

How would life be  
different if America had

# Universal Healthcare

### Live & Learn

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*Union providers keep membership in sharp focus. See which ones have all union staff.*



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8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Monday-Friday

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U magazine (USES 018-250) is published bimonthly by UFCW Local 324, at Post Office Box 5004, 8530 Stanton Ave., Buena Park, CA 90622-5004. Subscription rate is two (2) dollars per year (U.S. funds) Periodicals Postage paid at Buena Park, CA.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to U magazine, UFCW Local 324, Post Office Box 5004, Buena Park, CA 90622-5004.

READERS: Direct all inquiries and changes of address to the COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT, UFCW Local 324, Post Office Box 5004, Buena Park, CA 90622-5004. Web Site Address: UFCW324.org

## President's Report

# Wal-Mart wants health care for all — and I've got some swampland in Florida I'd like you to see.

Wal-Mart's recent letter in the LA Times declaring its support for universal health care has been viewed by most with justified skepticism. I am generally someone who sees the glass as half-full, not half empty, but I can't help but be bothered by those few among us who didn't see it for the shameful ploy that it is.

It was best exemplified in a column by David Lazarus in the L.A. Times that same week in which he declared that he was not sure of Wal-Mart's motives (we are) but didn't care.

"It's about time, he said, that someone in America's vast index of conscience-free corporations was stepping up to the plate and doing the right thing." Right belief, wrong company.

This disappointing world view is similar to the approach taken by so many of the small municipalities across the country that lay atop a heap of rubble in the wake of their brief encounters with Wal-Mart and its neighborly initiatives.

The ruins these towns currently sit on resulted from Wal-Mart's aggressive lobbying for commercial and retail space in cities and townships that are struggling to survive on a limited tax base. Their horror stories sound strikingly similar:

Wheeling and dealing Wal-Mart executives approach them. They perform flawlessly in a show featuring a few fancy dance steps, some smoke and mirrors and a magic calculator? By the end of the presentation, city councils and city managers are salivating at the prospect of dou-

bling maybe tripling their tax base and lifting their cities from economic hell and into a rainbow-splashed land of plenty.

The catch comes long after they have slept off any lingering hangovers and collectively decided that all this "bad talk" about Wal-Mart is coming from jealous do-gooders with shady motives. Together they form a fan club that goes two or three steps further than simply singing Wal-Mart's praises. These fan clubs focus on aggressively courting the company.

Within weeks the towns and cities nearby have been privy to the same performance, as the company's work is almost done. Soon six, seven or eight cities are actively competing for the privilege of hosting Wal-Mart and the honor of saying it has a Wal-Mart within its city limits. And so the bidding starts and cities that were already strapped for cash begin promising to reduce Wal-Mart's property taxes. Another says that it will construct the highway off ramp out of its own treasury so that more customers can get to Wal-Mart easy and hassle free. Another says that utility costs will never apply to the corporate giant so long as they build there.

Wal-Mart makes its decision amidst an atmosphere likened to the Kodak Theater seconds before the Best Picture Oscar is revealed. The difference here, of course, is that the only "winner" is Wal-Mart. It announces it will locate in the city that offered the most generous tax breaks and city-sponsored public works projects.

It usually isn't for a couple of years that city officials begin to realize that the sales tax money they receive from Wal-Mart's brisk business barely make up for what they are not collecting in property and business taxes. Income taxes from

newer, low wage workers also don't make up for lost taxes from employees who worked for retailers now out of business because of Wal-Mart's predatory practices.

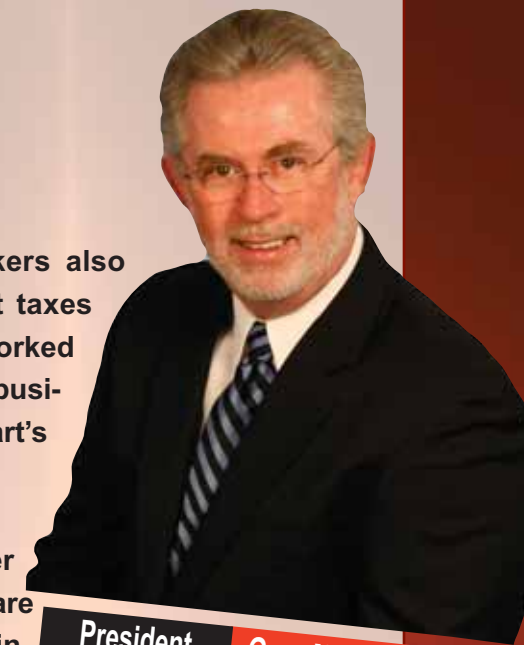
A few years later when city officials prepare for their temporary tax incentives to expire, Wal-Mart announces that five years at a single location is a bit much in this world of movers and shakers.

Often this story ends as Wal-Mart announces that it will leave town in favor of greener pastures—obviously one without a personal history with the company.

Now a building as big as an airline hanger sits empty at the end of a freeway off ramp to nowhere. This is "stepping up to the plate"?

The public schools that are now cash strapped continue to churn out students who lack even the most basic reading and writing skills can thank the city's wheeling and dealing for their plight. Lucky for them, they are prime candidates for a job at—you guessed it—Wal-Mart.

But do motives matter...damn right they do. Wal-Mart's cynical, even sinister, proposal to level the playing field to its advantage has some short term benefits that always sound enticing.



President Greg M. Conger



## Bill restricting self checkout sales passes State Assembly

SACRAMENTO, — The government organization committee of the California Senate is expected to vote again on a bill later this week that would require supermarkets to sell beer, wine and spirits only at check stands manned by clerks — to ensure that buyers are sober and of legal drinking age — rather than at self-service lanes.

The 13-member committee voted 6-5 in favor of the bill last week but required a majority of at least seven votes to move the proposal through to the full Senate.

The vote in the legislature's upper body comes after it sailed through the state Assembly on a party-line vote. Proponents of the measure point to lawmakers like John A. Pérez and Gil Cedillo, among others, as the main reason for its easy passage in the legislatures lower body.

Both lawmakers have long histories with the UFCW, Pérez served as Local 324's political director for a decade before being elected to represent the 46th Assembly District.

Although their support of the bill was acknowledged by opponents, others say that the likelihood of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signing it into law are slim or remote, to say the least. Schwarzenegger has not taken a public stand on the issue, but his track record suggests he will veto it.

Bill Dumbrowski, representing the California Retailers Association — which opposes the bill — said the one-hour discussion included comments from several legislators who raised issues with the bill, yet who voted for it when it came to a vote, leading him to expect passage when it is reconsidered.

The California Grocers Association, which also opposes the bill, said it is unnecessary legislation because there have not been any reported problems with underage purchases nor any problems with the technology that locks out alcohol purchases at self-service checkouts when such items are scanned.

## Secretary Treasurer's Report

# Health Insurance should not be seen as a luxury for the privileged few, but the basic right of all citizens

For many years, UFCW members have been on the front lines in the fight for quality, affordable health care. The struggle to maintain good medical benefits has taken place at the bargaining table and some times on picket lines and often tops the list of difficult issues during contract negotiations.

UFCW members recognize that quality affordable health care is as important to their families as a fair wage and respect on the job. UFCW members also know that comprehensive health insurance should be available to everyone and not just a privileged few.

Through years of successes, Local 324 and the UFCW have set the standard for what should be available to everyone. Members expect that the level of insurance they have always enjoyed will continue throughout their work years. But with escalating costs and a weak economy, this is becoming increasingly difficult.

Workers cannot continue to shoulder the burden of our broken health care system alone. We need a national solution to this national problem.

Real reform is essential to strengthening our middle class and getting our economy back on track. The continued lack of adequate health care for millions of Americans will adversely affect our country's recovery as more working people without quality coverage are saddled with astronomical medical bills from which they will never recover. This is why our union is rallying for Health Care Re-

form and it is why we believe this is one of the top national legislative priorities this year.

The idea advocated by anti-workers groups that employer provided health insurance should be taxed as income is absurd. Union members have been paying for their health benefits for years, in the form of lower wages at the bargaining table. Time and again, members have foregone wage increases or other benefits to protect health care.

Cost shifting is one of the major factors increasing the cost of health insurance to our unionized employers. Insured individuals indirectly subsidize uninsured individuals. Enacting a national mandate for affordable health care will share the burden among all employers, insurance companies and the government.

And we believe that with the right plan in place, over time, health costs will go down because people will get the care when they need it.

The focus of health care is changing. In our plans, fully paid preventive care has been implemented for both our retail food and meat members and our retail drug members. We urge everyone to take advantage of these benefits. For our retail food and meat members, the trust fund will soon be implementing the initial phases of our disease management plan.

Our long term goal must be wellness and we continue to work hard to ensure that members who do suffer from chronic conditions, get the best care available

with the goal of managing their diseases rather than waiting until the symptoms get worse.

Our role in negotiating health care

will not end with a national program. Instead it will provide us with the opportunity to improve upon the programs we already negotiate. Top among this list will be developing plans to promote wellness. This must be done carefully. We have seen corporate programs which place blame and higher costs on those with more costly diseases. Through union negotiated plans our goal will be to encourage healthy behaviors rather than penalize chronic

sufferers.

First and foremost, we must insist that our legislators pass a national health care bill which will provide all Americans with the basic right to health care. After that, we can look to the future of health care and how we can negotiate the best plans for everyone.



Secretary-Treasurer Andrea Zinder



An increased emphasis on doctor's checkups and 'preventative care' makes wellness a growing trend among insurers.





# Oakland General Strike: A Worker's Holiday

—By Matthew Hart

For two days in December of 1946, the streets of Oakland were host to a worker's holiday. Nearly 130,000 workers refused to work, shutting down commerce in the East Bay, and instead they flooded the streets in a show of solidarity against union busting. What started off as a small retail clerk strike grew into labor using its most effective (and now illegal) weapon – the general strike.

A month earlier, 400, mostly female, retail clerks from Hastings and Kahn's department stores walked off their jobs to protest the firing of a fellow employee for union activity.

The Retail Clerks International Association, Local 1265, was engaged in an organizing campaign against the two department stores. The stores and the Retail Merchants Association (RMA) were bitterly opposed to any attempts by labor to organize the retail industry leading to a public showdown between business and labor.

For 28 days, negotiations between the employers and retail clerks were at a standstill. But tension grew deeper when the RMA, after meeting with city and business leaders, declared it was going to break the strike with deliveries from a non union-trucking firm from Los Angeles.

Police offered protection for the delivery and cordoned off six blocks around the stores to prevent the pickets from halting the deliveries. By the next day at least 250 police were guarding the new perimeters with machineguns and tear gas.

Unions were enraged by the police intervention in the strike. In response, the union representing streetcar operators ordered its members not to use alternate routes formed by the police lines. Union streetcar operators on the downtown routes stopped their cars at the police cordons in protest, declaring the blockades to be picket lines.

The operators removed the control mechanisms from the streetcars and joined the picketers and their supporters.

For the rest of the day, a growing number of strikers and onlookers gathered downtown to view the spectacle. Meanwhile, unionists were meeting to demand action in response to the police involvement.

The next day, the AFL (American Federation of Labor) union leaders voted unanimously for a general strike. On December 3, an estimated 130,000 AFL members from 142 unions refused to work, and CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) members declared they would honor AFL picket lines.

The Central Labor Council (CLC) called for striking workers to come downtown for mass rallies and picketing. Thousands flooded the streets. Observers described the scene as a "carnival-like atmosphere." Strikers and sympathizers sang and danced to guitars and music played from loud speakers.

Union officials stated that this wasn't a strike but rather a "worker's holiday."

Behind the scenes, the CLC was negotiating with the city government to end the general strike. The unions wanted a promise that the police would never be used as strikebreakers during a labor dispute again. Eventually, the city government gave in and promised police neutrality in exchange for ending the general strike.

After 54 hours, the general strike ended. As for the retail clerk strike, it continued for nearly five more months before it was finally resolved.

The Oakland "Worker's Holiday" was one of six general strikes to occur in 1946, setting the all time record for strikes and work stoppages in the U.S. It was also the last general strike to occur in the United States. In 1948, Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act, making solidarity strikes illegal – ending the use of one of labor's most effective tools.



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Carole Peterson (714) 521-6820, Barbara Hamilton (562) 431-7545, or Marion Jones (714) 536-7315

For additional information, please visit our website: [www.ufcw324rc.com](http://www.ufcw324rc.com)





# Union as far as the eyes can see

Any casual reader of *U Magazine* knows by now that UFCW Local 324 is much more than the "grocery workers union." Those who don't should probably get their eyes checked. And believe it or not, there are several optometry offices in Orange County where members can do just that and be served by 100 percent union staff.

**Dr. Crismon Eye Center**  
13800 San Antonio Dr.  
Norwalk, CA 90650

**Dr. Byron Fennema**  
1234 West Chapman Avenue  
Orange, CA 92868

16152 Beach Blvd  
Huntington Beach, CA 92647

**La Paz Optometric Center**  
25252 McIntyre Street "D-1"  
Laguna Hills, CA 92653

**Long Beach Optometric**  
4275 Atlantic Blvd  
Long Beach, CA 90807

**Dr. Mark Forman**  
15066 Rosecrans Avenue  
La Mirada, CA 90638

**Russ Optical**  
310 East Orangethorpe  
Placentia, CA 92870

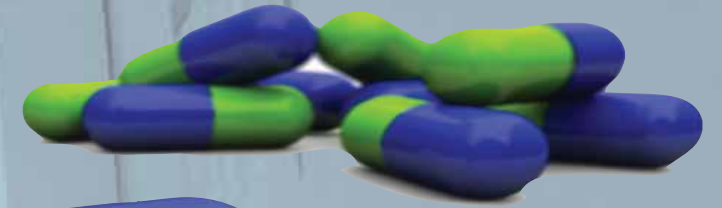
**Dr. Sheldon Marshall**  
2860 South Bristol #D  
Santa Ana, CA 92704

**Tustin Optometric Group**  
17602 17th Street #103  
Tustin, CA 92680





# If health care became 'universal', would the best argument for being union disappear?



Every time an organizer makes a home call or sits down with unorganized workers he or she must answer the question, "Why join a union?"

And for as long as anyone can remember, union negotiated health care led the list and provided organizers with a very persuasive weapon.

**"If you really want to make your life better, join the union. You and your family can qualify for health care as well as many other benefits."**

"This statement opens worker's eyes and leads to a host of other questions," said a 10-year retiree who stopped by the office recently to visit with former workmates.

Other union veterans recall with nostalgia that their impressive array of medical benefits used to be the primary reason many entered the industry.

Stories abound of people who sought jobs in the grocery industry mainly for the generous

package of family benefits that was not included in their spouse's six-figure salary.

Michelle Dobias, supervisor of Local 324's Health Benefits Department, acknowledges that although the days of upper-income women seeking a family safety net are past, many members point out that the UFCW benefits remain the envy of many who work in higher wage industries.

"I often speak with members and non-members alike who have compared our health insurance coverage to other plans. Even with recent changes, we come out ahead."

Comprehensive medical benefits are clearly only one of the many benefits of joining a union. A voice in the work place means many things, but for those with employers who have been reluctant to provide health care or are too small to obtain an affordable rate without the large pool of participants of a multi-employer trust fund, a

union contract was the answer.

So how then does the UFCW continue to grow with a federal mandate for health benefits?

Secretary-Treasurer Andrea Zinder said the answer is simple – negotiate an even better package. "The federal program will be the floor, and we will have a great opportunity to build from there."

President Conger said the gains the union movement stands to make are gigantic.

He said that anyone doubting the argument needs look no further than our own grocery employers. "These guys are the most powerful and most profitable companies in the country and they have attained that status and managed to

fund exemplary health benefits, superior wages and a pension plan," Conger said.

"Now they can absolutely afford these costs; so just think about how far ahead of the competition they would be if the smaller competitors were not allowed to take a pass when it came to taking care of their employees."

"It's all about leveling the playing field" said President Greg Conger. Union members are better workers, more productive workers and happier workers. He agreed with others who note that the rules have to be the same for everyone for that comparison to work as flawlessly as he describes. And that can happen when everyone—not just a few, share the burden of health care costs.

"I think one of the side affects of the health care crisis has been that we are finally focusing needed attention on wellness and the concept that healthy living results in healthy people which results in fewer trips to the doctor, which results in less spending on health care,"

*Trust Fund Co-Administrator Virginia Grady*



"When people have to declare bankruptcy because they had to pay for medical care out of pocket, then we have a real crisis going on out there . . . reform is not a wish list item it's a must for this country."

*UFCW Intl. Pres. Joe Hansen*



"There's certainly no doubt that we are facing huge cost burdens in health care, but it's also becoming clear that companies are trying to use that as an excuse to lower coverage and quality of care for their own gain. We can't just go along with their plans to gut what we have worked so hard for over the years,"

*President Greg Conger*



"Universal health care will be to us what the minimum wage has been for so many years . . . that is a starting point from which to move forward. As the bottom basic health plan improves, so too will our plan and the coverage our members receive."

*Secretary-Treasurer Andrea Zinder*





# Still pushing for change



President Barack Obama stopped in Bristol, Virginia July 29 where he engaged UFCW Local 400 members in a conversation about health care reform. Obama reiterated recent statements he has made in his whirlwind campaign-style tour promoting his health care reform proposals. He insisted that his plan would not take away from health care programs that are already in place—such as those in a union contract.



**Next General Membership Meeting is Wednesday, September 9<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. 8530 Stanton Ave. Buena Park**

**In honor of Labor Day**  
**Six Flags Magic Mountain**  
 is slashing the price of an all-day ticket  
~~\$26~~ to only **\$16**  
 Purchase your tickets at the union office. Offer good Aug. 29-Sept. 7 ONLY!

# Bare knuckles brawl ends in narrow loss for UFCW

## TESCO takes hard line in first head-to-head fight against UFCW organizers

A food processing plant located in Corona is slowly returning to normal. Styrofoam boats of red meat wrapped tightly in plastic roll off the conveyor belts and onto a bridge of metal rollers at about a package every five seconds.

Only a couple of stickers and a thin cardboard strip will be added before human hands touch it. By that time it has already been assigned to a distribution route that will deliver it to one of three dozen Fresh & Easy stores in California and Arizona.

Executives at Fresh & Easy are breathing a collective sigh of relief that their line of ready-to-eat beef concoctions won't be sporting one label in particular—the union label. They spent an estimated million dollars to guarantee it.

"I've seen a lot of organizing campaigns from beginning to end and I don't think I've seen anything

this intense," said UFCW International Organizer John Getz, who spent the final three weeks of the campaign assisting UFCW Local 1167 in attempting to bring union representation to workers at the Two Sisters plant.

According to Getz, the avalanche of money began pouring in within hours of the UFCW's filing for election with the National Labor Relations Board. The full force of the campaign was in full swing before government overseers announced the date of the election.

Traditionally, anti-union campaigns employ a combination of tactics as they attempt to convince workers to vote NO.



"What that ultimately meant was that every time we did a home call with the workers, we would be on the defensive the entire time." Getz said.

The Two-Sisters campaign also featured the traditional slurs directed against the union, which simply added to the onslaught of attacks, according to those involved with the campaign at its earliest stages.

Several Local 324 members worked to try and bring representation to the plant. But they faced stiff opposition from the moment it was talked about among employees.

Ultimately, the amount of money the company was willing to spend and the time it allotted to "captive audience" sessions proved too difficult to overcome. "This is the very reason why we need the Employee Free Choice Act." said President Greg Conger.

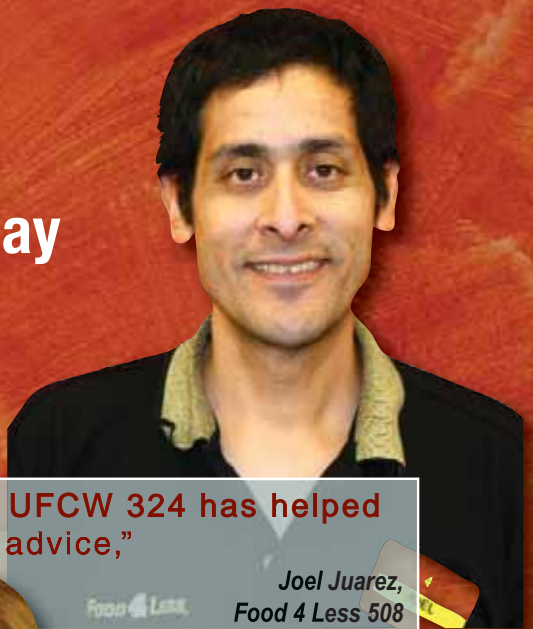




# Word on the street



What is the best argument today for joining a union?



**"Job Security, UFCW 324 has helped me with great advice,"**  
Joel Juarez,  
Food 4 Less  
Food 4 Less 508



**"Job Security,"**  
Cindy Griffith,  
Albertsons 6165



**"Health Benefits, especially with the health care reform,"**  
Monica Randolph,  
Albertsons-Savon 6165



**"Real Health Benefits, the cost I pay is next to nothing,"**  
Steve Saric  
Rite-Aid 6472



**"Having a guaranteed pension is wonderful,"**  
Delores Billings  
Rite-Aid 5738



# Off the wall



# What have you done for me *Lately?*

<b>STATS</b>	GRIEVANCES FILED .....	1,040	<b>Boycott B of A</b>
	MEMBERS BACK TO WORK .....	163	
<b>January-July 2009</b>	<b>BACKPAY COLLECTED:</b> \$ 497,660.13		
<b>UFCW324.ORG</b>			





Umagazine is published by



8530 Stanton Avenue  
P.O. Box 5004  
Buena Park, California 90622-5004

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# Help us honor them

We are looking for pictures of members or their families who are currently serving or veteran members of the U.S. military.

**Please e-mail them to:**  
[in-honor@ufcw324.org](mailto:in-honor@ufcw324.org) **or**  
send them to us in the mail with your current contact information so that pictures may be returned.

*U Magazine* plans to publish photos in a future issue devoted to recognizing their service to the country.