



For Immediate Release:  
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**Study of Manhattan Security Guards Released Today by Community Service Society  
Finds Poor Training, Low Pay and Lack of Job Security  
Shortchanges Workers and Public Safety**

New York, NY May 11, 2006 – A new report from the Community Service Society (CSS) “Shortchanging Security” finds that inadequate training, lack of job security and low pay are undermining the ability of New York City’s security guards to protect the public.

In focus groups composed of security guards working in Manhattan office buildings, participants described training ranging from minimal to non-existent:

*The first job I had . . . I didn’t get no training. All they did was give me a uniform and say, “Sit there.”*

*Security, you just go for 8-hour certification. They’d show you some TV with a picture of person going to blow up a building. That’s it.*

Many of the non-union workers openly admitted that this lack of training, combined with low pay, few benefits, and no job security resulted in a demoralized workforce. As one security guard put it, “Lots of guys just feel that they don’t pay you enough to push the button. They don’t care. It jeopardizes a lot of things, a lot of people.”

Guards who are members of SEIU Local 32BJ, however, reported that they are relatively satisfied with their pay and benefits, have received ample training, and enjoy a degree of job security that allows them to do their work effectively. The existence of good security jobs in the unionized sector can yield substantial benefits to the public.

“As the first line of defense, most of us would want security workers who perceive themselves as getting a fair wage, can take care of their health, and are prepared to handle routine and challenging conditions,” says David R. Jones, President of the Community Service Society. “Such workers, as was evidenced in our interviews with union members, have a stake in keeping these good jobs and are highly motivated to do their best.”

“The situation of low-paid security guards exemplifies the plight of the working poor in New York,” said Nancy Rankin, director of research for CSS and co-author of the study. “Despite working steady jobs, that can be high stress, and are critical for the city’s daily functioning, these workers earn too little to make ends meet but too much to qualify for government programs like Medicaid and Food Stamps.”

More than 61,000 security guards work in the city. The vast majority are African American and Latino men with few other employment options.

“This is an occupation that should be valued. It can offer a source of good jobs to people without a college education,” says Mark Levitan, Senior Labor Market Policy Analyst and co-author of the study. “That would help fill a critical gap in the city, particularly for less educated men of color, who today experience high rates of joblessness and unemployment.”

The report, commissioned by SEIU Local 32BJ, is solely the work of CSS.

*The Community Service Society (CSS) is a leading, independent, nonprofit organization that provides innovative solutions to the most urgent problems facing low-income New Yorkers. For more than 160 years, we have worked to strengthen community life by conducting research, policy analysis, advocacy, and service initiatives*