



Contracts, coalitions and... cannabis?

FDC returns to Sacramento for annual summer meeting

At its annual Sacramento meeting in June, the Food & Drug Council welcomed a new affiliate on the front lines of the nationwide battle for labor rights, UFCW Local 75 of Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana.

Addressing the gathering at the unionized Citizen Hotel, FDC Director Ellen Anreder said: "This organization will support Local 75 with the combined might of our affiliates and their 400,000 union members."

Anreder noted that the FDC's rapid growth is a response to Labor's growing need to form coalitions across traditional geographical and organizational lines.

Paul A. Kenny, FDC President, delivered the good news that Alta Dena dairy workers in City of Industry, Calif., have succeeded in their five-

America's Agenda: Health Care for All, spoke about the Healthcare Exchange Advocacy and Responsibility Team (HEART), a broad coalition of labor

much as 30 percent and reduced pressure on employers to shift those costs onto their workers.

"Several organizations have already pledged their support to this program and we believe, with this group of people working together, a responsible health care exchange will not only succeed in the state of California, but could become the standard by which health care will be made available to many workers in the future," Blum said.

Ron Lind and Dan Rush described efforts by UFCW Local 5 to organize workers in the "budding" industry of medical cannabis, which has the potential of employing

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year campaign to join the Teamsters.

"The contract is still being negotiated, but the end result will be that the major dairies in Southern California are 100 percent union," he said.

New solutions

Mark Blum, director of

unions, businesses and nonprofit organizations dedicated to designing the best possible health insurance exchange for California residents.

Blum cited success stories in Washington State and Vermont, where exchanges have lowered health care costs by as

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thousands of union workers.

Lind said that UFCW Local 5 already has organized more than 300 dispensary workers in the San Francisco Bay Area and expects to have more than 1,000 dues-paying medical marijuana industry members by the end of 2011.

“This industry has so much more to offer Labor than just the store clerks,” Rush said.

“Agriculture, food processing and textile industries have many potential members waiting to be organized. And when prohibition ends — and it will end soon — there will be hundreds of thousands of workers in California and nationwide who will be willing to unionize for their workplace rights.”

UFCW gearing up in Southern California

Jacques Loveall, President of UFCW 8-Golden State, and

Mark Ramos, Political Community Organizer of UFCW Local 1428, delivered updates on negotiations for the next Master Food Agreement for Southern California.

“More than 62,000 members have been on an extension to the contract since March,” Loveall reported. “An overwhelmingly positive vote was taken in April



that gave leaders of the seven Southern California UFCW locals authority to call a strike.

“Federal mediators are now involved. While pension issues were recently resolved, the primary issue now is health care costs.”

At the meeting, the Food & Drug Council voted to support the Southern California locals in the event of a strike or lockout. Ramos noted that the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, along with

other federations and labor councils in the state, also have pledged to support Southern California the locals if and when a labor dispute occurs.

“We have begun walking neighborhoods and tabling grocery stores, gathering public support for the workers if a strike becomes necessary,” Ramos said.

“Our members are also asking the public to tell the store managers that they don’t believe it’s fair to make the employees spend up to 25 percent of their salaries to cover health care premiums, that they won’t cross the picket lines if we go on strike, and that they won’t return to shop at the store if we go on strike.”

Before the meeting closed, Peter Olney of the ILWU thanked the Food & Drug Council for its five years of support in organizing workers at Rite Aid’s distribution center in Lancaster, Calif.

“On behalf of the 500 workers in that warehouse who now have a better quality of life, better job benefits and, most importantly, respect in the workplace, I thank you from the bottom of my heart,” Olney said.

2011 Convention registration is open!

Affiliate and service provider registration for the Food & Drug Council’s Annual Convention at Caesars Palace Las Vegas is now open!

Download a registration form at www.FoodandDrugCouncil.org.

Registration deadline is Nov. 9, 2011