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MOMENTUM BUILDS FOR NYC LIVING WAGE LAW

NELP CITY COUNCIL TESTIMONY CITES PRECEDENTS & ECONOMIC NEED FOR FAIR WAGE POLICY

New York – In a hearing today before the New York City Council, the National Employment Law Project joined a growing coalition of elected officials, developers, New York City residents and leaders from the civil rights, faith and labor communities in calling for passage of the Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act, Intro. 251-A.

“This bill is very simple: it asks businesses receiving more than \$1 million in taxpayer subsidies to guarantee that the jobs they create will pay at least \$10 per hour plus benefits,” said **Paul Sonn, Legal Co-Director of the National Employment Law Project**. “Los Angeles, San Francisco and Pittsburgh are already using this approach to create more quality jobs for local residents. The question for the Bloomberg Administration is, ‘Why can’t New York?’”

Support for the living wage campaign has been gaining [momentum](#): echoing protests on Wall Street and around the country, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York recently issued a call for fair wages as high unemployment and falling wages continue to afflict a large number of New Yorkers. Last night more than 3,000 New Yorkers joined at Riverside Church for an interfaith rally for the living wage, and a new [voter survey](#) found that voters strongly favor the living wage and would vote against a mayoral candidate who opposed it.

A full description of the legislation, which has support from a majority of City Council members, can be found [here](#).

Today’s hearing also showcased support from developers and representatives from other parts of the country where living wage laws have become a common development practice.

“We’re seeing more and more cities asking for living wages and prevailing wages from developers on new projects, especially those getting financial assistance. Our company has found it quite feasible to build and operate new hotel developments while paying decent wages,” said **Jeffrey Fleming, President & CEO of Amazing Hospitality Group in Portland, Oregon**. Fleming has more than thirty years of experience developing and operating hotel properties. “Frankly, this is the wave of the future, and the development community needs to adjust to factoring decent jobs into their business plans. For us, being a responsible member of the communities where we develop actually helps our bottom-line.”

“Our redevelopment agency in Los Angeles has been requiring living wages on development projects since 2003,” said **Donald Spivack, former deputy chief of operations and policy for Los Angeles’**

Community Redevelopment Agency. “We’ve covered dozens of projects with the living wage, generating thousands of decent jobs for our communities. The living wage simply hasn’t been an issue in getting developers to do deals, or for them getting financing.”

“San Francisco’s redevelopment agency has had a living wage policy since 2001,” said **Ken Jacobs, Chair of the University of California-Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education.** “This summer the city inked its biggest redevelopment deal ever – the Hunters Point/Candlestick Point project will include 10,000 housing units and millions of square feet of retail and office space. All businesses with more than 20 employees will be covered by the city’s living wage of \$12.00 plus benefits for 2012. While a lot of things about the project were debated and controversial, the living wage was not one of them. All the players including the developer accepted it as a given on a publicly supported project in San Francisco.”

“The bottom line is New York City gives billions in public subsidies to developers, and needs to find a way to leverage it to create the decent jobs that communities need. A growing number of New Yorkers recognize that. It’s time for the City Council to pass this bill,” Sonn said.

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