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Service Employees International Union

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COUNCIL VOTES UNANIMOUSLY FOR BILL TO CREATE GOOD JOBS

– Labor-Community Coalition Celebrates Progress in Economic Development Reform –

Pittsburgh, PA – City Council voted unanimously today for a bill that would create jobs that provide good wages, health care and other benefits to workers employed at new, city-subsidized developments and to workers contracted to work for the City of Pittsburgh. Eight Council Members were co-sponsors of the “prevailing wage bill,” which requires developers and contractors to pay the private-sector going rate to building service, food service, hotel and grocery workers.

“Too many Pittsburghers are working hard but struggling to get by,” said Council President Doug Shields. “This legislation will eliminate the City’s role in creating jobs that keep hard-working families in poverty.”

Pittsburgh United, a coalition of faith, labor, environmental and community organizations, including 32BJ Service Employees International Union (SEIU), United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 23 and Workers United, has been advocating for this bill as part of broader economic development reform. Two other bills, one on environmental protections and one on accountability standards, are expected to be reintroduced in Council next year.

“This was a vote for Pittsburgh families and businesses,” said Gabe Morgan, 32BJ SEIU Western Pennsylvania Director. “No longer will tax-subsidized developers be able to come into Pittsburgh and undercut our local economy.”

Over the past few years, Pittsburgh has subsidized developments that have changed the landscape of the city – from the North Shore to the East End. Despite the investment of city tax dollars and requirements for prevailing rates for the workers who build the developments, many of permanent jobs created at the sites pay below the going rate for service work.

“This legislation will strengthen our businesses, our neighborhoods and our families,” said Tony Helfer, Local 23 UFCW President. “It’s good government to make sure public money isn’t used to undercut private employers and lower wages.”

The legislation will also ensure city-contracted workers receive good wages and health care. Currently, some workers contracted to provide services to the city are earning just above the minimum wage and do not have access to affordable health care. At the City-County building, for example, security officers are paid as little as \$8.30 an hour by Am-Gard.

“When you’re only earning \$8.30 an hour, one job’s not enough,” said Ed Millender, a security officer at the City-County building. “I’m too old to be working so many hours, but I can’t get by on just my day job.”

With the passage of this bill, Pittsburgh joins more than 140 cities that have set wage standards for their contracting programs, according to the National Employment Law Project (NELP). NELP reports these cities have seen little, if any, impact on costs for services.

With more than 110,000 members, including 5,000 in Western Pennsylvania, 32BJ is the largest property services union in the country.

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