



# NEWS

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Lynsey Kryzwick: 212-388-3696

Matt Nerzig: 212-539-2882

**Service Employees International Union**

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, February 3, 2010

### **COUNCIL INTRODUCES BILL TO ENSURE GOOD JOBS AT CITY-FUNDED DEVELOPMENTS AND WORKSITES**

*– Council Members, Community Groups Call for Hearings and Swift Passage –*

**CITY HALL, NY** – Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito today introduced a bill that would guarantee good wages, health care and other benefits to building service workers who work at new, city-subsidized developments and newly-leased city work sites. Council Members Fernando Cabrera (Bronx), Julissa Ferraras (Queens) and Brad Lander (Brooklyn) joined Mark-Viverito, members of 32BJ, Make the Road New York and the National Employment Law Project in calling prompt hearings and passage of the bill.

“Too many New Yorkers are working hard but struggling to get by,” said Council Member Mark-Viverito. “The City Council must ensure that tax dollars don’t fuel the cycle that keeps working families in poverty. This legislation seeks to tie city subsidies to good, quality jobs that will help New York City’s families move into the middle class.”

The bill would ensure these jobs, created with the help of city tax-dollars, provide the same wages and benefits as other building service jobs in New York. Without an economic development policy focused on creating good jobs, tax-dollars can be used to create jobs for office cleaners, residential building workers and security officers that pay as little as minimum wage.

“There’s no reason why workers at city-funded sites should get paid less than workers at other buildings,” said Mike Fishman, President of 32BJ—the union representing 70,000 building service workers in New York City. “Government should not be in the business of creating poverty jobs.”

Over the past few years, the City has approved large-scale re-development plans that will transform neighborhoods without always guaranteeing the new jobs created will allow local workers to support their families. In Jamaica, Queens, one of the city’s largest redevelopment projects, hundreds of jobs, including more than 300 building service jobs, are expected to be created without any guarantees for the types of wages and benefits they will provide.

“Without a city-wide policy, we miss opportunities to create good jobs for New Yorkers,” said Fishman. “We shouldn’t be subsidizing developments that leave working families in the cold.”

“We must take concrete steps to eliminate the government’s role in promoting poverty,” said Councilman Fernando Cabrera, Bronx District. “We can create good jobs and develop communities at the same time.”

“Minimum wage jobs pay less than the minimum required to support a family in New York City,” said Ana Maria Archila, Make the Road New York’s Co-Executive Director. “New Yorkers desperately need good jobs, and the City Council should do everything it can to bring good jobs to the City.”

The number of New Yorkers working but still living in poverty has been on the rise – a 75 percent increase between 1990 and 2005. Until recently, some of these workers were City-contracted security officers who were earning just above the minimum wage and had no access to affordable health care. A new union contract and an increase in the prevailing wage have helped bring many of these workers, whose wages are indirectly paid by city tax dollars through contractors, out of poverty.

“I work hard to help keep the City running,” said Benita Mays, single-mother and security officer at the Brooklyn Municipal Building. “Now I can actually raise my family on my paycheck.”

“When governments adopt prevailing wage requirements, they help enforce the rates established in the private-sector and fight poverty at the same time,” said Paul Sonn, NELP Legal Co-Director. “This bill is a win for working New Yorkers and for business.”

With more than 120,000 members, including 70,000 in New York City, 32BJ is the largest property services union in the country.

###