

Coalition for a New Century



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Contact
Danny Feingold: 213-977-9400 x.109
Jessica Goodheart: 213-977-9400 x.135

Rally Launches Major Campaign To Improve Conditions Near LAX

Coalition Calls for Hotels to Join Effort to Create Better Jobs,
Stronger Tourism Industry, Healthier Communities

Five hundred hotel workers, community and religious leaders, elected officials and residents today called on the LAX hotel industry to join them in a major initiative to create better jobs and a stronger tourism market near LAX.

The “Campaign for a New Century” is seeking higher job standards for thousands of hotel workers on Century Boulevard, city investment in the long-neglected LAX tourism industry and a central role for adjacent communities affected by problems of poverty, crime and overcrowding.

Coalition leaders are circulating a petition calling for a “Plan for a New Century,” and expect to gather thousands of signatures in the coming weeks. The petitions will be delivered to city officials, who will be asked to consider a public policy proposal to address conditions in the Century Corridor.

At today’s events, held at three Century Boulevard Hotels – the Four Points Sheraton LAX, the LAX Hilton and the LAX Westin – community leaders added their name to the petition and asked the hotel industry to join with them.

“We believe that a real partnership between workers, the community, the hotel industry and the city is possible,” said Danny Tabor, a former Inglewood City Councilmember and community activist.

Leaders of the coalition – which includes churches, community-based organizations, educators, labor unions, workers and residents – cited a report by the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy, which documents conditions in the Century Corridor (<http://www.newcenturycoalition.org/>).

The report notes that Century hotel workers earn far less than their counterparts in the rest of L.A. County, and that the nearby communities of Lennox, Inglewood and Hawthorne, where a large number of these workers live, suffer high rates of poverty, crime and overcrowding. One in four residents in these communities lives below the federal poverty line, a measure of extreme poverty, while more than 40% of children come from poor households. Median household income is 25% lower than in L.A. County as a whole.

High poverty and low incomes have translated into severe social problems for those who live in these communities. The violent crime rate in the area is five times higher than that of L.A. County as a whole. In all three communities, the percentage of overcrowded homes is higher than in the rest of L.A. County, and in Lennox it is eight times higher.

“I am signing this petition because we need a plan to create good jobs in our community, jobs that pay a living wage and provide medical benefits,” said Tom Johnstone, Assistant Superintendent of the Lennox School District. “The future of the next generation depends upon it.”

Many religious leaders from nearby communities have joined the coalition, citing the social consequences of the poverty generated by the industry. “All of us desire a better life, a better community in which to live and work,” said Reverend J.D. Webster, pastor at Westchester Christian Church. “I am signing this petition because I want to make this happen.”

The report also finds that the City of Los Angeles has invested less in the tourism industry as a proportion of total economic output than have other comparable cities, despite the fact that tourism ranks as the region’s fourth-largest industry.

“We see the problem as a lack of investment,” said Kurt Petersen, organizing director at UNITE HERE Local 11. “Century Boulevard is home to the largest concentration of hotel rooms in the city. But the city has failed to invest in the area’s tourism industry. The hotels also have failed to invest in their 3,500 workers, many of whom live in the community. The poverty wages workers receive contribute to a vicious cycle of low-wage jobs, disinvestment and poverty.”

Regla Soto, a housekeeper at the LAX Westin Hotel, called upon the hotel industry to join with workers in improving conditions. “We know the hotels can do better. We know that they can pay us enough to support our families in dignity. We are proud of our work and we want the hotels to do well. That’s why we are not only asking the hotels to invest in us, but for the city to invest in the hotels.”

Coalition members emphasized that they are seeking a partnership with both industry and city leaders.

“We are hopeful that the hotels and the city will join with workers and the community in creating a Plan for a New Century,” said Tabor. “Together we can improve conditions for our families, our communities and the tourism industry.”

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