

# About our new Food contract, for today and the future

By DAVID COOK  
President

## To our Members in our Food Division:

First, to the 2200 members that showed up last week to vote on our new contract proposal, regardless of how you voted, THANK YOU. To the 7,000 members who were not there, your complacency is killing you and your co-workers.

At the meeting I made it clear that your officers, the rank-and-file members on the Negotiating Committee and I were not totally pleased with the final results, but in the end, your Union has an obligation to be responsible and not put our members' livelihood at stake needlessly. And that's the position the entire Negotiating Committee took with its unanimous "accept" recommendation.

## WHY DID WE RECOMMEND?

For those not there who will undoubtedly be doing a lot of Monday morning quarterbacking, I'll briefly explain why we recommended this contract and why it got a 70 percent vote to accept:

### In a word: COMPETITION!

- **Market share** for the three chains is only 50 percent. In years past, they controlled over 90 percent of the grocery sales in the metro area and we achieved better contracts.

- **Food options are everywhere.** There seems to be a Walmart, Target or other non-union food store on every corner. If our union stores were on strike, people would shop elsewhere.

- **Permanent loss of customers.** If we struck, many customers would never return. Fewer customers means fewer Local 655 members working.

- **Lots of available manpower** from the tens of thousands out-of-work who, had we gone on strike, would jump at the chance to have your job.

- **No public sympathy/support** this time. We gained public support for our first industry strike in 2003 because the employers made unreasonable demands. Although there are parts of this contract we don't like, there is nothing the public would deem unreasonable and without their support we would lose the strike.

But that's not the only reason. Let me give you another:

## COMPLACENCY!

We asked every member to help us send a message of UNITY to the companies by wearing a UNION PROUD button. In some stores, they were everywhere and THANK YOU. But in too many stores few buttons were seen.

Do you know what message that sent to the companies? *Our members didn't care enough, didn't feel strong enough about a decent contract, to make the effort to pin a button on their uniform each day.*

When that happened, everyone who didn't wear a button personally tied the hands of your Negotiating Committee. *We had no leverage in negotiations.*

Then add to that the fact that 7,000 of our 9,200 members – 76 percent – in the Food Division did NOT show up for the single most important meeting to protect their jobs.

### Complacency!

Now, in spite of all that, your Negotiating Committee worked for over a year, patiently, to bring back a "reasonable" contract – not a great one but in today's marketplace, a *reasonable* one.

Here's a sampling of what the other unionized food employers across the country have attained and what your companies wanted but didn't get:

- No union health care for spouses and dependents. They would have been forced onto the government exchanges.
- No health care for part-timers.
- Substantial reductions in benefits

## BUT WE DID IMPROVE

In spite of the many obstacles stacked against us this time, we were able to make improvements and protect our members and families:

- Virtually NO reduction in health care benefits.
- Protected dependents – your spouse and children remain on our health care plan.
- Saved health care for part-timers.
- Protected the pension plan's 40 and out benefit.

- Improved benefits for members wishing to retire prior to being Social Security eligible by introducing a voluntary Social Security Equalization plan.

- A 60¢ an hour increase that frankly is better than many food contracts being re-negotiated across America.

- Boosted fairness in terms of health care costs. Those who choose the best coverage Plan A will be paying a little more weekly premium sharing than those taking the B and C plans and the same for those choosing B over C.

## WE GAVE SOME TOO

And yes, we had to give up some things in order to keep our companies competitive with the competition:

- Allowing vendor stocking. We are one of the last union contracts that didn't allow vendor stocking. Even our sister Local 881 across the river has it. But we also got protections to insure that vendor stocking will not impact our current jobs.

- Open Thanksgiving and Easter, but no forced work on these holidays, it's purely voluntary. And we maintained holiday pay for Thanksgiving whether you work or not! If you don't want to work

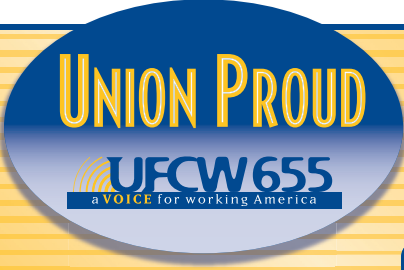
signatures are required to be filed, and transmission by facsimile, computer, or other form of electronic transmission shall not be valid.

Each petition shall be orderly and legible. Each petition shall clearly indicate the member who is being nominated and for which specific office he or she is being nominated. This must be done at the top of each page of the petition.

If a member is being nominated for one of the 17 Vice President positions, the petition shall specify which numerically designated Vice President position he or she is being nominated for. Any petition may nominate more than one member for office, provided that each member is being nominated for a different office and that the office for which each member is being nominated is specifically indicated.

Each petition shall also contain the following for each member signing the petition: (1) his or

**AN EXCLUSIVE TWICE MONTHLY REPORT FOR**



**UFCW 655 MEMBERS & THEIR FAMILIES**

[www.ufcw655.org](http://www.ufcw655.org)

a Thanksgiving or Easter, don't. If you do want to work you will get premium pay for those holidays.

## BOTTOM LINE

Members, given the imposing factors we face today, your Negotiating Committee had to make changes in order to protect your jobs and benefits by helping keep our union stores competitive. And we did.

We will live to fight another day...but, only IF you are ready to step up and help us organize non-union stores, will the outcome be different.

It's a fact of life: until we can increase our Union density (unionized market share), we will continue to face serious problems at contract time.

We don't have enough staff to provide member services and organize at the pace we need to do in order to substantially increase our market share.

## HERE'S HOW YOU MUST HELP TO ENSURE A BETTER FUTURE

We need every member's help! How?

1. Wear your UNION PROUD button *every day*. Non-union retail workers come through your store. If they ask you "What's that all about?" it's an opportunity to introduce them to Local 655, to let them know there are real benefits to being a member of Local 655: health care, a pension plan,

incremental wage boosts. And most importantly, job protection. Get a name and telephone number and get it to your Union Representative.

2. You have family and friends working in non-union stores. Encourage them to consider joining Local 655. Then pass on their names to our Organizing Department at 636-394-6500.

3. If you're not attending our monthly union meetings, you should be. Learn what's happening and make your voice heard. We want, we encourage, your participation in your union meetings.

4. Volunteer to be a part of our new Volunteer Organizing Program. We need your help. You'll be off work on weekends, but you won't lose any pay. You'll be helping us help *your* future.

## IT'S UPTO YOU

I'm proud to be your President. I, and your entire staff, fight for you every day. But we can't do this alone. Our staff is not big enough to make the kind of impact on Union DENSITY that we MUST have if we are going to see better contracts in the future.

It's up to all of us. Be a part of the solution.

With your help, if we can improve our Union Density we can come back to successfully fight another day.

**See contract story Pg. 1**

# UFCW LOCAL 655



COME JOIN US!

JUNE 29th

PRIDE FEST PARADE

Standing for Equality for all Workers



We will meet at 9:30AM  
at Broadway & Market Street  
On the South side of the Old Courthouse

For more information:  
Please Contact Nikki Rich at (636) 736-2772  
Or [nrich@ufcw655.org](mailto:nrich@ufcw655.org)



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# Notice of Nominations and Election of Officers of Local 655

## Notice of Nominations

Nominations for United Food & Commercial Workers (UFCW) Union Local 655 President, Secretary-Treasurer, Recorder and 17 Vice Presidents for the term of office commencing January 1, 2015 and ending December 31, 2017 will be conducted by petition. Each of the 17 Vice Presidents is numerically designated for nomination and election purposes, for example, Vice President No. 1, Vice President No. 2, etc.

The procedures are as follows:

Pursuant to Local 655s bylaws, nomination of a member for any specific office shall require the signatures of **75** active members.

Nomination petitions must be **received** at Local 655s office no later than 4:00 p.m. on **July 21, 2014**: UFCW Union Local 655, 300 Weidman Road, Ballwin, Missouri 63011. Petitions shall be filed either by mail or in person. The original

her signature, (2) his or her printed name, (3) his or her birth date (mm/dd/yy), and (4) the date signed.

To be eligible to run for office, one must be an active member of Local 655 who has either: (1) continuous active membership in Local 655 since July 1, 2013, or (2) continuous active membership in the UFCW International Union since July 1, 2012.

## Notice of Election

The election will be conducted by mail referendum. Mail ballots will be mailed to all active members at their last known home address on **August 1, 2014**. Any member not receiving a ballot by August 11, 2014 or who spoils his or her ballot, may contact the Election General Chairperson, Alex Lange at (636) 736-2776 to receive a duplicate ballot, which will be promptly mailed to the requesting member. Any envelopes containing ballots returned to Local 655 as undeliverable will remain sealed. The Election General Chairperson

shall take reasonable steps to obtain a good address for the member in question and mail a new ballot to the member as promptly as possible.

Mail ballots must be mailed back in order to be received at the post office no later than 12:00 p.m. (noon) on **August 22, 2014**. At 1:30 p.m. on August 22, 2014, the Election General Chairperson and election judges shall open and tabulate the ballots. The official results will be posted in the Union hall and published in the *Labor Tribune*.

Any questions regarding nominations and the election should be referred to Alex Lange, Local 655 Election General Chairperson, at (636) 736-2776.

There will be an Election Rules meeting for prospective candidates on July 2, 2014 at 5:30 p.m. at the Union offices, 300 Weidman Road, Ballwin, Missouri 63011.



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