

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, January 12, 2010

**COUNCIL PRESIDENT INTRODUCES BILL TO CREATE GOOD JOBS AT
CITY-FUNDED DEVELOPMENTS AND WORKSITES**

– PREVAILING WAGE BILL HAS SIX COSPONSORS –

Pittsburgh, PA – Council President Darlene Harris today introduced a bill to create jobs with good wages, health care and other benefits for workers employed at new, city-subsidized developments and to workers contracted to work for the City of Pittsburgh. Five other Council Members -- Doug Shields, Bill Peduto, Bruce Kraus, Theresa Smith, and new council member Natalia Rudiak – are cosponsoring the bill requiring developers and contractors to pay the private-sector going rate, or prevailing rates, to building service, food service, hotel and grocery workers.

“With too many Pittsburghers struggling to make ends meet, we must ensure that new jobs created with tax payer dollars don’t undercut the going rate for service jobs,” said Council President Harris. “Government should not be in the business of creating poverty-like jobs.”

Today’s bill is a reintroduction of the prevailing wage bill that was vetoed by the Mayor in a last minute New Years Eve action. The original bill unanimously passed the Council 9-0.

“By vetoing a good jobs bill, the mayor has shown a complete disregard for the plight of our city’s working families,” said Council Member Shields. “It comes as no surprise that his so-called alternative doesn’t seem to create any good jobs.”

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

“The bill creates what Pittsburgh needs: good jobs with wages and benefits to support working families,” said Gabe Morgan, 32BJ SEIU Western Pennsylvania Director. “The Mayor is pushing for what he calls a prevailing wage bill that does not seem to create any good jobs for our city’s service workers. We shouldn’t let developers create poverty-like jobs when their projects are subsidized by taxpayer dollars.”

Pittsburgh United, a coalition of faith, labor, environmental and community organizations including 32BJ Service Employees International Union, United Food and Commercial Workers and Workers United, is advocating for this bill as part of broader economic development reform.

“We will not stand for the outrageous acts of a Mayor that placates developers at the expense of our communities,” said Rev. John Welch, President of the Pittsburgh Interfaith Impact Network. “First his veto and then his own bill which fails to protect workers. We call on the Mayor to put the needs of workers ahead of the interests of developers and follow the Council’s lead on creating good jobs.”

The bill would 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.”

According to the National Employment Law Project (NELP), more than 140 cities have set wage standards for their contracting programs over the past fifteen years. NELP reports these cities have seen little, if any, impact on costs for services.

“When governments adopt prevailing wage requirements for their contracting and development work, they help enforce the rates established in the private-sector,” said Paul Sonn, NELP Legal Co-Director. “By upholding the going rate, government helps create good jobs without undermining market standards.”

With more than 120,000 members, including 5,000 in Western Pennsylvania, 32BJ is the largest property services union in the country.