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BAPTIST MINISTERS AND NATIONAL ACTION NETWORK ENDORSE UNION'S SECURITY OFFICER CAMPAIGN

--Local 32BJ's Campaign Aims to Raise Wages for 60,000 Security Officers --

New York, NY – Honoring the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King's fight for economic and social justice, the Baptist Ministers Conference of Greater NY and the Reverend Al Sharpton's National Action Network today endorsed Local 32BJ's security campaign to organize up to 60,000 security officers in New York. The announcements came at two major events in Manhattan today commemorating the anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King's Birthday.

"By seeking to raise the pay of security officers, Local 32BJ's security officer campaign will benefit thousands of African-Americans, their families and communities around the city", said Rev. Al Sharpton. "By obsessing on their bottom line, billionaire building owners – such as Peter Malkin of the Empire State Building – are depriving hard-working African-Americans of a fair chance to attain Rev. King's dream for racial equality and economic justice."

More than 60,000 men and women in New York, most of whom are African-American, work as private security officers in New York. Although security officers keep our city safe, many of them – including officers employed by Copstat at the Empire State Building – earn less than \$10/hr, receive no affordable health care and little, if any, state-of-the-art security training.

"Nearly four decades after Dr. King stood alongside sanitation workers in Memphis in their fight for respect, religious leaders in New York need to stand up and support the Union's fight for justice for security officers," said Rev. Charles Joubert, President of the Baptist Ministers' Conference of Greater New York & Vicinity. "Dr. King said: 'The coalition that can have the greatest impact in the struggle for human dignity here in America is that of the Negro and the forces of labor, because their fortunes are so closely intertwined.'"

Rev. Joubert said that the Union's security officer campaign should become part of the Black community's on-going struggle for living wages, fair benefits and respect on the job. "The hard working men and women who protect our city need us to stand shoulder to shoulder with Local 32BJ in their campaign to get New York's wealthiest building owners to do the right thing."

"The support of the Baptist Conference and the National Action Network greatly strengthens Local 32BJ's fight for the economic justice of security officers," said Mike Fishman, President of Local 32BJ. "It's unfair for building owners to count on security officers to protect their billion dollar buildings, but barely pay them enough to afford their rent, support their families or give back to their communities by sustaining local businesses."

In addition to higher wages and affordable health care, Local 32BJ's security campaign has stressed the need for state-of-the-art security training. Local 32BJ's New York Safe & Secure Program, which has been endorsed by the Mayor, Police Commissioner and elected officials, provides security officers with the skills they need to get ahead in their job and to keep all New Yorkers safe and secure.

“Four years after 9/11, when the role of security officers has become one of the most important jobs in this city, its unacceptable for building owners to refuse to raise wage and training standards for a job that we all depend on to be safe and secure,” said Fishman.

Two months ago, Rep. Charles Rangel, former Mayor David Dinkins, leaders of the NAACP and ACORN as well as dozens of religious leaders called on New York building owners to raise standards for New York’s private security officers by raising wage, benefit and training standards. In a letter hand-delivered to Steven Spinola, the President of the Real Estate Board of New York, religious leaders called on the real estate industry to “publicly support Local 32BJ’s campaign by pledging to raise the wage, benefit and training standards of security officers in New York City.”

“The New York real estate industry has the resources and the moral obligation to transform this industry,” states the letter dated November 14, 2005. “Doing so will make New York safer and will turn dead-end jobs into good jobs – jobs that can support families and uplift communities of color.”

With more than 85,000 members, including 60,000 building service workers in New York, Local 32BJ is the largest private sector union in New York and the largest building service union in the country.

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