

Klamath Falls Walmart fires worker who went on strike

By Don McIntosh
Associate Editor

A Klamath Falls Walmart store has fired one of the three workers who took part in a late November protest strike.

Ismael Nuñez, along with his wife Jennifer Sanchez, took part in the nationwide walkout, and traveled to take part in rallies in Klamath Falls, Medford, and Portland. The strike was called by the group Organization United for Respect at Walmart (OUR Walmart) to protest cases of retaliation by Walmart against workers who spoke out about pay and working conditions. Now Nuñez may be one of those workers.

Nuñez says he was restocking frozen food Jan. 16 when his manager told him to go home, saying he hadn't been working hard enough. With half an hour left until the end of his nine-hour graveyard shift, Nuñez stayed working, and police were called to escort him out. [This is the same Walmart where in Decem-



Walmart workers Ismael Nuñez and his wife Jennifer Sanchez, take part in a Black Friday rally Nov. 29 outside a Southeast Portland Walmart. Six weeks later, Nuñez was suspended and terminated on what he says were phony accusations.

ber a manager threatened to call police after ordering a group of several dozen high school Christmas carolers to leave the store.]

Nuñez called in later in the day, and was told he was suspended without pay pending an investigation by the store manager Kelly Cooper. He says he was given few details of anything he'd done wrong, except for an accusation that he left a pallet of eggs unrefrigerated for two hours on Jan. 4. Nuñez denies it, and says it was more like

20 minutes. [Memo to Walmart: In many countries, eggs are sold unrefrigerated, and they can sit out for days without risk to human health.]

It's unclear what kind of investigation Cooper conducted, and she did not respond to a call from the Labor Press. But on Jan. 26, Nuñez was terminated from his \$15.42-an-hour job as an overnight frozen and dairy stocker — after 11 years as a Walmart employee.

"They fired me unjustly," Nuñez says. "They should stop

treating their employees that way. And stop calling the police on their employees."

Sanchez says police were also called when she tried to collect signatures on a petition.

Nuñez has applied for unemployment insurance compensation, and says he plans to file charges with the National Labor Relations Board. It's illegal to fire a worker for supporting union efforts or taking part in

"protected, concerted activity" with co-workers.

"A lot of people just move on and try to get another job," says Sanchez. "We're going to try to fight it."

Southern Oregon Jobs with Justice and Portland Jobs with Justice are appealing to supporters to call Klamath Falls Walmart manager Kelly Cooper at 541-885-6890 and tell her to put Ismael back to work.

IN MEMORIAM

JOHN C. WAGONER

July 3, 1946 - Nov. 24, 2014

John C. Wagoner, a retired member of Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers, died Nov. 24 at the age of 68. A medical examiner determined that he died of accidental drowning.

Wagoner was born in Vancouver, Washington and lived his whole life in the Camas and Washougal area. He served in the U.S. Army from 1965 to 1971. He worked at the Camas paper mill 38 years, until retiring. He was active in AWPPW, and served as area lobbyist for the union's Washington/Alaska Area Council. He also produced a newsletter called "Politics for

Workers." He was active the local group Concerned Citizens in Action.

Wagoner is survived by his wife Penny, daughter Taletha, a grandson, and brothers, nephews and nieces.

A celebration of life was held Dec. 5 at the AWPPW Local 5 union hall in Camas, accompa-

nied by the American Legion Cape Horn Honor Guard and the Patriot Guard Riders.

Wagoner was an avid motorcyclist and yachtsman, and lived on a boat. Friends are collecting contributions at Riverview Community Bank in Camas for a memorial in his name to be placed at the Port of Camas Washougal Marina.



ONLINE EXTRA

Ismael Nuñez has begun an online petition urging Walmart to rehire him. That's at <https://www.coworker.org/petitions/walmart-stop-retaliate-against-walmart-workers?>

...Unions rally for \$15 minimum wage

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counties in Oregon from raising the minimum wage locally.

The Legislature convened Feb. 2 and will be in session for 160 days.

"Almost half a million Oregonians work for \$12 an hour or less," Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain told the Salem crowd. "In other words, 1-in-4 Oregon workers are working as hard as they can and still live in poverty. That is shameful."

The state labor federation says that large low-wage employers aren't paying their fair share and, as a result, taxpayers are picking up the tab. Each year, Chamberlain said Oregonians spend \$1.7 billion in taxes to subsidize low-income wages along with irregular work schedules and inadequate benefits. Meanwhile, the companies employing low-wage workers (companies like Walmart, and McDonalds) are bringing in record profits.

"This is wrong. Corporate

greed will destroy our state, our nation, our communities, and our families," Chamberlain said. "It is time to hold them accountable. It is time for the Oregon Legislature to pass a minimum wage that lifts workers out of poverty, not one that drives them into it."

Tim Stoelb, president of the Oregon School Employees Association, called on the Legislature to "outlaw poverty" by passing a \$15 per hour minimum wage. "There are 200,000 reasons — that's the number of Oregon children who live in households below the federal poverty line," Stoelb said.

After rallying on the steps of the State Capitol, supporters marched through the streets of Salem to share their message.

Some of the labor organizations at the event were: Oregon School Employees Association; American Federation of Teachers; Portland Association of Teachers; Laborers Local 483; Oregon Education Association; Service Employees Locals 49



Workers hold up signs in support of raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour during a rally Saturday, Jan. 24, at the Oregon State Capitol in Salem.

and 503; AFSCME Locals 88 and 328; the Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals Local 5017; Amalgamated

Transit Union Local 757; IBEW Local 48; Communications Workers Local 7901; Musicians Local 99; International Long-

shore and Warehouse Union; Teamsters; and the Northwest Oregon, and Marion, Polk, Yamhill labor councils.