



NEWS

Service Employees International Union

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Kate Ferranti: (212) 388-3469
(917) 968-7853

Matt Nerzig: (212) 539-2882
(917) 584-0787

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 30, 2005

Local 32BJ Launches Prevailing Wage Campaign in New Jersey
-- Legislation would raise wages for state-contracted building service workers --

Newark, NJ – Having raised wages for private sector building service workers in New Jersey, Local 32BJ is launching a campaign to raise wage and health care standards for state-contracted building service workers. Most state-contracted building service workers earn around \$6.15/hour, less than half as much as the prevailing wage for janitorial work according to the federal government.

“Good wages help workers support their families and give back to the local economy and their community,” said Mike Fishman, Local 32BJ President. “Government contractors should not undermine workplace standards in the private sector.”

The New Jersey Prevailing Wage Act (A4161/S2702), introduced by Assembly Majority Leader Joe Roberts (D-Camden) and Senator Joe Coniglio, Chair, Senate State Government Committee (D-Paramus), would require contractors to pay prevailing wages and health care to workers at state-owned and leased sites. The average federal prevailing wage rate for New Jersey building service workers is \$13.16 per hour, as determined by the U.S. Department of Labor. Under current law, the State of New Jersey is required to award cleaning contracts to the lowest bidder, leaving state-contracted building service workers with dramatically lower wages than private sector cleaners.

“It is very hard to pay the rent, put food on the table and support my family on such low wages,” said Fausta Jeronimo, who cleans the William Ashby Building and the NJ State House in Trenton.

The bill would boost wages for at least 500 building service workers at state-owned or state-leased property – including state agencies such as the Department of Transportation, the Motor Vehicle Commission, NJ Transit stations and institutes of higher education. Contractors including ABM Industries and CSI support the legislation because it would level the playing field for contractors by basing competition on work quality instead of driving down wages.

“Low-wage, no-benefit jobs force workers to rely on government-subsidized health care programs that are costly to taxpayers,” said Hector Figueroa, Local 32BJ Secretary-Treasurer. “By providing good wages and health care, the bill enables cleaners to pursue the American Dream.”

The bill was passed by the Assembly Labor Committee on June 13, 2005 and will be reviewed by the Senate Labor Committee tomorrow. It is expected to be passed by that Committee and move to budget hearings. New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts and California have prevailing wage laws for building service workers, and New Jersey already has a prevailing wage law for construction work.

With more than 75,000 members, including 6,000 in New Jersey, Local 32BJ is the largest property service union in the United States.

###