



Building Benefits

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

NEWSLETTER

March-April 2007

Security Officers' City-Wide Union Campaign Heats Up



All across the city, security officers are organizing to win justice on the job. Officers employed by DC's largest security companies recently began signing union cards to join the

Service Employees International Union local 32BJ. DC building owners enjoy one of the most profitable commercial real estate markets in the US and the officers are seeking fair wages and benefits in return for their hard work.

In 2004, the women and men who protect countless downtown buildings launched their effort to come together for better working conditions. More than 2,000 officers guard buildings in DC, earning as little as \$8.00 an hour. Most officers have no paid sick days. Health insurance is often unaffordable, and some companies do not offer health benefits at all.

Security officers are also organizing with SEIU in many other cities including New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Seattle and Boston. Everywhere in the US, officers bear the brunt of intense competition between private security companies to win contracts from building owners.

The Building Benefits network has already helped support the officers' effort. Tenants have collected petitions, met with property managers, and worn "Stand for Security" stickers to show their support for officers in their buildings.

To set up a meeting for tenants in your building, contact DC Jobs with Justice intern Jack at jl99@georgetown.edu.

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Paid Sick & Safe Days Bill Coming To DC Council Soon

The effort to win paid sick and safe days for all working people in DC is moving forward. Councilmembers Mendelson and Thomas have already agreed to co-introduce a bill in the DC Council that would create a minimum standard of 10 paid sick days yearly for all DC workers except those with very small employers, who would still get at least 5 paid sick days. A broad coalition of community organizations that support paid sick days has met with other Councilmembers, including members of the Committee on Workforce Development and Government Operations. Supporters also met with the D.C. Chamber of Commerce in late February to discuss the proposed legislation. In addition, efforts are underway to identify individual workers who are willing to share their stories, as well as businesses that support the bill. For more information, contact Karen Minatelli of the D.C. Employment Justice Center at kminatelli@dcejc.org.

National Sick Days Legislation Also Picks Up Steam

On March 13, Senator Kennedy reintroduced the Healthy Families Act, which would guarantee at least 7 paid sick days to all full-time workers across the US, to recover...
Continued on page 2, "Healthy Families"

Building Benefits Continues to Grow

More and more downtown office building tenants are getting involved in our project. Here's an update from one building in our network:

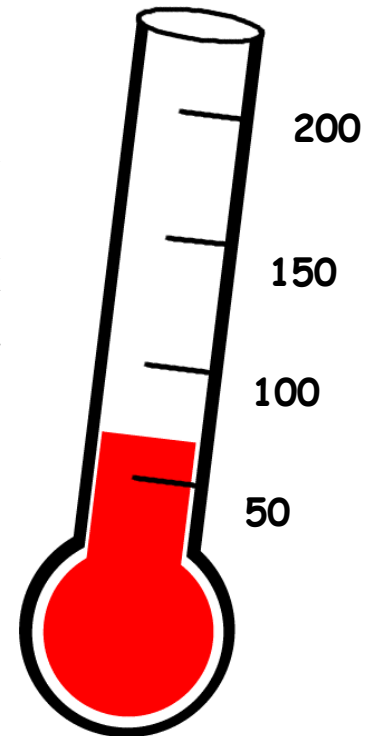
The Building Benefits effort in 1015 15th is gaining momentum. Our team focused our initial efforts on gaining support for Paid Sick Days legislation in the DC City Council. In January, we invited every tenant in our building to a midday "Desserts and Discussion" by asking a representative (often the receptionist) to circulate a printed invitation flyer and forward an electronic copy to their colleagues. Three of our fellow building mates attended the

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meeting and asked to work with our Building Benefits team collecting signatures for a petition to the DC City Council on Paid Sick Days. Already, these folks have successfully solicited signatures from almost everyone in their office and are now asking what more they can do for the Paid Sick Days effort!

For those tenants who were not able to attend the meeting or did not express interest, we went door-to-door with petitions in hand and asked if they could post a petition with a fact sheet on Paid Sick Days attached. We plan to host another discussion in the coming months and will continue to work with our building to improve conditions for low-wage workers.

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



Healthy Families (continued from page 1)

...from their own illness or take care of a sick family member. On February 13, the Senate committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions held a hearing on the Healthy Families Act with a packed audience of reporters and others. Witnesses at the hearing included Debra Ness, National Partnership for Women and Families; Dr. Jody Heymann, McGill and Harvard; Heidi Hartmann, Institute for Women's Policy Research; Dr. Rajiv Bhatia, San Francisco Public Health Department; and Mr. Roger King, Jones Day. For more information, see the website of the National Partnership for Women and Families at www.nationalpartnership.org.

Fun Facts on the DC Commercial Real Estate Market

- In November 2006 the Washington Post reported that rental rates in DC are the second highest in the country, averaging \$42.16 per square foot. Only New York City's Midtown tops DC rates, at \$53.08 per square foot.¹
- In 2004 the Association of Foreign Investors in Real Estate ranked DC the #1 city in the world for profitable, secure investment in real estate.²

1. "Vacancy Rates, Asking Rents Hold Steady" *Washington Post* 11/13/06.
2. 2004 AFIRE Annual Survey.

Get involved!

Contact us!

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