

# Labor: 'Times of trouble'

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the keynote address at the Washington State Labor Council's annual convention. The three-day event, which has attracted 500 union delegates from across the state, will include speeches by Sen. Maria Cantwell and Western Washington congressmen Jay Inslee and Brian Baird.

The delegates will vote Saturday on a resolution that endorses the UFW's Fair Trade efforts. Chavez-Thompson said she supports the idea and will share it with AFL-CIO executives in Washington, D.C.

During the editorial board meeting, Guadalupe Gamboa, UFW state director and national vice president, said the campaign is based on a strategy used by coffee producers to get fair-market value for their coffee from major retailers.

He said even an extra 5 cents per pound would help increase profits for apple growers because of the high volume of apples sold in supermarkets.

According to a recent Washington State University study, a worker gets 4 cents of every dollar from apple sales. The grower receives 7 cents, while the store pockets 68 cents. The

remaining 21 cents goes to packaging and transportation costs.

The union is talking with economists and growers to establish a profit goal for the Fair Trade campaign, Gamboa said.

Retailers and growers have yet to buy into the campaign, according to Gamboa. It could be up to a year before retailers start selling apples with a label that identifies the fruit as labor friendly by UFW standards.

Gamboa said consumers would have to be willing to pay more for their apples — a challenging aspect of the campaign that would require a big effort to educate consumers about the plight of growers and workers.

Mike Gempler, executive director for the Washington Growers League, said earlier this month that he is skeptical that the union plan would work.

"It would be good to get recognition for the fact that growers in this state meet labor laws," he said then. But if retailers can find high quality apples to buy for less than the premium they would have to pay for Fair Trade apples, they will, he said.

"Not every grower is going to agree with this campaign," Gamboa admitted. "Some are, though, and we're going to look out for them.

"In times of trouble is when people are open to new ideas," he said.

Chavez-Thompson said immigration remains one of the union's biggest issues.

The AFL-CIO, a federation of 64 affiliated unions representing 13 million members, announced a new policy last year that supports legal status for undocumented workers and their families, as well as employer sanctions and a penalty system that targets businesses that exploit illegal workers for commercial gain.

President George Bush is expected to announce his immigration proposal in early September when Mexican President Vicente Fox visits Washington, D.C.

Chavez-Thompson said she doubts any proposed legislation to give legal status to the millions of Mexican immigrants living in the United States will pass this year. She said passage is more likely next year.

"If we ship those 8 or 9 million people out of this country, it wouldn't slow the economy down, it would stop it," she said. "If they're paying taxes and providing a benefit to the U.S. economy — we say give those people a chance."