



TEAMSTERS LOCAL 727

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PHARMACISTS: JEWEL-OSCO'S BUSINESS DECISIONS PUT PUBLIC AT RISK

Company Grinds Negotiations With Union to a Halt

CHICAGO — Teamsters Local 727 began informing the public of the safety risks associated with Jewel-Osco's chronic understaffing of pharmacies amid ever-increasing pharmacist workloads by informational picketing outside Chicago-area Jewel-Osco stores this week.

Teamsters Local 727 represents about 500 pharmacists at 134 Jewel-Osco locations.

“As pharmacists, we have a responsibility for the health and safety of our patients, but the company is more concerned with their bottom line,” said Jewel-Osco pharmacist Michael Trnka. “Not making enough money is not a good enough reason to risk someone's health. Jewel-Osco is not making moral decisions, they're making business decisions.”

“There's no respect for the profession,” said pharmacist Dennis Sender, who has worked for Jewel-Osco for 17 years. “I want to take care of my patients, but under these conditions, I don't feel safe. If this keeps up, somebody is going to get hurt, and no one wants it to be on their shift.”

Teamsters Local 727 also has filed unfair labor practice charges against Jewel-Osco for bad faith bargaining and for refusing to comply with the Union's information request, which includes information regarding prescription misfills.

“What is the company trying to hide?” said John T. Coli, Secretary-Treasurer of Teamsters Local 727. “Our pharmacists care deeply about their patients' welfare, but it seems that Jewel-Osco doesn't care about the welfare of their employees or their customers.”

The sides met six times in April, spending nearly 60 hours at the bargaining table with little to show for it. During the last negotiation meeting on April 29, Teamsters Local 727 made substantial movement by narrowing its focus to only six remaining non-economic items that address pharmacists' concerns with “quality of life” issues, such as support staffing levels and coverage for time off. When the company did not reciprocate the Union's substantial movement, Local 727 offered to enter federal mediation.

The Union came into federal mediation with options for solutions to many of these issues in an effort to reach middle ground, but Jewel-Osco management once again refused to make meaningful movement. After spending nearly 20 hours over two days in federal mediation last week, the Local 727 is no closer to reaching a fair agreement with Jewel-Osco.

“Over and over, we have reiterated the pharmacists’ concerns, but management doesn’t care. They say pharmacists are the face of the company, but their actions don’t back up that statement,” Coli said. “These incredible, dedicated pharmacists only want to serve their patients, and they are united now more than ever. Our goal should be creating an environment of cooperation so we can translate that into better customer service, motivation and growing the business. We can’t do that unless Jewel-Osco management actually listens to the pharmacists and treats them with respect.”

Additionally, the Local 727 Bargaining Committee has proposed the same 401(k) contributions and health and welfare rates, premiums and overall health care language protections as outlined in the recently negotiated contract for Jewel-Osco warehouse and transportation workers represented by Teamsters Local 710.

Earlier this year, the Union learned that management has been forcing pharmacists to pay more than other Jewel-Osco employees for the identical health insurance. The resulting grievance against the company been filed for arbitration.

Management summarily rejected the Union’s proposal, claiming that it sets the health insurance rates “to be competitive,” and has not provided a counter proposal.

“The company sees nothing wrong with singling out one group of employees and charging them more for the same exact health care while denying them similar retirement benefits,” Coli said. “This is just another example in a long list of ways Jewel-Osco has mistreated its pharmacists, and the pharmacists have had enough.”

The Jewel-Osco pharmacists’ contract expired May 20 following a two-week extension. Teamsters Local 727 and the company do not have an additional extension agreement in place, so the pharmacists are now working without a contract. At this time, no additional bargaining dates have been scheduled.

“Throughout this entire negotiation process, the company has done nothing but waste our time, forcing the Union’s Bargaining Committee to wait for hours on end for movement that never comes,” Coli said. “When they are ready to stop mistreating their pharmacists and work with the Union to reach a fair agreement, they know how to find us.”

Teamsters Local 727 represents nearly 10,000 hardworking men and women throughout the Greater Chicago area, including about 700 Jewel-Osco and CVS pharmacists.

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