union busters put in key positions by anti-union sources, the Law became a roadblock to lawful, traditional methods of organizing.

At one- point, many Unions stated publicly that "now is not the time for organizing."

The UFCW does not agree with this philosophy. In fact, we can't! Organizing is our lifeblood. We must adopt the opposite position. Now is the time for organizing! There is never a bad time. If the National Labor Relations Board has become our roadblock, then forget the board."

One of the key elements in any organizing drive is forcing employers to be neutral and allow workers to exercise their right to organize without intimidation, fear or threats. Therefore, we must develop new strategies, new techniques - we must continue to research companies for weak spots. We must explore possible legal ac-

UFCW 540 Will Fight for Standards!

A company-issued time study was conducted at the Frito Lay Plant in Irving, Texas. The company had concerns in the area of warehouse production and performed a time study in 2005.

As a result, Local 540 has made arrangements to have a union industrial engineer from UFCW International Headquarters do its own conclusive time study on May 15, 16, & 17, 2006, to compare and verify the company's findings. The Union continues to work on this issue to ensure a fair standard for all warehouse employees at Frito Lay.

—John "Chip" Serrano, Union Representative

From the UFCW International Web Page:

We Deserve Health Care

UFCW members know the pitfalls of our current health care system, whether it's soaring costs or access to quality care. Members have been forced to organize community support, mobilize their workplaces, and walk picket lines in order to fight back against employer demands to slash or reduce health care for workers and their families.

The health care crisis is a national crisis and requires a national solution. It can't be solved at the bargaining table or on the picket line. The Citizens' Health Care Working Group (CHCWG) provides a direct connection for the American people to offer their concerns and views on health care to lawmakers.

- ✓ Let Congress know your opinions on and priorities for our health care system and help find a solution that works for everybody.
- ✓ Quality health care should be affordable and accessible for all people regardless of how much money they make, or where they live.
- ✓ We can afford a streamlined, cost-effective system that guarantees quality health care to everyone—instead of paying too much for a system that denies affordable care to those in needs.
- ✓ Meaningful health care reform must address cost, quality, and access. Health care must be patient driven, not consumer paid.
- ✓ Health care must be a right, not a privilege!
- ✓ The health care system needs to be fixed—for our generation and for our future generations. Working families need to have a voice in the solution!
- ✓ Participate in community meetings on the health care crisis in your area

WakeUpWalMart Demands Health Insurance

UFCW members and others are working to get health care benefits for Wal-Mart employees. WakeUpWalMart called a national day of action on April 26th with participation in at least 35 cities, including Pasadena and Plano, Texas. Afterwards, supporters took to the streets to sign up thousands of Americans to join the fight for health care by signing the "Cure the Wal-Mart Health Care Crisis" pledge.

The rallies were the first nationally coordinated actions involving the new Change to Win federation, which represents over six million workers.

Executive Board

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
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| Felipe Mendez | Secy/Treasurer |
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Ray Vera, Mona Lisa Rodriguez, and Helen Chesser

Executive Council:

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| Chip Serrano | Local 540 Staff |
| Junior Aguilar | Local 540 Staff |
| Miguel Reyes | Local 540 Staff |
| Hugo Caballero | Local 540 Staff |
| Sharon Mullens | Campbell Soup |
| Hilda Guillen | Excel- Friona |
| Eddie Granados | Kroger - Dallas |
| Edrick Mosely | Frito Lay |

Contact Us!

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PLEASE HELP US HELP YOU!!!

Your Local Union President, Johnny Rodriguez, is interested in your opinion and what you think of your Union Representation. The goal is to ensure that the Local Union is providing quality and effective service to all the members of Local 540.

The questionnaire below is designed to give you the opportunity to express your thoughts and opinions about your Union Representation in the workplace. Just fill out the questions any way you like, then tear out the sheet and send it, postage free, to your union office.

Please participate in letting us know if you are pleased with your Union Representation. If not, why not?

Suggestions & Comments Are Greatly Appreciated

Directions: Please circle the best and most accurate answer:

- **Age Group:** (Below 25) (25-45) (Over 45)
- **How Many Years In The Union:** (Less than 5) (5 -10) (10 or More)

1. Do you know who your Union Representative is? YES NO

2. Do you know your Union Steward(s)? YES NO

3. Do you attend monthly Union meetings? If not, what can we do to get you to attend, i.e., location, time, date? Explain briefly:

4. Has a grievance ever been filed on your behalf? If so, were you satisfied with the way it was handled from start to finish?

Excellent Good Fair Needs Improvement

5. Problems & questions are handled within a reasonable time frame?

Excellent Good Fair Needs Improvement

6. Phone calls returned within a reasonable time frame?

Excellent Good Fair Needs Improvement

7. Union Representatives visibility in your plant/store?

Excellent Good Fair Needs Improvement

8. Union Representatives are well informed and professional?

Excellent Good Fair Needs Improvement

9. Union Stewards are well trained, fair and available to you?

Excellent Good Fair Needs Improvement

10. Your Union Representative treats you with respect?

Excellent Good Fair Needs Improvement

11. The Union affects my working conditions positively?

Excellent Good Fair Needs Improvement

12. I have confidence in being a Union Member?

Excellent Good Fair Needs Improvement

13. Do you feel your membership is a worthwhile investment? YES NO

14. Are you proud of your Union? YES NO

COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS _____

Employed By _____ Name _____
(Company) (Optional)

Local 540 Defends Pension Plans !

The Union has a difference of opinion on how the pensions should be calculated with the Quaker Oats Company located in Dallas and the Campbell Soup Company located in Paris, Texas.

The Local Union has taken the necessary steps to resolve this very important issue and believes the way the companies have calculated could have major impacts on future accrual. We will keep you updated when we receive any additional information.

—John "Chip" Serrano,
Union Representative

America's Retirees Are Fighting Back

George W. Bush called for companies to fund their pension plans fully so as to keep their retirement promise to workers, but the *Wall Street Journal* reports that pending legislation in Congress that would bolster underfunded pension plans would also create new ways for employers to cut benefits.

Several companies, including IBM, moved to freeze or end pension programs in favor of 401(k) programs and other savings vehicles in which workers bear all the risks. Airlines and auto parts makers

are trying to get judges to tear up their union contracts and destroy pension guarantees.

Retirees are fighting back all over America. In Texas, a new statewide chapter of the Alliance for Retired Americans has called for a founding convention at 10 AM on May 20 at 1106 LaVaca in Austin.

Retirees will fight for their own rights pension and health care rights. They expect another fight to save Social Security after the November elections.

Bargaining Report Brings Good news

We are happy to announce Local 540 has completed negotiations with Swift & Company located in Cactus, Texas. Employees are enjoying a new contract that include industry setting benefits. The contract increased wages across the board for all maintenance and production workers. It also increased health care benefits and produced the only 100% eye care program for Swift employees at no additional cost. Employees will also enjoy an extra

week of vacation and the ability to take one-day vacations when requested. In addition, there were several employees who received job upgrades on top of the across the board increases.

The negotiation committee of along with President, Johnny Rodriguez and staff did an outstanding job with this contract. The Swift agreement has set new standards in collective bargaining.

—Executive Vice President, Casey Williams

UFCW Is On A New Road

The UFCW has adopted an audacious new road to reconstruct our union and thus better satisfy the necessities of our affiliates. It will allow us to protect and to improve union contracts, as well as to revitalize the capacity for change and influences of workers during collective bargaining. We have initiated a process to construct a labor movement adapted to the necessities of the 21st century that

allows us to look for effective solutions to problems that arise from a global economy that transforms itself drastically day by day.

In order to obtain this, we have disaffiliated from the AFL-CIO and we associated with strong unions that think the same way. The others unions of this alliance are the Teamsters, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), UNITE-HERE, the Labor-

ers, the Carpenters, and the Farm Workers (UFW). Our task is to construct a labor movement for a new generation of workers.

We must change now to confront the obstacles that drastically bring an economy different from the one from 10 years ago.

[Shortened from an original article by International President Joe Hansen. The complete article is on www.ufcw.org/]

UFCW Hosts Latin Leaders

On February 8, the International Food and Commercial Workers carried out a Round Table for Latino Leaders. The Round Table, the first carried out of a series that focuses on Latin subjects, united Latin leaders and the labor movement of the entire country to discuss ways to revive efforts for a national mobilization for Latin workers.

Joe Hansen, International President of the UFCW, welcomed the participants who included Milton Rosado, President of the Labor Committee for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) and the Executive Vice-president of the AFL-CIO, Linda Chavez Thompson, saying that "the Labor Movement does not have a future without the Latin workers. And we cannot organize Latin workers effectively until we open the door to Latin leaders in the movement."

"In many UFCW industries, Latino workers are most of the work force. Our possibilities of winning good wages and benefits in main industries of the UFCW — packing, chicken plants and food processors — depend on our capacity to connect with the Latin workers. We must make sure that the UFCW, and the Labor Movement as a whole, is the route to fulfill the dreams of Latin workers and carry out their hopes."



UNIONS FIND ALLIES -- such as Dallas Bishop Grahammann, posing here with two union sisters

Weintraub Remembered

Herman Weintraub, an outstanding member and longtime friend of Local 540, died on February 18, 2006. He began working as a meatcutter with Safeway in 1974 and remained a union member with Local 540 for 28 years. Although Herman retired from the meat cutting industry, his heart and his union spirit never retired. He often brought retirees into the union office to help them prepare pension paperwork.

Weintraub has left a lasting impression on the staff and officers of Local 540, and we will miss him deeply. Our Union has lost a true soldier.

Local 540 Hot Topics

UFCW Gives Position On Immigration

The United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) believes that an overhaul of our nation's immigration laws is a national priority. America deserves an immigration system that inspires confidence from our citizens, provides for legal immigration, and ensures that immigration policy protects the life, liberty, and employment prospects of everyone within our borders.

Immigration reform must include a path to legalization and protections for the current 12 million immigrants working in this country. Any attempt to deport them would be prohibitively expensive, would result in millions of investigations of citizens and non-citizens, and would inevitably fail. Real reform must provide a path to permanent residency for the undocumented living in this country who are paying taxes, obeying the law, and contributing to our communities. Without a legalization program, the economic incentive to hire and exploit the undocumented will remain, to the detriment of all U.S. workers who labor in the same industries. Reform must also ensure that future flow workers are also allowed the same path to legalization.

with little to no benefits. These programs have a permanent and substantial detrimental effect on these jobs, the workers, and the communities they serve. Workers who come to the U.S. on these guest worker programs should not be considered "guests" but future citizens. The proposal to create a new H-2C guest worker category, which would quadruple the number of foreign workers who would be admitted to the U.S. annually, would have a demonstrable impact on our economy and would force those workers into indentured servitude.

In addition, reform must include much needed civil protection for workers as well. It must provide protections from unscrupulous employers who recruit un-

documented immigrants for economic exploitation. Too many employers seek to avoid, evade, and ultimately negate U.S. labor and employment laws through the recruitment of undocumented workers. The U.S. Supreme Court created a powerful incentive for exploitation with its decision Hoffman Plastic Compounds v. National Labor Relations Board, in which the Court determined that an undocumented worker is not entitled to back pay. This decision has now been used to justify denying undocumented workers their right to equal protection and their right to be repealed.

The broken immigration system in this country has effectively reduced working standards for all workers within the U.S. The only

meaningful way to ensure that all workers are protected is to provide real and enforceable remedies for labor and employment law for all workers regardless of immigration status.

UFCW also strongly opposes the House Sensenbrenner/King bill, H.R. 4437. This bill will criminalize millions of hard-working, tax-paying, undocumented immigrants and those Americans who attempt to help them. This will only drive people further underground. It also encourages bad employers to continue to break the law by misclassifying employees as independent contractors, or paying cash and paying no attention to working conditions and benefits. This will create chaos among legitimate employers, driv-

ing overall industry standards down.

UFCW strongly supports AGJobs (S. 359, H.R. 884). This is comprehensive bipartisan legislation negotiated by the United Farm Workers and farmworker advocates and the nation's agricultural industry, as an immigration reform solution for the agricultural industry.

Immigration reform including a path to legalization and not just enforcement and border patrol or new guest worker programs is crucially needed in this country. The equal protection of all workers, regardless of immigration status, will improve wages, benefits and working conditions for millions of workers. It is time to re-write immigration law in this country in order to equalize the playing field. We must not create a workforce with an endless non-immigrant status that will be denied full protection under the law and barred from being full participants in our workplaces and communities.

UFCW urges Congress to fix the immigration system in this country now. Congress must reject any language that creates a massive expansion of guest worker programs and does not provide a

