



NEWS

SERVICE EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW HAVEN JANITORS RALLY FOR JUSTICE

Elected Officials, Community and Religious Leaders Join Workers in a March and Rally to Support Justice for Janitors Campaign

New Haven, CT – Hundreds of janitors were joined by local elected officials, religious leaders, community supporters and union members at a rally and march to call for improved wages and benefits for the 400 janitors who clean more than 45 buildings, or approximately 10 million square feet of commercial office space, in New Haven County. The workers have joined together in a campaign for better wages, benefits such as health insurance, sick days and paid holidays, and respect on the job.

“All workers deserve decent wages to support their families, and to be treated with dignity and respect,” said New Haven Mayor John DeStefano. “I am supporting Local 32BJ’s campaign to raise the quality of life for working people because it will strengthen our communities and our City.”

The New Haven area janitorial workforce is non-union and is made up largely of Latino immigrants who live in and around the City. Most earn only minimum wage, \$7.40 per hour, or slightly more, and have no health insurance. Further, most of the janitorial jobs are part time, forcing cleaners to work two or three jobs. In contrast, Hartford area cleaners will earn \$11.50 per hour in 2007 and full time workers receive employer-paid health care.

“We work very hard, but struggle everyday to make ends meet on such low wages,” said Antonia Hernandez, who has worked for SMG for more than 3 years cleaning a downtown New Haven building. SMG is the second largest contractor in New Haven County.

The Most Reverend Peter A. Rosazza, New Haven Board of Aldermen President Carl Goldfield, New Haven BOA Members Jacqueline James, Dolores Colon, Ed Mattison, Alphonse Paolillo and Tom Lehtonen, New Haven BOA Black and Hispanic Caucus President Jorge Perez, State Senator Toni Hart, State Representative Toni Walker and community groups including CORD and United Latinos in Action as well as labor leaders and union members pledged their support to the Justice for Janitors campaign. Following the rally, janitors led a march to the U.S. District Court on Church St.

“Today, the hard-working janitors of New Haven are making their voices heard and standing up for the American Dream, just as Stamford workers did several years ago,” said Kurt Westby, Local 32BJ Connecticut District Chair. “New Haven’s real estate market is healthy and these workers deserve to be treated fairly and on par with janitors in other parts of the state.”

With more than 85,000 members in six states and Washington, D.C. – including 4,500 in Connecticut – Local 32BJ is the largest property services union in the country.

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