



MAINTENANCE COOPERATION TRUST FUND

For Immediate Release
December 6, 2004

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Bilingual, Spanish & English

Vons, Albertsons, Safeway and Ralph's To Pay \$22.4 Million To Thousands of Janitors In Class Action Lawsuit

LOS ANGELES—The final step in a five-year courtroom battle between 2000 janitors and California supermarket giants will end today as the courts decide whether to approve a \$22.4 million class action settlement. In the largest lawsuit of its kind, the courts ruled in favor of the janitors and found Vons, Albertsons, Safeway, and Ralph's responsible for their sub-contracted cleaning companies' non-payment of minimum wages and overtime. Today, Judge Percy Anderson will decide whether to approve the \$22.4 million class action settlement, forcing the supermarkets to pay the janitors for unpaid wages and overtime.

The watchdog group, the Maintenance Cooperation Trust Fund (MCTF), conducted an investigation of the supermarkets' cleaning contractors and uncovered a pattern of sub-minimum wages and non-payment of overtime. The MCTF referred the case for litigation. After years of fact gathering, plaintiff attorneys identified enough information to show that the supermarket chains exercised significant control over the janitors' working conditions even though they were not the direct employers. *"Even though the cleaning companies hired us, the supermarkets' managers would review our work every day"*, said janitor Jesus Lopez. *"And if they didn't like something, we would have to redo it or we would be fired."*

"This is a historic victory for janitors and other sub-contracted workers who are exploited," said Lilia García, Executive Director of the MCTF. *"These supermarket chains have been hiding behind irresponsible contractors for years. This settlement sends a message that using law-breaking contractors will not be tolerated."*

Some janitors have worked in exploitive conditions for more than 15 years. Many worked for years without any days off, paid much less than the minimum wage and were never paid overtime although they worked 10-16 hour shifts every day. Approximately 2000 janitors will receive back wages from this settlement. We anticipate checks to be distributed in January of 2005.

"Workers like us break our backs to put food on the table for our families" said Lopez. *"I hope this victory serves as an example to all cleaning companies who continue to pay less than minimum wage and no overtime."*

What: Court Approval of \$22.4 million class action settlement
When: 1:30pm, Monday, December 6, 2004
Where: Federal Court House, 312 N. Spring St. Rm.15
Who: Plaintiff janitors and MCTF watchdog group

Janitors and MCTF will be available for comment at courthouse between 1-2:00pm

The MCTF is a watchdog organization created by SEIU Local 1877 and its signatory contractors to abolish unfair business practices within the janitorial industry. The MCTF is committed to improving the stability of the janitorial industry in the interest of responsible employers, client companies, consumers and workers. Irresponsible contractors place all parties at risk. Protect yourself and your business; ensure that you are contracting a responsible employer.

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