



NEWS

SERVICE EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION

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LOCAL 32BJ LAUNCHES TALKS TO INCREASE WAGES AND BENEFITS FOR MORE THAN 1,800 UNION MEMBERS

Union Proposals Focus on Ensuring Fully Employer-Paid Family Health Care Coverage

Hartford, CT – Negotiations for a new union contract for more than 1,800 commercial property service workers in the City of Hartford and Hartford County began today between Local 32BJ and representatives from several cleaning companies, including UNICCO Service Company, Capitol Carpet Upholstery and American Building Maintenance (ABM). More than 90 percent of downtown Hartford’s large commercial office space is cleaned by Local 32BJ members.

“Our proposals would ensure Hartford’s hard-working office cleaners receive the raises and health care coverage they need to support their families in one of the wealthiest states in the country,” said Kurt Westby, Local 32BJ Connecticut Director. “The workers who help keep Connecticut’s capital running should also benefit from the growing demand for the city’s office space.”

Local 32BJ members in Hartford County are fighting for a fair wage increase and to ensure fully employer-paid health insurance for themselves and their families. Failure to reach a new contract by December 31, 2007, when the current contract expires, could lead to a strike by more than 1,800 property service workers who work for cleaning contractors at the United Technology Corporation building, the Aetna building, the Hartford Insurance Group building, the Travelers building, the Signa building and the Citigroup building.

“Now that I’m a father, health insurance has a new meaning to me,” said Manuel Estrada, an office cleaner at the Hartford State Capitol Duplex. “I have a new baby-girl who needs regular check-ups and immunizations. I can’t afford to pay health care premiums on top of the diapers, vitamins and other things she needs.”

Hartford commercial property service workers are negotiating their contract alongside 1,800 Local 32BJ members in Fairfield County and nearly 50,000 Local 32BJ members from four other northeastern states and Washington, D.C. Most of the contracts are set to expire on December 31, 2007. Currently, more than 150,000 people - workers and their family members - receive health care through 32BJ commercial contracts.

“Hartford office cleaners deserve the same fully employer-paid family health care coverage that other 32BJ members in the Tri-State Area receive,” said Mike Fishman, Local 32BJ President. “Family-

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sustaining wages and benefits for workers in Hartford are essential to maintaining the health and wealth of Connecticut's capital city."

Since the last contract negotiations in 2004, Connecticut has benefited from economic growth in businesses across the financial services and insurance industries. As a result, the commercial real estate market has strengthened. Current vacancy rates in Hartford's commercial business district are at their lowest point in the past two years – down at least 2.5 percent since early 2005.

"We hope to receive the wage increases and benefits that we work so hard to earn," said Ciro Gutierrez, a cleaner in Hartford and member of the contract bargaining committee. "We're not asking for millions of dollars – just enough to support our families."

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

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