

# Kroger and Albertsons Proposed Grocery Store Merger



Kim Cordova, President UFCW7, left, speaks about the Kroger and Albertsons Merger. AP Photo/Jenny Kane

## CEOs of Albertsons and Kroger says Shoppers would See Lower Prices After Merger

(AP) — The chief executive officers of Kroger and Albertsons insisted Wednesday — under questioning from the federal government — that merging would allow the two supermarket companies to lower prices and more effectively compete with retail giants like Walmart, Costco and Amazon.

Kroger CEO Rodney McMullen and Albertsons CEO Vivek Sankaran appeared in Oregon's U.S. District Court to testify against the Federal Trade Commission's attempt to block the proposed merger of their companies. During the hearing, the commission's lawyers suggested that the merger would hurt competition in certain areas where the two are each other's primary rivals.

"The day that we merge is the day that we will begin lowering prices," McMullen said while under questioning by a lawyer representing his company.

The two companies proposed what would be the largest supermarket merger in U.S. history in October 2022, after Kroger agreed to purchase Albertsons. But the Federal Trade Commission sued to prevent the \$24.6 billion deal, alleging it would eliminate competition and lead to higher food prices for already struggling customers.

Addressing another issue that has worried shoppers in communities with both Albertsons and Kroger-run stores, McMullen said Kroger was committed to not closing any branches immediately if the merger is finalized but might down the road if it decides location changes or consolidations are needed. Sankaran, Albert-

sons' CEO, argued that the deal would boost growth and in turn bolster stores and union jobs, because many of its and Kroger's competitors, like Walmart, have few unionized workers. But when asked what his company would do if the merger didn't go through, he said it may pursue "structural options" like laying off employees, closing stores and exiting certain markets, if unable to find other ways to lower costs.

"I would have to consider that," he said. "It's a dramatically different picture with the merger than without it."

The testimonies of both CEOs were expected to be critical components of the three-week hearing, which is at its midpoint. What the two say under oath about prices, potential store closures and the impact on workers will likely be scrutinized in the years ahead if the merger goes through.

McMullen said that Albertsons' prices are 10% to 12% higher than Kroger's and that the merged company would try to reduce the disparity as part of a strategy for keeping customers. "We know that pricing is going to continue to go down," McMullen said.

"America needs more competition, more grocery stores, and more leverage for workers to secure better pay and staffing — not less," the United Food and Commercial Workers International union's Stop the Merger coalition said in a statement Wednesday.

McMullen said Wednesday that Kroger was committed to honoring existing labor contracts. Under the proposed deal, Kroger and Albertsons would sell 579 stores in places where their locations overlap to C&S Wholesale Grocers, a New Hampshire-based supplier to independent supermarkets that also owns the Grand Union and Piggly Wiggly store brands.



Pamela Yarosz and her daughter Capri are shown with a photo of New York Firefighter Christopher Michael Mozzillo, who died in the 9/11 attacks. Mozzillo was Pamela's brother. (AP photo/Noah K. Murray)

## Heroes That Will Never Be Forgotten

### A 9/11 Anniversary Tradition is Handed Down to a New Generation

(AP) — A poignant phrase echoes when 9/11 victims' relatives gather each year to remember the loved ones they lost in the terror attacks.

"I never got to meet you."

It is the sound of generational change at ground zero, where relatives read out victims' names on every anniversary of the attacks. Nearly 3,000 people were killed when al-Qaida hijackers crashed four jetliners into the twin towers, the Pentagon and a field in southwest Pennsylvania on Sept. 11, 2001.

Some names are read out by children or young adults who were born after the strikes. Last year's observance featured 28 such young people among more than 140 readers. Young people are expected again at this year's ceremony Wednesday. Some are the children of victims whose partners were pregnant. More of the young readers are victims' nieces, nephews or grandchildren. They have inherited stories, photos, and a sense of solemn responsibility.

Being a "9/11 family" reverberates through generations, and commemorating and understanding the Sept. 11 attacks one day will be up to a world with no first-hand memory of them.

"It's like you're passing the torch on," says Allan Aldycki, 13.

He read the names of his grandfather and several other people the last two years, and plans to do so on Wednesday. Aldycki keeps mementoes in his room from his grandfather Allan Tarasiewicz, a firefighter.

The teen told the audience last year that he's heard so much about his grandfather that it feels like he knew him, "but still, I wish I had a chance to really know you," he added. When it comes time for the ceremony, he looks up information about the lives of each person whose name he's assigned to read.

"He reflects on everything and understands the importance of what it means to somebody," his mother, Melissa Tarasiewicz, said.

On Sept. 11 anniversaries, the Pentagon's ceremony includes military members or officials reading the names of the 184 people killed there. The Flight 93 National Memorial has victims' relatives and friends read the list of the 40 passengers and crew members whose lives ended at the rural site near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

The hour long observance at the 9/11 Memorial in New York is almost exclusively dedicated to the names of the 2,977 victims at all three sites, plus the six people killed in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. All are read by relatives who volunteer and are chosen by lottery.

"It means a lot to me that I can kind of keep alive my uncle's name and just keep reading everybody else's name, so that more of the upcoming generations will know," she said by phone from her family's home in central New Jersey. "I feel good that I can pass down the importance of what happened." Her two younger sisters also have read names, and one is preparing to do so again Wednesday. Their mother, Pamela Yarosz, has never been able to steel herself to sign up.

"I don't have that strength. It's too hard for me," says Pamela Yarosz, who is Mozzillo's sister. "They're braver."