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An Estimated 1,000 Residents, Religious & Community Leaders, LA City and County Workers Stage String of Actions, March to Restore City Services and Middle-Class Public Jobs



Under Banner of “We’re Bargaining to Fix L.A.”, a Labor, Faith and Community Coalition Urges City Hall to Put Neighborhoods’ Needs Ahead of Wall Street Bank Greed



LOS ANGELES: An estimated 1,000 community members, religious leaders, and LA City workers delivered over 4,000 hand-collected petitions to send a message to the Mayor and City Council to recover taxpayer revenue from Wall Street – not working-class communities of color – to restore vital services and project good middle-class jobs in the public sector.



LA City workers’ contract expired last night, and the petitions were delivered as part of a series of community-backed contract negotiation kickoff actions that started with a gathering outside NY Mellon Bank to protest predatory financial deals with the City that have cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. The group then marched from the bank (which is the [flashpoint in an effort to get City leader to renegotiate toxic interest rate swap deals](#) as the LA Times reported today) to City Hall. They were accompanied by a convoy of 30+ garbage trucks driven by City workers with signs that read “Benefits for the Community, not Bank CEO’s” and “Fix Our Streets, Don’t Fund Wall Street” and “Protect Middle-Class Jobs & City Services.”



“Working families made sacrifices when the finance giants tanked the economy, but our communities continue to suffer long after the big banks enjoy the riches of the recovery because of the predatory practices of Wall Street,” said Reverend William Smart, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference of Los Angeles and member of the “The City is responsible for protecting the public’s interest and driving local prosperity by creating middle class jobs that benefit local residents and provide quality neighborhood services. We call upon our City leaders to take the next step in going after Wall Street to return the resources needed to fix LA.”



Rev. Smart , a founding leader in the clergy-community-labor [Fix LA](#) coalition noted that 75% of LA City workers are African-American, Latino, and Asian, many of them second and first-generation immigrants. “Civil-service jobs in the public sector have historically been the gateway to the middle class, and a city as diverse as LA must uphold that in its employment practices.”



Hundreds packed Council chambers, and a lineup of speakers testified there and in an overflow public-style speakout in the rotunda to reinforce the point that the City Council has an urgent obligation to protect LA’s working families and their communities, which have been decimated by eroding services, by standing up to excesses of the Wall Street banks that LA does business with.



“By cutting staff, we have fewer operators able to answer emergency calls, especially on the bilingual line,” said 911 operator Eva Espinoza. “We are working twice as fast as before – with inadequate staffing to handle the calls. People in crisis are waiting minutes to get their calls answered. That can represent the difference between life and death.”

Rev. Smart, Ms. Espinoza and other speakers also presented the [“Fix LA” Bargaining proposals](#) to the City Council. The package includes provisions that would bring immediate benefits back into the communities in the form of restored services, improved public and child safety, and protect middle-class jobs and create career opportunities, such as local hire and public works programs for LA’s neediest neighborhoods.

The day’s messages and activities further reinforced and celebrated the unanimous June 30 Budget and Finance Committee vote in support of Councilmember Paul Koretz’ motion that calls for the City to renegotiate bad bank deals. The City spends more than \$300 million in bank fees each year – double its annual Bureau of Street Services’ slashed budget.

In addition to the millions of taxpayer dollars being spent on Wall Street fees and deals, the City has also failed to enforce an ordinance that would collect fees and fines from banks and lenders who neglect vacant and foreclosed properties. This has resulted in City taxpayers having to foot the bill for over \$200 million on maintenance costs a year for these properties – the total price tag exceeding more than \$1 billion since 2008.

“Every day I’m on the job, I’ve seen firsthand how the people with the least suffer the most,” said Simboa Wright, a City wastewater division worker. “The banks’ neglect becomes a magnet for illicit activity that puts our kids at risk and lowers property values for other working families.” The SEIU Local 721 executive board member, who has participated in several volunteer clean-up efforts of cluttered alleyways and curbside garbage spilling from bank-owned homes with Fix LA community groups added: “Wall Street made this mess. They need to pay to clean it up.”

Wright also noted that in the wake of the economy crashing, workers with the Coalition of LA City Unions stepped up and created tens of millions of dollars in cost savings for the City.

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