

**For Immediate Release**

March 22, 2020

**Local 881 UFCW Mourns the Passing of Ronald E. Powell, President Emeritus**

**Des Plaines, IL** - Ronald E. Powell, former President of Local 881 and International Vice President of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, passed away this morning of natural causes.

Ron retired on December 1, 2018, after 57 and a half years of faithful and dedicated service to the working families in the retail grocery industry and the American Labor Movement.

Ron was born on April 5, 1935, in rural Wisconsin, where he was raised on a farm. Ron served his country in the United States Army, and following his service studied at Northern Illinois University, graduating in 1960.

In 1960, he commenced employment at the Jewel Tea Company in DeKalb, Illinois, where he successfully led the first and only recognition strike against the company; after which he joined the staff of Local 881 (formerly the United Retail Workers Union, Independent).

Following the recognition strike, Ron began his union career as a Field Representative in 1961, and was promoted to Director of Field Operations, Vice President of the Executive Board, Secretary-Treasurer, and then in 1983, was elected to the office of President. At his retirement he became the longest-serving Constitutional Officer of Local 881 UFCW. As President, Ron built Local 881 into the largest local union in the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union. Ron was also elected Vice President on the Illinois AFL-CIO Executive Board on December 4, 1986, and remained a leading voice in its governance under six Illinois AFL-CIO Presidents.

Throughout his life and career Ron vigilantly fought to strengthen the rights of union members throughout Illinois and Northwest Indiana in the workplace and in the halls of government. Ron mentored and helped countless workers find their voice on the job and steered Local 881 through periods of challenges and growth while providing guidance to the broader Labor Movement as the most senior UFCW International Vice President.

In addition to his work in labor, Ron committed himself to many educational, philanthropic, and community endeavors, including: the Better Boys Foundation, Little City Foundation, United Way, the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of America, and the UFCW Local 881 Charitable Foundation. He served the Village of Mundelein as a Trustee for many years, the Illinois State Board of Investments, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois, Illinois Workers' Compensation Advisory Board, Amalgamated Bank of Chicago, Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority Board, and was elected as a Delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1996, 2000, and 2008.

Ron's unwavering commitment to his career only matched his dedication to his family. His beloved wife, Lois, preceded him in death on November 15, 2018. Ron is survived by children Kelly (Mark) Morrissey, Brad (Joanne) Powell, Steven Powell, and Kerry Fisher, grandchildren: Nicholas (fiancé Patricia Kutrumanes), Mark (Amanda), Michelle, Matthew, Ronald, Camille, Michael, Tyler (Koni), Trevor (Jasmine), Sean and Rachel, great-grandchildren: Braylon, Jaylen, Rylee and Jax, and Ron and Lois' dear friend Penney Wyman. He was preceded in death by his grandson Ryan Fisher.

Due to current circumstances, a private family graveside service will be held and a celebration of Ron's life will be held at a later date.

Memorials in Ron's memory may be made to the Local 881 UFCW Charitable Foundation, 1350 E. Touhy Ave, Suite 300 E, Des Plaines, IL 60018.

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*Local 881 UFCW represents 34,000 members employed in retail food and drug stores throughout Illinois and Northwest Indiana, cannabis workers in Illinois, as well as a professional division comprised of health and nursing home workers, barbers and cosmetologists, and workers in other retail and service industries. Among the companies under contract with Local 881 are Jewel Food Stores, Osco Drug, Mariano's, CVS Pharmacy, Kroger, Schnucks, Conagra Brands, and many smaller chains and independent stores, as well as nursing homes and other business establishments. Local 881 is among the largest affiliates of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, which represents 1.3 million members in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico.*