



# NEWS

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Lynsey Kryzwick: 212-388-3696  
917-683-4474  
Matt Nerzig: 212-539-2882

**Service Employees International Union**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **ASSEMBLY PASSES GOOD JOBS BILL FOR CLEANERS AT CON EDISON, NATIONAL GRID AND OTHER PUBLIC UTILITIES**

*– More than 2,000 Workers Await Governor’s Signature –*

**Albany, NY**—State Assembly Members voted last night to close a loophole that has allowed Con Edison, National Grid and other public utility companies to keep the contracted cleaners and security officers at their sites in poverty. The bill (A-10257D), which passed by a 90 to 43 vote, will help create good jobs for more than 2,000 contracted workers who currently earn as little as \$7.75 an hour. The Senate voted for a companion bill (S-8379) yesterday morning.

“Too many hard working New Yorkers are in need of public assistance because utilities like Con Edison are denying them a fair wage,” said Assemblyman Michael Gianaris (D-Queens), who was the prime sponsor of the bill. “This legislation will cure this injustice and ensure that these dedicated men and women can adequately provide for their families.”

“Public utility workers deserve to receive a wage sufficient to support their families. These workers’ efforts are part of the reason National Grid and other public utility companies are profitable,” said Assemblyman William Magnarelli, (D-Syracuse, Geddes, Van Buren). “Good paying jobs are what will help our local economy rebound and keep hard-working people from moving out of the area.”

The vote comes on the heels of a month-long advertising campaign, in which 32BJ and Local 200 United brought attention to the public utility loophole and the tax dollars being spent on public assistance programs to support these workers.

“New Yorkers are paying billions of hard-earned dollars to public utility companies,” said Jerry Dennis, SEIU Local 200 President. SEIU Local 200 represents 13,000 workers in 52 Upstate counties. “This legislation keeps public utilities from turning a profit on the backs of the workers who keep their facilities safe and clean.”

Although public utilities are bringing in millions of dollars in profits, many workers contracted to keep the sites running are unable to make ends meet on their wages. On top of monthly utility payments, New York taxpayers are paying for public programs for basic necessities like food, health care and housing for low wage, uninsured service workers.

“My family relies on food stamps, and my older daughter receives free school lunch,” said Danny Mercedes, a contracted cleaner at Con Ed who earns \$8.50 an hour. “Now, I hope to be able to support my family without public assistance.”

New York's public utility companies are bringing in billions of dollars in operating revenue from consumers and rate payers. Con Ed, for example, reported \$13 billion in operating revenues for 2009 and National Grid's reported operating revenues were \$22.4 billion. Rochester Gas reported \$1.01 billion in operating revenue and New York State Electric & Gas Corporation reported \$1.65 billion in operating revenues.

"Public utilities that benefit from a state-regulated monopoly should be creating jobs that benefit New Yorkers," said Hector Figueroa, 32BJ Secretary Treasurer. "Two thousand workers can get off public assistance and support themselves when the Governor signs this bill."

The bill eliminates the current exemption for public utility companies in the state prevailing wage law, which guarantees publicly-contracted service workers the wages and benefits that are standard in the industry. Since this law was passed in 1971, thousands of workers contracted to clean and secure public buildings and facilities have been able to support their families with good wages and health care.

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

With more than 13,000 members in human services, the public sector, education, and building services in 52 Upstate counties, SEIU Local 200United represents more private human service agency workers than any other union in Upstate New York.

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