



# NEWS

SERVICE EMPLOYEES  
INTERNATIONAL UNION

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SURBURBAN PHILLY JANITORS MARCH FOR THE AMERICAN DREAM**

*--Clergy, Elected Officials Unite in Support of Fired Workers, Campaign for Wages and Benefits--*

PHILADELPHIA, PA—Clergy, elected officials and community leaders joined janitors in a march through Norristown Thursday afternoon to protest the firings of five workers and to kick off a public campaign for improved wages and benefits for 3,000 commercial office cleaners in suburban Philadelphia.

“These workers have a right to stand together for just and living wages without facing threats or retaliation,” said Rev. William Murphy, who kicked off the march with a benediction at St. Patrick Church in Norristown. “I support suburban Philly janitors in their struggle to achieve the American Dream.”

Last week, one of the Philadelphia-area’s largest contractors—Budget Maintenance— fired five workers, at the Montgomery Corporate Center and Horsham Corporate Center, who had petitioned the company for better wages and benefits. Local 32BJ filed unfair labor practice charges against Budget on Tuesday and took the strong step of asking the National Labor Relations Board to restore the workers to their jobs pending outcome of the Board process.

“Instead of listening to our requests, we were fired for putting our names on a piece of paper,” said Rigoberto Trinidad, one of the five fired cleaners. “We organized, took a risk and lost our jobs, but did so to help our families and friends.”

The fired cleaners are part of a growing campaign to bring the wages and benefits of 3,000 workers who clean 51 million square feet of suburban Philadelphia office space in line with Center City cleaners. While commercial cleaners in Center City earn \$12.96/hour with health care, cleaners in the suburbs make as little as \$7 an hour, without benefits.

“Intimidating workers for trying to improve their lives will not be tolerated” said Leo Love, Local 32BJ District 36 Secretary. “We are watching contractors like Budget closely to make sure they follow the law.”

“Working two jobs barely pays for rent, food, and taking care of my family,” said Carlos Lopez, another of the fired workers. “With no health care, I must choose between paying for a doctor and supporting my family if I get sick.”

U.S. Reps. Allyson Schwartz and Robert Brady and State Senator LeAnna Washington have signed a “Justice for Janitors” pledge. On Tuesday, the Norristown Council approved a resolution supporting the campaign.

“Building owners have a responsibility to hire contractors that don't force workers into poverty,” said State Rep. Daylin Leach. “Jobs that pay living wages and health care are good for workers and the community.”

“At \$7 an hour, I struggle to make ends meet and sometimes must choose between putting food on the table and paying the rent,” said Ana López, who receives no health care, sick days, or paid holidays from her job with City Cleaning Contractors in King of Prussia.

With more than 75,000 members, SEIU 32BJ is the largest building service workers union in the country.

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