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**Living Wages and Creating Small Business
Opportunities Key to Thomas' Community Development Strategy**

Washington, DC--Ward 5 Councilmember Harry "Tommy" Thomas, Jr., Chair of the Council's Committee on Economic Development, today reiterated that living wages for District residents and creating small business opportunities are central tenets of his community development strategy. Councilmember Thomas views fair wages and thriving local businesses as able to coexist with the advent of large retailers in the District. "The two are not mutually exclusive," stated Thomas, who has been working with organized labor to strengthen employment opportunities for District residents and enforce the Living Wage Act of 2006.

Toward that goal, Councilmember Thomas, and his colleagues Council Chairman Kwame Brown and At-Large Councilmember Michael Brown, recently introduced Bill 19-50, the District of Columbia Workforce Intermediary and Reform of First Source and Living Wage Amendment Act of 2011. The bill seeks to toughen the requirements of the District's First Source Employment Agreement program. Currently, First Source requires that, for projects receiving District funds, each employer sign an agreement ensuring that all job openings created are listed with the Department of Employment Services, and that 51 percent of new hires are District residents.

Introduced at the Council's January 18, 2011 legislative session, Bill 19-50 would require, for government-assisted projects of \$300,000 or more, that District residents perform:

- 20% of all non-construction hours,
- 25% of journey worker hours by trade,
- 50% of apprentice hours by trade,
- 60% of skilled laborer hours by trade, and
- 70% of common laborer hours by trade.

In addition, the bill requires employers to provide evidence of best efforts to comply with First Source before obtaining a waiver, and increases the fines for violating First Source agreements from 5% to 10% of the total amount of the contract's labor costs. The bill calls for implementation of the DC Auditor's May 2010 recommendations regarding oversight of the First Source program, including enforcement of compliance recordkeeping, requiring contractors to meet their obligations under land disposition and development agreements, and creating and implementing regulations for the Living Wage Act. Bill 19-50 also stipulates that the city form a task force to review best practices for workforce intermediary programs, including those in Boston, Minneapolis, and San Francisco.

Councilmember Thomas has a strong record of advocating for the small business community, as well. During the December 2010 trimming of \$180 million from the city's FY2011 budget, Thomas played a pivotal role in retaining funding for the DC Department of Small and Local Business Development's Main Street and small business technical assistance programs. He also has hosted a number of speed networking events to link Ward 5 small businesses to larger institutions, with the goal of encouraging local purchasing.

"I am committed to making sure District workers receive fair pay for a day's work, and that our local businesses remain viable and competitive as the marketplace changes," stated Thomas.