

Janitors set deadline for companies to address Green Cleaning Innovations

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More than 4,000 janitors from across the Twin Cities began working without a contract today after an agreement with their employers expired Friday. After cleaning contractors rejected green cleaning innovations that could save building owners millions, while simultaneously demanding drastic wage and health care cuts, Twin Cities janitors set a January 23 deadline for employers to discuss real solutions proposed by janitors on green cleaning and affordable health insurance.

“We want to make our jobs green jobs, and we have proposed innovations that could save building owners millions of dollars every year,” said Chico Coleman, a janitor at Securian in Saint Paul. “We’re willing to do our part to make the economy work for everyone again, and the companies need to get serious.”

“I have huge health care bills because our plan doesn’t cover enough,” said Blanca Pineda, a janitor who works in Roseville. “But rather than look for a solution, the companies want to make our health care even worse.”

Janitors want to make green cleaning a reality in the Twin Cities by using only green chemicals that are safer for janitors and tenants, recycling more trash, and supporting a transition to day-shift cleaning that would save energy and reduce the carbon footprint of hundreds of buildings.

“If buildings switched to cleaning during the day, the energy savings in Minneapolis and Saint Paul alone could total over \$5 million per year,” said Javier Morillo-Alicea, President of SEIU Local 26. “But so far, the companies have refused to even address what should be a win-win solution for janitors and building owners. We stand ready and willing to bargain a fair contract whenever the cleaning contractors are ready to get serious about real solutions.”

Janitorial companies that clean the majority of Twin Cities office buildings – including ABM, Harvard, and Marsden – have proposed to cut wages for janitors working in the suburbs by almost \$5.00 per hour or more while eliminating full-time jobs in both the downtowns and the suburbs. Companies also proposed an unrealistic freeze on their share of health insurance premiums for three years, guaranteeing declining benefits for janitors that already face huge bills due to inadequate coverage.

SEIU Local 26 is Minnesota’s Property Services Union, representing over 5,000 janitors, security officers, and window cleaners, and is a powerful voice for all of Minnesota’s working families. For more information, go to www.seiu26.org