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## **BALCONY SUPPORTS NYS “15 IN 15 GREEN COLLAR JOB INITIATIVE”**

Albany , NY Saturday February 16, 2008

Greetings. I am Alan Lubin, the Executive Vice-President of the New York State United Teachers and the Co-Chairman of **BALCONY**, the Business and Labor Coalition of New York. **BALCONY** finds common ground between small businesses, labor unions and trade associations on New York Public Policy issues like the statewide struggle for affordable health care for all and efforts to keep our transportation infrastructure up-to-date.

**BALCONY announces today its support of Governor Spitzer’s “15 by 15 Green Collar Job Initiative” that will begin New York State’s long hard transition to renewable energy.** To reach a 15% energy reduction goal by the year 2015, a workforce must be trained to work with new technologies and in new ways creating thousands of new union jobs and saving countless others. These include workers who will be employed incorporating green building codes and energy retro-fits. Others can work in green waste composting and recycling centers, in the manufacture of solar panels and other energy-saving devices. They can work in the maintenance of energy-efficient public transportation and in the green renovation of residential homes. The training initiatives should utilize the existing labor-management training structure already in place, and should be coupled to labor standards that make these newly-created jobs attractive ones, with decent wages, benefits, and career ladders.

Today, I am proud to introduce our featured speaker, Jerome Ringo, who as president of the Apollo Alliance presents a fresh new face to the ranks of American environmental activists. Mr. Ringo started out working in the Louisiana petrochemical industry and experienced firsthand the effects of careless environmental practices while he worked as a union community organizer.

In 1996, Mr. Ringo accepted an offer to join the board of the National Wildlife Federation, and in 2005 became chairman of that Federation’s board. With this appointment, he became the first African-American to ever head up a major United States environmental organization. He also served as an U.S. delegate to the 1998 Kyoto conference that created the world’s first global warming treaty, and counts former Vice-President Al Gore as one of his environmental heroes. A treaty which was blocked by Republicans in the U.S. Senate but hopefully can now be rejuvenated when the Democrats take over the White House next year be it either Senator Hillary Clinton or Senator Barack Obama.

Mr. Ringo has mapped out a strategy to expand the environmental movement into previously under-served communities, and uses his participation in the Apollo Alliance as a vehicle for transcending lines of race and class. The Apollo Alliance should become the face of the green movement, with its healthy mix of labor unions, business and civil rights leaders, and already-existing environmental groups.

Without further ado, **BALCONY** and I am delighted to welcome Mr. Jerome Ringo to the Labor Luncheon of the New York State Association of Black and Puerto Rican Legislators.

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