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Weatherization Works – and Puts Local People to Work
First Class of Skilled and Certified Local Weatherization Workers
Graduate Training Program

Jackson, MS – The Laborers’ International Union of North America (LIUNA) graduated its first class of 14 skilled weatherization workers today. The new graduates completed a challenging three-week training program where they learned general construction skills in addition to core weatherization competencies, such as energy auditing and insulating.

Representatives from the South Central Community Action Agency (SCCAA) attended the graduation ceremony to present the new graduates with job offers to immediately go to work retrofitting local homes. The SCCAA and LIUNA developed the program to benefit the Jackson-area and surrounding counties by creating job opportunities for local residents who go through the weatherization training program. The two organizations are working together to train local workers and identify contractors that will provide them with good, family-supporting jobs.

“The skilled and credentialed weatherization workers LIUNA graduated today can now go to work retrofitting the thousands of poorly insulated homes in our area and help local families save money on their energy bills,” said Rob Richardson, LIUNA Vice President for Ohio Valley and Southern States, who led local officials on a tour of LIUNA’s mobile training facility after the graduation ceremony while the graduates demonstrated their newly acquired weatherization skills. **“LIUNA and SCCAA want these new graduates to have the skills they need to advance in family-supporting jobs and make a good career out of weatherizing American homes and businesses for years to come.”**

The average family can save \$350 a year on their utility bills after a weatherization. Retrofitting is also a cost effective way to help our environment, because the energy wasted in homes contributes heavily to pollution in communities. American homes (particularly those in the Northeast) burn oil that comes from foreign sources, so weatherization can also bolster our nation’s energy security by helping to curb the amount of foreign oil that is wasted on poorly insulated windows, doors and roofs.

“The program we’ve developed in Jackson will have an impact not only on the graduates, but will change energy costs by hundreds of dollars each year for homeowners in Hinds, Rankin, Madison and Simpson counties,” said Jessie Griffin, Executive Director of SCCAA. **“SCCAA and LIUNA Local 145 have worked hard to help these graduates develop weatherization skills for green job opportunities to support their families. We’re all so proud of everything they’ve accomplished to this point and look forward to helping them develop their careers in the years to come. Everyone wins with this program.”**

LIUNA has designed a breakthrough national program to train thousands of workers in communities across the country to do skilled energy efficiency retrofits, in order to meet the demand for a skilled weatherization workforce. LIUNA trainees learn detailed weatherization skills at LIUNA’s nationwide network of training centers, and have the opportunity to advance in family-supporting careers.

It is estimated that LIUNA’s national training program will create hundreds of thousands of new jobs, reduce household energy costs by \$3.5 billion a year and save the equivalent of 500 million barrels of oil annually. Both

Green for All (www.greenforall.org) and Good Jobs First (www.goodjobsfirst.org) have highlighted LIUNA's weatherization model as an example of weatherization work done right.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act invested \$5 billion to expand the Department of Energy's Weatherization Assistance Program and meet the Obama Administration's goal of weatherizing one million homes a year. This is a nearly 10-fold increase in the amount typically invested in weatherizing poorly insulated homes, but it is still not enough to fix all of the nation's energy inefficient homes. DOE recently announced that it will be allocating over \$400 million in competitive energy efficiency grants, which could help fund weatherization projects in states like Mississippi and around the country. LIUNA is working with partners, such as the SCCAA, to help close the remaining weatherization investment gap and identify ways to ramp up both public *and* private investment in America's weatherization industry, including "pay-as-you-save" models, utility partnerships, bonds and pension fund investments.

For more information on LIUNA's weatherization training program please visit <http://www.liunabuildsamerica.org/weatherize>.

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