

## Handout 1

### **JANITORS' VICTORY BRINGS HOPE TO CINCINNATI FAMILIES, CREATES NEW MODEL FOR ENSURING GOOD JOBS WITH HEALTH CARE FOR REGION'S LOW-WAGE WORKERS**

#### **Historic city-wide contract will more than double the income of nearly 1,200 janitors throughout Greater Cincinnati**

Cincinnati – On the heels of recent high-profile contract victories that made dramatic gains for thousands of working families in Houston and Miami, Cincinnati janitors have won higher wages, more work hours, and health insurance in their first-ever city-wide union contract. The groundbreaking agreement will help lift more than a thousand janitors out of poverty, increasing the income of the majority of workers by an incredible 129 percent over the course of the contract—nearly doubling their income of workers at the lowest end of the spectrum within the first 18 months alone.

“This is a huge victory for our families and for our neighborhoods,” said Cincinnati janitor Lauressie “Dee Dee” Tillman, “I’m proud of what we have accomplished, not just for us and our families, but for all of the workers in this city who are paid so little. We showed what can be done—what must be done—to make Cincinnati a better city to live in.”

The agreement was reached after representatives for 1,200 Cincinnati janitors and the city’s eight largest cleaning companies—ABM, Jancoa, Professional Maintenance of Cincinnati, Aetna Building Maintenance, Scioto Corp, NSG, OneSource, and GSF—returned to the bargaining table to avert a metropolitan-area wide strike. Participants on both sides of the table engaged in constructive, cordial talks which took into account the challenges low-wage janitors face and the impact of a contract on the city’s most impoverished neighborhoods. Recognizing the significance of the improvements established by the contract, both parties also agreed to continue to collaborate and reach out to other corporate leaders to join efforts to raise standards and improve the industry in the future. The

agreement is already being hailed as a potential model for raising job and health care standards for low-wage workers throughout the region—including in Columbus and Indianapolis where janitors are currently fighting for improvements in those cities.

The agreement, which will be put before Cincinnati's janitors for ratification tomorrow, provides the city's janitors with victories on four key fronts:

- **Higher Wages.** Janitors with current wages at the Ohio state minimum of \$6.85 an hour will receive an immediate increase to \$7.05 on October 1, 2007. Janitors' pay will increase to \$7.55 an hour on January 1, 2008, \$8.15 an hour on January 1, 2009, and \$8.35 by January 1, 2010, \$8.85 by January 1, 2011, and \$9.80 by January 1, 2012.
- **More Hours.** The new contract will increase work hours for janitors currently provided with only 4 hours of work a night to seven hours a shift in the first two and half years. The additional hours and the wage increase mean that the vast majority of janitors will see their income rise by nearly 129 percent over the course of the five-year contract. Workers who currently make \$6.85 an hour will see their income rise by a remarkable 150 percent overall—and nearly double by the start of 2009.
- **Quality, Affordable Health Insurance.** At a time when many employers are shifting health care costs on to workers, Cincinnati janitors won individual health insurance at a cost of only \$20 per month. Family insurance will also be available for a cost of \$198 a month. The health insurance will become available starting January 1, 2010.
- **Paid Holidays and Vacation Time.** The contract will allow workers—many for the first time in their lives—paid time off from work. Janitors will receive six paid holidays per year and be able to accrue paid vacation time beginning the first year of the contract.

The historic union contract includes the largest increases in income ever won through the long-running national Justice for Janitors Campaign and

builds on the momentum achieved by janitors' victories in Houston and Miami. In Cincinnati, the victory is being seen as an important step toward uniting a city that has often seen bitter division in the past. In their fight for a contract, Cincinnati janitors drew upon a strong coalition of faith, political and community leaders calling for good jobs with health care in a city that has seen a sharp increase in service-sector employment.

"Cincinnati won big today," said Cincinnati janitor Linda Watson of Price Hill. "They said we couldn't do it but we stood strong with our families, our supporters, and our neighborhoods. I'm proud to say we won a better future for hard-working people in our city."

The increase in wages and health insurance will dramatically improve the lives of 1,200 Cincinnati janitors, many of whom had been earning as little as \$28 a day without benefits. The increase in wages and hours will lift many families out of poverty, and provide janitors and their families with a steppingstone into the middle class while the health insurance will ensure workers have access to affordable health care.

### **Discuss**

- Were you surprised to learn that it was a real story?
- If you reached an agreement in your simulation meeting, how does it compare to what Cincinnati workers actually won?
- Based on what you know now, would you change your position? If so, how and why?

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