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IN THIS EDITION, YOU WILL FIND:

- More on the win in Georgia!
- The latest news on the omnibus and other federal budget bills.
- News from the FTC on the proposed merger between Kroger and Albertsons.

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With the Georgia election now behind us, I want to thank you all for everything you did during this election season. Our Political Member Organizers, Local and International Union staff all worked extremely hard and put in long hours and we were instrumental in many great victories across the nation, electing politicians who put the needs of our members first. With a 51-seat majority in the Senate, Democrats are poised to make a real impact on the lives our members. Thank you all again for your hard work in making this possible.

- Ademola

Updates From Capitol Hill

- The FTC asked Kroger to provide [more details about its proposed merger](#) with Albertsons. The request extends the waiting period to complete the deal until they have “substantially complied” with providing the requested information.
- Top appropriators are working on a [massive year-end funding deal](#) but no one has seen topline numbers. They will likely need to pass a short-term continuing resolution (CR) to get them past the December 16 deadline. The stakes are high because lawmakers keenly aware that passing annual spending bills in the divided 118th Congress will be tough.
- House and Senate negotiators [filed the National Defense Authorization Act \(NDAA\)](#), a mammoth defense policy bill. Not included in the bill: SAFE Banking or Pregnant Workers Fairness Act.

- The [proposed DOL independent contractor rule](#) would make it more difficult for companies to misclassify workers and may significantly impact chicken farmers. Most poultry processing companies operate under contract arrangements and the new rule could open up potential legal challenges on existing system that dominates the industry.
 - One hundred health organizations and provider associations [sent a letter to congressional leaders](#) asking them to prevent the 4.5% reduction in Medicare payment rates that CMS will implement [on January 1, 2023](#). Groups said that these cuts, in addition to inflation pressures, would translate to reductions in staffing and the purchase of essential technologies.
 - Organized labor has worked around the clock to push for [more funding for National Labor Relations Board](#). The NLRB budget that has remained flat since 2014, and if the department does not get funding soon, it could mean that employees will be furloughed. This means that it will be even more difficult to certify union organizing elections, or issue complaints against employers when they commit unfair labor practices.
 - The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services have [announced they will hold monthly meetings with drugmakers](#) as the agency works to implement the Medicare provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The IRA includes several [conditions that will lower prescription drug costs](#) for Medicare enrollees and reduce drug spending by the federal government.
 - The Department of Homeland Security [has extended Temporary Protected Status \(TPS\) for Haiti](#) for an additional 18 months and will allow newly eligible Haitian nationals to apply for TPS and employment authorization documentation.
 - The SAFE Banking Act of 2021 - the bill that would give cannabis workers and their employers access to traditional banking services - died again in the US Senate as it was removed from the NDAA. There is a slim but not impossible chance that [it could still pass the Senate](#) before the end of the session, either as a part of the omnibus or as an independent bill.
 - Rep. Virginia Foxx on Wednesday [received a waiver](#) from the Republican Steering Committee to be chair of the House Education and Labor Committee in the next Congress. The North Carolina Republican has been seeking the waiver due to a GOP conference rule that bars members from serving more than three consecutive terms as a ranking member or chair of a committee. Foxx has a lengthy anti-union agenda for the committee including investigations of the DOL and union spending.
 - The Department of Justice issued a [memo laying out concerns that pending marijuana banking legislation](#) could “complicate” enforcement against other drug and money laundering crimes—though it believes it can “effectively implement” the bill with changes.
 - Sen. Tom Cotton (R-AR) has [introduced legislation to overturn the Department of Labor’s new rule](#) permitting retirement plan fiduciaries to consider climate change and other environmental, social and governance factors when selecting investments and exercising shareholder rights.
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News From the Field

- On November 8th when it was clear that Georgia was headed to a runoff for the US Senate Race, L1996 was ready to dive into action. During the election season Political Member Organizers had spent months knocking on doors, visiting worksites, and making phone calls. From November through December those same Political Member Organizers continued the hard work to make sure our members turned out to vote on December 6th with over 2500 members.
 - Locals 7R, 99, 400, 655, 770, 1776KS, and 1994 sent staff out to knock on doors the final week of the runoff (pictured below). Thanks to the twenty-seven staff and members, **we were able to knock on nearly 10,000 doors** in Gwinnett County, a key county in securing Warnock's victory.
 - In a statement to the press, [UFCW International President Marc Perrone said](#), "our union has much to be proud of thanks to the mobilization effort our members mounted during this year's midterm elections, both in Georgia and across the country. We look forward to continuing to fight for essential workers and their families with Senator Reverend Warnock and all of his Senate colleagues as we head into this next Congress."



- Michele Kessler, Secretary-Treasurer of UFCW Local 1776, [has been named Co-Chair](#) of Pennsylvania Governor-Elect Josh Shapiro and Lieutenant Governor-Elect Austin Davis inauguration committee!
- New York state's first licensed recreational cannabis stores are set to open in the next few weeks, with all cannabis companies required to [submit labor peace agreements](#) prior to receiving a cannabis license.

- Pennsylvania has released a new Task Force Report estimating that almost 50,000 Pennsylvania [employers are misclassifying workers as independent contractors](#) and making recommendations to address the problem, including expansion of a state law that currently applies to the construction industry, adoption of a uniform test to differentiate employees versus independent contractors, and stiffening penalties for employers that misclassify workers.
- Washington D.C. Attorney General Karl Racine is suing Amazon and its subsidiary Amazon Logistics, alleging that they broke the law and [stole tips from delivery drivers](#) alleging that Amazon violated the District of Columbia's Consumer Protection Procedures Act by "lying to consumers" about whether the tips they selected during the checkout process for their Amazon Flex delivery service would be passed on to drivers in full.