

## Farbest Foods Plant Workers Say "Yes" to a Union Voice with UFCW Local 227

Last week, workers at the Farbest Foods plant in Vincennes, Indiana, came together for a union voice at work and voted to join UFCW Local 227.

Farbest Foods opened last December as a turkey kill and processing facility. The plant is a packer for all major labels, including Butterball.

By forming their union so soon after the plant opened, the workers will be able to shape the culture of Farbest Foods as the plant expands from its current size of 300 workers to an expected 700 workers by next year.

"Having a union at Farbest Foods is going to make a big difference for all of us. We won because we stood together," said Justin Gardner, a worker in the Refrigeration Department. "There is so much at stake and we look forward to sitting down with management and negotiating a first contract that moves everyone forward." **OP**

## New Jersey Truck Stop Workers Vote to Join the RWDSU

Workers at the Pilot Flying J Travel Center in Bloomsbury, New Jersey, voted overwhelmingly last week to join the RWDSU/UFCW Local 108. Pilot Flying J is the largest travel center chain in the country with over 550 locations under the Pilot and Flying J brands. The chain is owned by the family of Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam and is operated by his brother, Jimmy Haslam.

The gas station attendants, cashiers, stockers, maintenance workers, and coffee hosts at Pilot Flying J have been working to organize for months. RWDSU Local 108 has a membership of 5,000 throughout New Jersey and represents a wide range of workers in clothing stores, jewelry stores, automotive service, parts and accessory stores, supermarkets, warehouses, and manufacturing facilities throughout the state.

Bill Ludwig, an employee who helped lead the effort to join the union said, "Companies will stop at nothing to fight unions



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and employees from organizing. They claim they are trying to educate you about unions, all while bashing them. I was confident that we would win because people were tired of not being treated with respect. We were being taken for granted while the company made millions." **OP**

## UFCW Members Lobby State Legislators in Kentucky and Missouri

UFCW members in Kentucky and Missouri lobbied their state legislators last week. In Kentucky members, UFCW Locals 75 and 227 traveled to Frankfort where they spoke with legislators about raising the state's minimum wage and preventing Kentucky from becoming a right to work for less state.

In Missouri, UFCW Locals 2, 88, and 655 lobbied legislators in Jefferson City about expanding Medicaid and how harmful a right to work for less law would be to Missouri's working families. UFCW members who participated in lobbying felt like they were making a difference.

"Lobby day is important because if we don't come to Frankfort and tell our lawmakers exactly how we feel about certain subjects, they may never know," said Amy Beasley, member of UFCW Local 227.



*UFCW members in Kentucky (above) and Missouri (below) held state lobby days to talk to their legislators about issues important to working people.*



“I think we did a great job. We were well prepared to talk about the issues.”

Jimmy Lappe, member of UFCW Local 655, was most pleased about the strength UFCW members showed in the Capitol. “It’s incredibly important to come here and show legislators that workers support one another. We are a force who stands together and deserves to be heard.” **OP**

## Wellness Connection of Maine Settles NLRB Charges With UFCW

For the first time, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has recognized that federal labor law protects workers in the medical marijuana industry. The government authorized a complaint absent settlement of the charges that Wellness Connection of Maine, a medical marijuana company, repeatedly retaliated against and interfered with workers who were exercising their right to form a union. The company subsequently settled charges alleging nearly a dozen instances where Wellness Connection violated the National Labor Relations Act and the rights of its employees.



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The alleged violations began last February, after workers at an Auburn cultivation site organized a walk-out in protest of the company’s unlawful practice of applying pesticides. The federal government was prepared to issue a complaint stating that the company unlawfully disciplined workers who stood together, and interfered with their right to join the UFCW by interrogating them, creating the impression of surveillance, and soliciting them to oppose the union. The NLRB also found merit to the charges that the company maintained several overly broad confidentiality policies that unlawfully prevented employees from discussing their wages and working conditions.

“Only by sticking together, we were able to find the strength to speak out about the gross violations that we saw at work,” said Ian Brodie, a former Wellness employee who is included in the charges. “By fighting for our union, we are protecting our customers and shaping the medical marijuana industry into a safe and well regulated industry that provides good jobs and needed medicine for our community. I am proud of what we workers have done to bring justice to Wellness Connection.”

Previously, Wellness Connection workers reported other regulatory and health and safety violations to the Department of Health and Human Services, resulting in \$18,000 in penalties for more than 20 violations of state law. OSHA also fined Wellness Connection \$14,000 for numerous health and safety violations. Workers were emboldened to blow the whistle on their employer’s inappropriate practices after joining together in an effort to organize a union.

Thousands of medical cannabis workers in six states and the District of Columbia are UFCW members. They work predominantly in dispensaries, coffee shops, bakeries, patient identification





centers, hydroponics stores, and growing and training facilities. UFCW members have been key leaders in coalitions and advocacy groups that work for real change at all levels of policy and have been instrumental in working to advocate for the good jobs provided by the medical cannabis industry. **OP**

## UFCW Releases Statement on Arizona Discrimination Bill

UFCW International President Joe Hansen released a statement last week opposing Arizona Senate Bill 1062. On February 26th, Arizona Governor Jan Brewer would veto SB 1062.

“I urge Governor Jan Brewer to veto SB 1062. It is nothing more than a hate bill passed under the guise of protecting religious freedom. The legislation was drafted so broadly as to allow discrimination against nearly any Arizonan on religious grounds. But make no mistake—its target is members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community.

“At a time when LGBT equality is advancing on several fronts, the Arizona legislature is seeking to relegate some of its citizens to second-class status. This is both shameful and unconstitutional. There is significant and growing momentum for equality across America on everything from employment nondiscrimination to the freedom to marry. Those who want to stop this momentum and protect the status quo are desperately trying to fight back. That is what SB 1062 and similar efforts are all about.

“At the UFCW, we have always been on the side of equality, both in our contracts and the law. We stand with business, labor, Republicans, and Democrats in calling for SB 1062 to be vetoed.” **OP**

## UFCW Legislative and Political Action Conference Announced

The UFCW will convene a Legislative and Political Action Conference on May 5 through May 7 at the Westin Chicago River North in Chicago, Illinois. Registration will be held on May 4 and May 5. Local union legislative and political representatives, communications staff, stewards, and other political activists are encouraged to attend.

The conference will include workshops focusing on politics, legislation, communications, and VAN (UFCW member voter file), as well as hearing from prominent elected officials, candidates, and political experts.

All hotel and travel reservations, as well as all travel-related expenses, will be the responsibility of the local union. Please call the Westin Reservation Department at 888-627-8359 and request the rate for the UFCW Legislative and Political Action Conference. Reservations may also be booked online at <http://bit.ly/1crisLJ>. **OP**

## Educational and Scholarship Opportunities for UFCW Members and Staff

The Joseph S. Murphy Institute at the CUNY School of Professional Studies has launched a national scholarship competition dedicated to fostering a diverse leadership in the labor movement and the academic field of labor studies.

The Institute will award significant scholarships to deserving students: up to \$30,000 for graduate students and up to \$20,000 for undergraduates. The deadline for applying is March 31. For information and applications, please visit <http://bit.ly/1hGFduk>.

The United Association for Labor Education will hold three Union Women’s Summer Schools in 2014. The Northeast Regional Summer School for Union Women is planned for Queens College (Queens, N.Y.) on July 26 - 31. The Midwest School for Union Women: “Growing our Power: Learning! Inspiring! Transforming!” will be hosted by University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, June 22 - 26. The Southern School for Union Women will take place at the Highlander Center in Tennessee on August 13-17. For more information and save-the-date flyers, please visit: <http://bit.ly/1iaqhHT>. **OP**