

Building Benefits

June 2007
Newsletter # 2

A Network of Downtown DC Tenants Supporting Service Workers in Our Buildings!



UPCOMING EVENTS

June 26: Security officers rally to kick-off contract bargaining. 11am, Freedom Plaza, Pennsylvania Ave, between 13th and 14th, NW

July 9: City Council Hearing on Paid Sick & Safe Days Act. Tenants are needed to testify on the importance of this bill! Begins at 3 PM, 1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW.

Do you work in a DC office building? Do you support the rights of service workers in your building? Then contact us & get involved!

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BUILDING BENEFITS
Tenants Support
Downtown Service Workers!

Security Officers Win Union, Prepare To Fight For Fair Contract

The women and men who guard our buildings are one step closer to justice on the job. In late March 28, the officers' union – Service Employees International Union local 32BJ – won official recognition from the three largest private security companies in DC.

This means that more than half of our city's 2,000 private security officers are now represented by SEIU 32BJ. The officers and their union hope to begin bargaining a new contract

in early June. This would be the first time private security officers in DC have a voice at the table to negotiate for better wages, benefits and working conditions.

Tenant support at this moment is crucial. As in the past, tenants in some buildings are planning 'sticker days' to show support for their officers by wearing "Stand For Security" stickers and encouraging other tenants to do the same.



Other tenants are considering sending a letter to urge their property managers in support of living wages and better benefits for building workers.

See the left column for info on the June 26th rally...

Sick Days Bill Introduced To City Council With Broad Support

Cough drops and tissues were passed out to DC City Councilmembers arriving early the morning of May 1 for a pre-Council breakfast meeting.

The "Get Well" packages were attached to briefing packets on the Paid Sick and Safe Days Act of 2007, which would provide a minimum standard of 10 paid days off for people to use to address health-related needs; for domestic violence victims to address the violence; and for

parents to attend their children's school-related activities. These changes would directly impact workers in our buildings, who often receive no paid sick leave at all. Sick leave is an important issue to security officers who are currently working towards negotiating a fair union contract.

The early start paid off for the DC Employment Justice Center and other members of the Paid Sick and Safe Days coalition when the bill

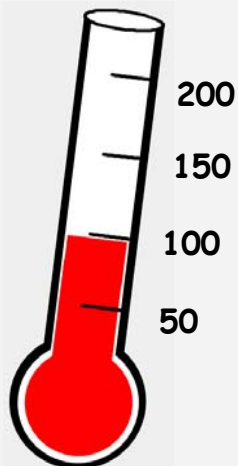
was introduced later that morning with all 11 Councilmembers co-sponsoring the legislation.

"This is a case of fundamental fairness," said Ward 3 Councilmember Mary Cheh as she joined Councilmembers Mendelson, Barry, Brown, Graham, and Thomas as a co-introducer. Council Chair Gray and Councilmembers Catania, Evans, Wells, and Schwartz

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"They treat us like we're dispensable when they know they need us."

Tenants' Petitions: Paid Sick Leave for all DC workers!



Worker Profile



Officer Charla Fletcher has worked as a security officer in downtown office buildings for over 4 years. She has a 4-year-old daughter and 1-year-old son. She earns \$11.50 an hour, a relatively high wage among officers in DC, but still lower than the living wage needed to cover high costs of living in the area. Officer Fletcher explains why she's working with SEIU to win a good contract:

"If we don't come together, other people will keep getting rich off our hard work."

"They treat us like we're dispensable when they know they need us."

"I don't feel valued as an employee at all."

"It's time for all security officers to stand up and do what's right!"

Paid Sick Days by the Numbers

- **210,000:** estimated number of workers in the District of Columbia who have no paid sick days benefit.
- **86:** percent of accommodation and food services industries workers who have no paid sick time.
- **20:** percent of workers ages 18-54 who have no paid time off of any kind.
- **30:** percent of people who receive paid sick days, but cannot use them to care for sick children.
- **10:** number of paid sick days all full-time workers in the District of Columbia would receive under the Paid Sick and Safe Days Act of 2007.
- **26:** Hours per week DC employees would need to work to earn one hour of paid sick time under the bill.
- **\$11.65:** Amount per week employers could save per worker by providing adequate paid sick time, due to savings from lower turnover, improved productivity, and reduction in the spread of influenza in the workplace. (According to Institute for Women's Policy Research, *Valuing Good Health: An Estimate of Costs and Savings for the Healthy Families Act* by Vicky Lovell, April 2005.)

Sick Days Bill (from page 1)

also joined as co-sponsors. "We need to take care of the people in our city who are our workforce," added Ward 5 Councilmember Harry Thomas, Jr.

More than 100 tenants from the Building Benefits network had already signed petitions to the City Council in support of the bill.

At a public hearing on July 9, working people and others will testify to the Council about the importance of paid sick leave.

The Council knows that office-building tenants are crucial to the downtown economy. We need to show the Council that tenants want the workers who clean and guard our

buildings to have paid sick days.

If you can testify as a tenant at the July 9 hearing, contact Karen Minatelli at the DC Employment Justice Center - (202) 828-9675 x 16 or kminatelli@dcejc.org