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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Eugenio H. Villasante: 646-285-1087

Matt Nerzig: 212-539-2882

Service Employees International Union

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MIAMI BEACH NEW ‘LIVING WAGE’ RATE WILL HELP SECURITY OFFICER AND PARKING ATTENDANTS MAKE ENDS MEET

– New Rate of \$12.92/hour by 2012 is First Increase in Years –

Miami Beach, FL – The Miami Beach City Commission voted yesterday for the first increase in the living wage rate in nearly a decade. Despite a mandate in the law, the living wage ordinance -- which sets a wage floor for contracted security officers and parking attendants and other workers – has not kept pace with inflation.

“We commend the Commission for putting Miami’s Beach’s hard-working security officers and parking attendants in a better position to support their families,” said Eric Brakken, 32BJ SEIU Florida Director.”

Although the living wage law mandates that the City Manager adjust the living wage for inflation annually, the rate has remained the same since the ordinance was adopted in 2001. Over the same time period, the consumer price index for Miami-Fort Lauderdale has increased by more than 29 percent.

As a result, workers like parking attendant Maria Eugenia Mena and security officer Tony Jones, who have been working at Miami Beach City Hall for 14 years, are struggling to get by on what were intended to be livable wages. Due to the adjustment, the living wage rate for employees receiving health benefits will reach \$11.28 by 2012. Workers without benefits will receive \$12.92.

“I work all day at the parking lot, breathing pollution, putting my health at risk,” said Maria Eugenia Mena who has \$21,000 in medical bills from a recent hospital visit. Mena earns as little as \$10.10 an hour and has no access to affordable and quality healthcare. “I don’t know how I am going to pay these healthcare bills.”

Maria Eugenia Mena and her coworkers at city contracted parking lots in South Beach, who have been organizing with 32BJ to demand better wages, benefits and health care will be in a better position to pay their bills with the new, updated living wage rate.

With more than 120,000 members in eight states on the east coast, 32BJ is the largest property services union in the country.

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