



# NEWS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **CONTRACT TALKS OPEN FOR MORE THAN 26,000 OFFICE CLEANERS IN NEW YORK CITY**

*-- With Industry Booming, Union Seeks Boost in Workers' Wages --*

**New York, NY**— Negotiations for a new labor contract covering more than 26,000 commercial office building cleaners began today when Local 32BJ, the City's largest private sector union, presented its proposals to the Realty Advisory Board (RAB) -- an association of commercial building owners, managers, and cleaning contractors -- for a new contract starting on January 1, 2008.

Local 32BJ's proposal comes as building owners are enjoying a dramatic upturn in the real estate market and workers are suffering from a drop in their purchasing power. This first in a series of face-to-face meetings between the two sides took place at Local 32BJ in downtown Manhattan.

"The time has come to bring workers' wages back into line with the rising cost of living in New York," said Mike Fishman, President of Local 32BJ SEIU. "With New York City's commercial real estate industry booming, there is no excuse for holding back on the real wage increases that these hard working men and women deserve and need to get by in New York."

According to CoStar Group, Inc., rents in Class A office buildings have jumped 26% in just the past year and vacancy rates have dropped to 5.3%, a six-year low. Furthermore, according to Reis, Inc., rents are projected to continue rising. Meanwhile, office building cleaners have seen their real wages, when adjusted for inflation, drop in the last three years.

"The stock market is up, large NY-based firms are showing record profits and the real estate industry is prospering with no end in sight," said Fishman. "Low wage workers should not suffer as the industry flourishes, they should be able to do better than keep pace with the cost of living."

Failure to reach a new contract by December 31, 2007, when the current contract expires, could lead to a strike of some 25,000 commercial property service workers at more than 2,000 buildings, including landmarks such as the World Financial Center, the Met Life building and the Empire State Building.

"We all have families to support and it's getting harder to do so on what we make," said Luis Poposki, a midtown commercial office cleaner. "We're not asking for anything other than what other hard working men and women want—better pay for the jobs we do."

New York is one of six Local 32BJ districts in the northeast to negotiate new commercial contracts this fall. Nearly 50,000 commercial members from Hartford, CT to Washington, D.C. are united in a campaign to secure contracts that raise and maintain wage and benefit standards. Most members are covered by contracts that expire on December 31. If contracts are not reached by that date, strikes cannot be ruled out.

With more than 85,000 members in six states, including 65,000 in New York City, Local 32BJ is the largest property service union in the country.