

Deal would raise 700 janitors' wages in Baltimore by 4%

By Luke Broadwater, *The Baltimore Sun*, Oct 17, 2011

A bargaining committee late Sunday struck an agreement that would give 4 percent annual raises to 700 Baltimore janitors after the office cleaners held a protest in downtown Baltimore earlier this month.

The office cleaners, members of the Service Employees International Union, had been negotiating a new contract since Sept. 8 with representatives from major commercial cleaning companies in the region. They had threatened a strike if their demands for higher pay were not met by mid-October.

"This is not just a win for working families and our communities, but it ensures tenants will receive professional service and gives our economy a much-needed boost," Jaime Contreras, an area union leader, said in a statement.

Current wages for the union's more than 700 Baltimore workers range from \$10.90 an hour (\$11,336 annually) for part-time cleaners to \$11.40 an hour (\$23,712 annually) for full-time cleaners.

The tentative agreement, which is pending a ratification vote Saturday by the union's members, covers nearly 12,000 janitors from Baltimore to northern Virginia.

Earlier this month, the janitors were joined by Baltimore City Councilman William H. Cole IV and Nick Mosby, who defeated Councilwoman Belinda Conaway in the Democratic primary, as they rallied at the corner of Light and Pratt streets.

The custodians work for companies including Red Coats, American Building Maintenance and Building Maintenance Services. The companies arrange for custodians to clean prominent buildings downtown such as the Candler, Legg Mason and Bank of America buildings.