

Raley's says deal on the table to end strike

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Raley's said today it has struck a deal to end its strike.

There was no immediate confirmation from the United Food and Commercial Workers. Ellen Anreder, a spokeswoman for UFCW Local 8 in Roseville, said there wasn't a signed agreement yet.

The announcement from Raley's came after a marathon negotiating session in San Francisco that went all night and into the morning. Bargaining resumed over the weekend.

Raley's didn't provide any details of the agreement but said an announcement was expected later this morning.

The UFCW went on strike a week ago Sunday over the grocer's demands for wage and benefit concessions. In particular, the workers rebelled against Raley's proposals to restructure their health care plan and eliminate coverage for Medicare-eligible retirees.

The company said that while sales were affected by the walkout, revenue was steadily improving in recent days. Raley's also said well more than half the UFCW members crossed their own picket line to return to work.

But Raley's may have suffered a setback last Thursday, when rival Safeway signed a tentative labor agreement with the union. The deal preserved the union-preferred health plan and left Raley's as the only unionized grocery chain in the region without a contract. Save Mart Supermarkets made a deal with the union in September.