



For Immediate Release  
December 12, 2006

**Contacts**

Danny Feingold—213-675-8960  
Mary Gutierrez—213-276-3384  
Dolores Bernal—213-550-6105

**Mayor Villaraigosa, California Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez  
To Join LAX Hotel Workers as Living Wage Fast Comes to an End**

500 People Expected for Closing Ceremony of Weeklong  
Fast in Support of Century Boulevard Wage Law

**Hotels Seek to Repeal Landmark Legislation Through Ballot Referendum**

Los Angeles—Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa was scheduled to join LAX hotel workers on December 12 for the closing ceremony of a weeklong fast in support of a new law that provides living wages for 3,500 workers employed in the Century Boulevard hotel industry. Earlier in the day, Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez was slated to visit with the workers.

The fasting workers stayed outside the Westin LAX on Century Boulevard, and participated with community, faith and religious leaders in daily gatherings outside various hotels, including the Westin LAX and the Hilton LAX. The seven-day water-only fast began on December 6, with workers vowing to go without food to demonstrate their determination to secure a living wage and better lives for their families and communities.

On November 22, the Los Angeles City Council passed a living wage ordinance for Century Boulevard hotel workers as a first step in lifting these workers out of poverty. The legislation, which would raise wages to \$10.64 an hour (or \$9.39 for those with employer-provided health benefits), was signed into law by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa on November 27.

Century Boulevard hotels and other business groups, however, are now seeking to repeal the law through a ballot referendum.

In a letter released by Congresswoman Hilda Solis, 21 members of California's congressional delegation backed the new wage law. "Fair wages are essential to a just society and are fundamental to the growth of the middle class," the letter states. "We applaud you and the Los Angeles City Council for supporting the LAX hotel workers living wage and support efforts to ensure that the new living wage ordinance is enacted."

The fast by LAX hotel workers was dedicated to the memory of Margarita Uriostegui, a Radisson LAX housekeeper who tragically died two days after the September 28 civil disobedience.

“Margarita was an inspiration to us all, and we will continue her struggle and honor her memory over these seven days with our fast,” said Josefa Galindo, who worked with Margarita at the Radisson LAX.

Hotel workers on Century Boulevard work full time, yet many of them still live in poverty. Hotel workers in the LAX/PCH submarket earn 20% less than their counterparts in downtown L.A. Average annual earnings for LAX/PCH workers is \$20,328 – barely above the federal \$20,000 federal poverty threshold for a family of four. Some workers qualify for multiple government assistance programs.

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.

Over the course of the weeklong fast, community, faith and political leaders demonstrated their support for the Century hotel workers. Councilmember Janice Hahn, who spearheaded the effort to pass the living wage law for Century Boulevard hotel workers, and United Farm Workers co-founder Dolores Huerta lent their support to the fasting workers. Six churches from Inglewood to Santa Monica to Westchester hosted LAX hotel workers, and the comedy troupe Culture Clash emceed a benefit concert for the family of the late hotel worker Margarita Uriostegui, to whom the fast was dedicated.

Community leaders from across Los Angeles joined the fasting hotel workers, as did Assemblymembers Julia Brownley, Mike Eng, Tony Mendoza, Anthony Portantino and Curren Price and former Assemblymember Jackie Goldberg. And hundreds of hotel workers from different parts of the city came down to Century Boulevard to show their support for the fasting workers.

Every day of the fast, new panels were added to a colorful seven-foot “Wall of Dreams,” which was decorated with photos of hotel workers bearing handwritten wishes for a better life.

“It is my dream to give my son a better life,” said Alicia Melgarejo, a single mother who earns \$9.60 an hour after working seven years as a housekeeper at the Hilton LAX. “This is what every mother hopes for, and a living wage will help me fulfill this dream.”

Workers participating in the fast acknowledged that it was a difficult experience, but expressed their satisfaction in making it through the week.

“Often the struggles that are the most worth fighting for are the ones that test us the most,” said Regla Soto, a housekeeper at the Westin LAX for the past 20 years and a mother of three who earns \$9.60 an hour. “The struggle that lies ahead of us is a long and difficult one, but we have come too far to turn back now.”

**For complete information on the living wage fast, please visit [www.LivingWageFast.com](http://www.LivingWageFast.com)**

###