

The Coalition of Rite Aid Workers Organize a National Day of Action on December 15, 2010

Over the past several years, Rite Aid executives have made a number of serious missteps that have hurt the company's business. The nation's third-largest retail drug store chain has not made a profit in more than three years, causing investors to suffer heavy losses. Instead of working with employees to help turn the company around, Rite Aid executives are trying to make workers pay for management's mistakes. At Rite Aid locations across the country, the trend is same: the company is demanding concessions from hardworking employees, while increasing executive compensation.

For example, while CEO John Standley recently doubled his own compensation, Rite Aid is:

- Proposing onerous health insurance hikes for workers in Northern Ohio, which may force them to strike;
- Seeking huge increases in employees' share of health insurance costs in Lancaster, CA where, for 2 ½ years, workers have been trying to get a fair labor agreement; and
- Closing a unionized distribution center in Rome, NY and going non-union, leaving 400 employees without work.



The Coalition of Rite Aid Workers was formed to support employees at Rite Aid stores and distribution centers who are fighting to change the company's culture of corporate greed. The National Day of Action, which took place on December 15, was the Coalition's biggest effort to date to help win justice for Rite Aid workers. Hundreds of individuals, representing dozens of community groups, student organizations and unions joined together to make the event a huge success and tell Rite Aid, "Respect workers – respect our communities."

In all, Day of Action participants organized more than 40 store actions in 13 states and the District of Columbia. Participants included high school students, long-time union members, retirees, church groups and other veteran activists. Twelve local **Jobs with Justice (JwJ)** coalitions helped organize actions and eight events were sponsored by affiliates of **United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS)**. UFCW Local 880 held a big rally in downtown Cleveland. Workers at Rite Aid's Lancaster, CA distribution center had a lunchtime rally in their cafeteria where they educated co-workers about the company's healthcare proposal and sent a strong message to Rite Aid that workers won't roll over for the company's health insurance rip-off.

Following is an overview of some of the day's highlights:

Albany, NY



(Above) JwJ affiliate Capital District Labor Religion Coalition in Albany turned out die-hard supporters of workers' rights at the local Rite Aid store in zero-degree weather. (For more information on the Coalition: <http://www.labor-religion.org/locals-LRCofCD-main.htm>)

Atlanta, GA

(Below) Members of the Emory University USAS-organized contingent outside a Rite Aid store in Atlanta where they leafleted customers and talked with management.



Bellingham, WA

(Below) Dozens of activists, including International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) members and retirees, members of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 843, Jobs with Justice and United for National Health Care, and students from Western Washington University and Whatcom Community College rallied at a Bellingham, WA Rite Aid store.



Boston, MA



(Above) Despite bitter cold, representatives of Massachusetts Jobs with Justice (www.massjwj.net) the IWW and the AFL-CIO, braved freezing temperatures to leaflet the Cambridge Street Rite Aid store in Boston. Actions also were held at stores in **East Boston** and **Somerville, MA**.

Chicopee, MA

(Right) A small but hearty band of activists, including members of NALC, AFT, Operating Engineers, and UFCW braved bitter cold to participate in the Western MA Jobs with Justice (<http://wmjwj.org/>) action at a Rite Aid store in Chicopee, MA.



Cleveland, OH



(Above) Frigid temperatures in downtown Cleveland did not deter UFCW Local 880 and Jobs with Justice (www.clevelandjwj.org) from organizing a very successful rally at Public Square that included State Representatives, Cleveland City Council members, Rite Aid workers, and Santa Claus.

Denver, CO

(Below) Colorado Jobs with Justice and the state AFT organized an action outside the Rite Aid store at the busy 16th Street Mall in Denver. The group educated customers, passed-out 600 flyers and collected 4 pages of signatures on the letter of support that was delivered to store management. (See report: <http://fb.me/DCanqxm7>)



Los Angeles, CA

(Right) Students from USAS organized a dynamite action in downtown Los Angeles at the Rite Aid store on Broadway and Fifth Street. Members of the Steelworkers union also participated. The students and USW representatives did outreach to customers for about an hour before a delegation met with the manager to explain the reasons for the National Day of Action. In other LA area actions, ILWU Locals 13, 13A, 56 and 63 turned out dozens of members at Rite Aid stores in **San Pedro** and **Wilmington, CA**.



Oakland, CA

(Below and right) At the downtown Oakland Rite Aid store action Mayor-elect Jean Quan addressed the crowd which included representatives of community groups as well as unions. Mayor-elect Quan pledged her continued support for the Rite Aid workers and for workers' rights everywhere. Picketers also were treated to a live performance from a team of professional actors who portrayed Scrooge, Marley's ghost and Rite Aid CEO John Standley. All three later joined the picket line. (See link to the video of the Rite Aid action in Oakland:



http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_profilepage&v=rrGF2GlqyFY



Philadelphia, PA



In Philadelphia, UFCW was out in force. Seventy people turned out to handbill and talk with Rite Aid customers and other members of the public throughout the Center City area. Leafletters got a positive response from most folks and Rite Aid store managers were observed calling Rite Aid headquarters to report on the activities. Activists planned their event to maximize public attention – and that's exactly what happened.



Seattle, WA

(Below) Seattle Jobs with Justice (www.wsjw.org) led a group of 30 supporters in an action at a downtown Rite Aid store.



Participants represented a variety of organizations, including: ILWU Local 19, the Inlandboatmen's Union, the International Transport Workers' Federation, IATSE, Teamsters Local 117, the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, the Coalition of Labor Union Women, the Alliance for Retired Americans, and the IWW.

West Sacramento, CA

(Left) A rally at the Rite Aid store in downtown West Sacramento attracted a lively group of 40 activists including members of the ILWU, SEIU-United Service Workers West, Unite-Here, AFSCME, AFT, CSEA, the Sacramento Central Labor Council, the CA Labor Federation, the National Union of Health Care Workers, and the Los Rios College Federation of Teachers, as well as representatives of community organizations. The group leafleted customers and talked with the store manager.

More actions around the U.S.

Other events that took place as part of the National Day of Action included **USAS**-sponsored actions at Rite Aid stores in **Highland Park, NJ**, **New Orleans**, **Providence**, **State College, PA** and **Williamsburg, VA**. In addition, **Jobs with Justice** in **Eugene, OR**, (<http://www.solidaritynetwork.org/>) **Portland, OR** (www.jwjpgdx.org) and **Richmond, VA** attracted dozens of supporters of workers' rights who leafleted and talked with customers and store managers.



In **Aberdeen**, **Longview** and **Vancouver, WA**, groups including members of the ILWU, UFCW, AFSCME, IWW and the Painters union, visited their local Rite Aids to discuss health insurance and other issues of concern to Rite Aid employees with store customers and other members of the public. UFCW Local 1059 did the same at two store actions in the communities of **Marion** and **Shelby, OH**.

And, finally, in **Lancaster, CA**, workers at Rite Aid's giant distribution center organized a rally in their cafeteria focused on affordable health insurance for employees. Workers also "stickered up" displaying the message that provided the theme for the National Day of Action: **"Rite Aid. Respect workers: Respect our communities."**

The Coalition of Rite Aid Workers and its supporters will continue to work with Rite Aid employees and our community, student and labor allies to ensure Rite Aid workers and their families get the fair wages and benefits and the respect they deserve.

News and blog coverage of the National Day of Action:

Demonstrators to Rite Aid: Respect Workers, Respect Communities, by Rick Nagin, December 16, 2010;
<http://peoplesworld.org/demonstrators-to-rite-aid-respect-workers-respect-communities/>

Workers Protest Rite Aid's Corporate Greed, Disrespect of Workers' Rights, by Rand Wilson, December 15, 2010;
<http://blog.aflcio.org/2010/12/16/workers-protest-rite-aids-corporate-greed-disrespect-of-workers-rights/>

Rite Aid Unions Unite Against Concessions, by Jenny Brown, December 16, 2010;
<http://labornotes.org/2010/12/rite-aid-unions-unite-against-concessions>

Rite Aid Union Activists Mobilize, by Kathy Robertson, December 15, 2010;
<http://www.bizjournals.com/sacramento/news/2010/12/15/rite-aid-union-activists-mobilize.html>

Nationwide Action Targets Rite Aid's Record on Workers' Rights, by Rand Wilson, December 17, 2010;
http://inthesetimes.com/working/entry/6782/nationwide_mobilization_highlights_corporate_greed_employee_disrespect/

For a copy of the Coalition's "Call to Action," the community letter to Rite Aid store managers, the flyer distributed to the public at stores, a list of locations where actions took place or an "Investor Alert" prepared by the ILWU and the AFL-CIO, contact: Rand Wilson at rand.wilson@gmail.com.



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