

Raley's union, management to return to negotiating table

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Raley's and its labor union, locked in a lengthy stalemate over a new contract, are finally talking again.

The West Sacramento grocery chain and the United Food and Commercial Workers will resume negotiations Aug. 31.

It will be their first bargaining session since June 8 and follows several more weeks of turmoil in Northern California's unionized supermarket industry.

Two weeks ago, UFCW members rejected a tentative contract with Save Mart Supermarkets by a wide margin – but stopped short of authorizing a strike against the Modesto grocer. Negotiations haven't yet resumed.

And last Friday, Raley's announced it's closing two more stores – one in Woodland and one in Pittsburg. The struggling chain has now closed six stores this year.

Raley's, Save Mart and Northern California's third unionized chain, Safeway, are pushing for wage and benefit concessions as they try to recapture market share from Wal-Mart and other nonunion competitors. Talks began last fall.

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