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LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL UNANIMOUSLY SUPPORTS HOTEL WORKERS

The Los Angeles City Council voted 13-0 today to “urge hotel workers and hotel companies to reach a just and decent contract that protects health care, improves working conditions, and allows for a national dialogue on these issues which affect the health of the many communities of Los Angeles and the tourism industry.” Faced with the specter of a disruptive contract dispute, many council members expressed their hope that hotels and workers could reach a settlement that provided economic security for the employees of 9 area hotels without lockouts or strikes.

“As councilmembers, we’re asked to be fair, but not to be neutral,” said Councilmember Eric Garcetti. “If the hotels want to provide good jobs at fair wages with fair benefits, then we’re clearly on their side. But if they want to make our communities poorer and weaker by denying hotel workers a national voice, than it’s our obligation to our communities to reject that.”

“This is exactly what we need to move people out of poverty and into the middle class in Los Angeles,” said Councilmember Martin Ludlow. “Working people should be able to support their families, keep their children healthy, and someday buy a home.”

“The City of Los Angeles has strongly supported a living wage and we are committed to a better quality of life for our residents. Hotel workers should not be exempt from that equation,” said Council President Alex Padilla. “We stand united behind the men and women who clean hotel rooms, who prepare food for banquet receptions and hotel guests, and who make the hotel experience for guests a positive one. We know that a thriving hotel industry translates to a positive economic impact for the City, and that’s why we are urging both sides to come to an agreement.”

Emerging as central to the negotiations is the question of a national voice. Hotel workers seek a 2-year contract, which will allow contracts across the country to expire at the same time. As hotel companies have merged and consolidated, they have become national actors; workers

have repeatedly affirmed that they seek similar nationwide coordination, most recently in a 92% vote to reject a 5-year contract offer made by the hotels. Additionally, hotel workers seek equitable pay. In Los Angeles, a union housekeeper earns \$11.02/hour; in New York City, her counterpart earns \$19.63.

“My son was born with a heart condition,” said Miguel Aguilar, a 12-year employee of the Sheraton Universal hote. “His operation cost \$80,000, and my health insurance covered it. Today, the hotels are using our health benefits to threaten the workers. My message to them is this: Don’t play games with my child’s life. Sign a fair contract.”

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