



Coalition for a New Century

www.newcenturycoalition.org

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Century Boulevard Hotel Workers To Fast In Support Of Living Wage Ordinance

Action Comes as Businesses Seek to Repeal Legislation With Ballot Referendum

Senator John Edwards, SEIU President Andy Stern Join Workers, Signaling National Support for LAX Area Wage Law

Los Angeles—Century Boulevard hotel workers yesterday announced that they will fast in support of the recently enacted LAX hotel living wage law. The announcement came as LAX-area hotels and other business groups launched an effort to repeal the law with a ballot referendum.

Senator John Edwards and SEIU President Andy Stern joined the workers at a press conference announcing the seven-day water-only fast, signaling that the battle over the Century Boulevard living wage law will receive national support. L.A. County Federation of Labor Executive Secretary Treasurer Maria Elena Durazo, L.A. Alliance for a New Economy Executive Director Madeline Janis and faith and community leaders also attended the event.

“It is wrong that millions of Americans work full-time and still live in poverty. Every American who works hard should have the chance to achieve the American Dream. These hotel workers and all working Americans deserve a fair wage,” said Edwards.

The workers’ fast will begin on Wednesday, December 6. The workers will stay 24 hours a day for the duration of the 7-day fast in front of the Westin LAX hotel. There will be major actions along Century Boulevard every day of the fast by hundreds of workers, community and faith leaders, elected officials, students and supporters from all over Los Angeles. Workers hope that their fast will educate the public about the need for a living

wage and draw attention to poverty wages in the hotel industry and the impact on families and communities.

The living wage ordinance was passed overwhelmingly last week by the L.A. City Council, and signed into law this week by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. The law provides the 3,500 Century Boulevard hotel workers with a wage of \$10.64 an hour for those without employer-provided health insurance, or \$9.39 an hour for those with health insurance.

Century Boulevard hotel workers earn 20% less than their counterparts in downtown L.A., and 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.

Century Boulevard hotels benefit from their proximity to city-owned LAX, which receives tens of millions of dollars in taxpayer-funded support annually. City Council members and a coalition of community, labor and faith leaders have argued that the hotels have a responsibility to pay their employees a living wage. In January the coalition launched a campaign to improve working conditions and alleviate poverty.

The County Federation of Labor's Durazo called on the hotels to do the right thing. "We urge the LAX area hotels to honor the living wage. These hotels are tremendously prosperous. Their occupancy rates are the highest in the county. We only ask that the workers who labor every day to make these hotels successful be paid a living wage that will help them rise out of poverty," said Durazo.

LAANE's Janis said the living wage battle is a human rights issue and a justice issue. "We hope this fast encourages more people to involve themselves in the struggles of low-wage workers that highlight the tremendous disparity between the wealthy and those stuck in poverty."

In addition to building public support for the Century living wage law, the seven-day fast will also honor the memory of Margarita Uriostegui, a Radisson LAX housekeeper and a strong supporter of the living wage. After years of working hard to support her three young boys, Margarita passed away at the age of 36, before realizing her dreams of sending her children to college and achieving better working conditions for Century Corridor hotel workers.

Josefa Galindo, a housekeeper at the Radisson LAX, said the fast would honor the memory of Uriostegui. "Margarita was fearless in her support of a living wage because she knew it would help her and her family rise out of poverty. We all work so hard, but still can't afford to make ends meet. We are not asking for a handout, we are just asking to be paid what we deserve."

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