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SERVICE EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BALTIMORE OFFICE CLEANERS RALLY FOR FAIR CONTRACT

- Contract negotiations for more than 700 Baltimore cleaners begins Thursday -

Baltimore, MD – Hundreds of Baltimore commercial property service workers, along with their co-workers from Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia, today marched through downtown to call for a contract that provides a fair wage increase and keeps benefits secure. Negotiations begin tomorrow for a new union contract covering 700 workers who clean and maintain Baltimore commercial buildings.

On Thursday, Local 32BJ will present contract proposals to leaders representing major commercial cleaning companies in the Washington and Baltimore region including Potomac Red Coats, American Building Maintenance (ABM), and Unicco. The Baltimore contract will be negotiated simultaneously with contracts for 4,500 Washington, D.C. cleaners and 1,500 cleaners in Montgomery County, MD.

“It’s time to make work pay for the hard working men and women who keep Baltimore’s buildings running,” said Jamie Contreras, Local 32BJ Capital Area Director. “These workers need a fair wage increase as well as health care and pension security in order to support their families.”

Local 32BJ commercial cleaners currently earn wages ranging from \$7.50 in Baltimore and Montgomery County, Maryland, to \$10.55 in Washington, D.C. In addition to achieving fair wage increases and job security, other goals include increasing employer-paid benefits. Failure to reach a new contract by midnight on December 31, 2007, when the current contract expires, could lead to a strike of 2,200 workers in Montgomery County and Baltimore at buildings including 100 E. Pratt St., Candler Building, 111 Market Place, Legg Mason Building 100 Light St. and the Bank of America Building.

“Baltimore cleaners – just like cleaners in other cities throughout the region – need to earn wages that will help them get ahead,” said Local 32BJ President Mike Fishman. “Fair compensation is vitally important to the health of our families and our communities, especially in urban centers such as Baltimore, with one of the nation’s highest rates of poverty.” More than 50,000 commercial cleaners from Hartford, CT to Washington, D.C. are united in a campaign to win new contracts that raise wage and benefit standards.

“We deserve a fair share for our hard work,” said Judy Johnson, who has cleaned Baltimore office buildings for 18 years but still earns just \$8.50 an hour with no benefits. “Many times I’m forced to make choices: Do I pay for my electric bill this month, or do I pay for my phone bill?”

With more than 85,000 members in six states, including 9,000 in the Washington DC-Maryland area, Local 32BJ is the largest property service workers union in the country.

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