



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Governor Codey Signs NJ Prevailing Wage Bill

New Law Could Double Wages for Hundreds of State-Contracted Property Service Workers in NJ

Newark, NJ – Under a new law signed by Governor Richard J. Codey today in New Jersey, some 500 state-contracted property service workers can look forward to dramatically higher wages and the security of health care coverage. The NJ Building Services Prevailing Wage Act (A4161/S2702) requires contractors to pay prevailing wages and health care to workers at state-owned and leased sites. The Senate and the Assembly passed the bill on Monday.

“The prevailing wage law ensures that the hard-working men and women who maintain New Jersey buildings are paid a living wage and health care, which will help them to better support their families and give back to the local economy and community,” said Governor Codey. “Throughout my term as Governor, we have undertaken many measures geared toward improving worker’s conditions, including raising the minimum wage.

New Jersey is the fifth state to pass a prevailing wage law for property service workers – joining New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts and California. Local 32BJ also spearheaded the campaign to pass the law in Connecticut in 1999.

“Fighting for the NJ prevailing wage law is part of Local 32BJ’s region-wide campaign to ensure property service workers are treated fairly,” said Mike Fishman, Local 32BJ President. “All workers, whether from the private sector or the public sector, deserve living wages and health care.”

The law sets the prevailing wage at the rates set by the federal “Service Contract Act of 1965” and differs by county – the average rate is \$13.16 per hour. Previously, the State was required to award contracts to the lowest bidder, leaving state-contracted workers with wages around \$6.15 an hour and no benefits. Affected service workers are employed at state-owned or leased property – including government buildings such as the State House and agencies such as the Department of Transportation, the Motor Vehicle Commission, NJ Transit stations and institutes of higher education.

“The prevailing wage law is good for New Jersey’s workers, contractors and taxpayers,” said Hector Figueroa, Local 32BJ Secretary-Treasurer. “Good wages and health care help workers reduce their dependence on public assistance. At the same time, the new law levels the playing field for contractors by basing competition on quality of work instead of a race to the bottom for low wages.”

Having successfully doubled wages for thousands of private sector building service workers in New Jersey during the last five years, Local 32BJ launched a campaign last year to raise wage and health care standards for state-contracted workers. Assembly Majority Leader Joe Roberts (D-Camden) and Senator Joe Coniglio, Chair, Senate State Government Committee (D-Paramus) introduced the legislation last spring.

“I need this law because it is very difficult to live on \$6.15 an hour without any benefits,” said Pedro Gomez, who cleans the Department of Community Affairs building in Trenton.

With more than 85,000 members, including 6,000 property service workers in New Jersey, Local 32BJ is the largest private sector union in the metropolitan area and the largest property service union in the United States.

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