

UFCW Turns Capitol Hill Gold as UFCW Members and Workers Urge Members of Congress to Pass Employee Free Choice



Hundreds of UFCW members, staff, and workers from across the nation were on Capitol Hill yesterday to share their experience about having a union at work and to urge their elected officials to support the passage of the Employee Free Choice Act.

Participants spent Monday in workshops provided by the UFCW International, learning how to lobby their elected officials and engage in home state activism, as well as how to talk to the media. Workers also had their stories captured on video, as well as radio ads that the locals in their home states can use. On Tuesday, they urged their members of Congress to support Employee Free Choice, and thanked those who are already supporters of the bill.

Participants said they were glad to have the chance to share their experiences with a union. Armando Martinez, a Hormel Foods worker from Nebraska, shared a positive experience of getting a voice on the job without intimidation. "I know that having a union makes the difference because I have worked in places where employees were harassed and threatened when they tried

to join a union," Martinez said. "When I started working at the Hormel Foods plant in Freemont in 1998," he continued, "UFCW Local Union 22 already represented the workers. All I needed to do was sign up to show I wanted to join." Martinez used his story to urge Senators Mike Johanns (R-NE) and Ben Nelson (D-NE) to support Employee Free Choice.

Many of the workers have experienced firsthand the disappointment of being unable to join a union, despite the fact that a majority of their co-workers wanted to join one. Darlene Bruzio and her co-workers at Giant Eagle grocery store in Pennsylvania were denied union representation, despite having majority support at work, because of employer interference. "When you have more than 80 percent support like we did at my store and still lose an election," Bruzio said, "you know that the system is broken. Congress has to realize that and pass the Employee Free Choice Act."

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Locals 1099 and 911 Members Vote Overwhelmingly In Favor of Merger



Local 1099 members and Local 911 members have voted overwhelmingly in favor of a merger which would create a new, stronger local union—Local 75—to represent members in Ohio. In both locals, over 80 percent of the membership voted ‘yes’ on the merger.

"The more members we gain, the more power and solidarity we'll bring to our union," said Tammy Elbert, above center with fellow Kroger workers.

"I think the merger will be a benefit to us," said Kroger worker Nancy Bowling. "We will have more power to organize and more strength at the bargaining table." **OP**

(continued from first page) Another grocery worker, James Satler, is a former Fresh and Easy worker from California who says he was fired for trying to organize a union at his workplace. Satler said he believes Congress should pass Employee Free Choice, "because it will allow us to have better wages and benefits. Our economy is stronger when more American workers have more money to spend." Celia Cisneros and Diane Garcia also say they were fired for trying to form a union at their California workplaces.

"I noticed a lot of things that weren't right at work and I called the union for help," Garcia, a Pomona resident, said of her experience trying to form a union several years ago at Big Saver. "The company did not like the fact that we were trying to form a union and they did everything they could to prevent unionization. In the end, they fired me."

Cisneros' experience was no different. Despite being a model worker for several years at Foster Farms, she was fired when she became too involved with the union. "I worked there for seven years without having one point against me," she said, "But when I became a vocal supporter of the union, they fired me and cut my medical insurance. I have a family to take care of. Fortunately, the union helped me get my job back."



Celia Cisneros met with Sen. Dianne Feinstein to ask for her support of Employee Free Choice.

UFCW Local 700 member Jennifer Krue, a grocery worker in Indiana, encouraged her members of Congress, Senators Richard Lugar (R-IN) and Evan Bayh (D-IN), to support the bill. "The UFCW came into our break room, spoke to us about the union, and I signed up. I know Employee Free Choice would give working Americans a choice for a better life."

Yolanda Abreu from Las Cruces, New Mexico, was also there to urge Senators Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) and Tom Udall (D-NM) to support the bill. "When my coworkers and I tried to form a union at Albertsons, the company responded with threats and harassment," she said. "There is no better proof that the current system is broken, and that workers need the Employee Free Choice Act to protect their right to join a union of their choosing."

This is just the beginning for Abreu and other UFCW members and workers across the country, who have pledged to continue to contact their members of Congress. They will also write letters and blogs, sign cards, and take an active role in urging passage of Employee Free Choice. **OP**