



TERENCE M. O'SULLIVAN
General President

ARMAND E. SABITONI
General Secretary-Treasurer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LABORERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION OF NORTH AMERICA

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Contact: Richard Greer, 202-942-2262 or 202-215-1562

**Statement of Terence M. O'Sullivan
General President, Laborers' International Union of North America,
On President Bush's Elimination of Wage Standards for Katrina Victims**

We have witnessed the worst natural disaster in the history of the United States. We have seen the dead, the victims struggles, hundreds of thousands displaced - all before our eyes. We have seen a woefully inadequate response from FEMA and other governmental agencies. And now to add injury to insult, those who have witnessed first-hand, experienced first-hand and struggled to survive are now confronted with another insult, the suspension of basic worker wage requirements afforded by the Davis Bacon Act.

By lifting Davis-Bacon requirements, or the payment of wages and fringe benefits that are normal in a geographic area for work, President Bush is dashing the hope and opportunity of everyday working people, those who have built this great nation and those who work to rebuild in the aftermath of disaster.

Will big oil corporations sacrifice by forgoing profits for the greater good? Will construction conglomerates rebuild the Gulf Coast at cost? Eliminating Davis-Bacon will not lower the cost of rebuilding materials, the cost of equipment or profits for employers – it will only lower the paychecks of the men and women who will rebuild the Gulf Coast.

Davis-Bacon has long been the law of the land to protect communities from fly-by-night contractors who would drive down community living standards with taxpayer money.

Nothing will be more crucial to recovery for hurricane-affected communities and for families getting their lives back together than good, family-supporting jobs – the kind of jobs reconstruction could create by the tens of thousands.

Waiving Davis-Bacon will dash the hopes of rebuilding for thousands of families and will have made it more difficult for the people of the Gulf Coast to rest assured that reconstruction will be done to sound standards.

I ask the Republican leadership of the House and Senate how they will assure that workers will make a wage that lifts them out of poverty and helps rebuild hundreds of thousands of broken lives.

Terence M. O'Sullivan is General President of the Laborers' International Union of North America, one of the largest construction workers unions on the continent. Several thousand Laborers and their families were ravished by Hurricane Katrina. The Laborers are a leader in dispatching resources and aid to the region and in preparing for reconstruction.

For information: Richard Greer, 202-942-2262.