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****PRESS RELEASE****

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Professional Minor League Umpires Vote Overwhelmingly to Affiliate with OPEIU

New York, NY – The union representing professional minor league baseball umpires has voted overwhelmingly to affiliate with the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU), AFL-CIO.

The 215 members of the Association of Minor League Umpires (AMLU) voted by 91 percent in favor of affiliation with OPEIU. The AMLU will now be known as AMLU/OPEIU Guild 322 (3 balls, 2 strikes, 2 outs!)

“Our affiliation with OPEIU is the next step in a progression toward improving the lives and working conditions of some of the hardest working and most underappreciated people in the game,” said AMLU President Shaun Francis. “We evaluated the pros and cons of affiliation with a variety of different unions and OPEIU was head and shoulders above the rest. OPEIU’s size, diversity of membership in a wide range of industries, as well as the quality of staff made them a perfect fit for our group.

“During the affiliation process, OPEIU President Michael Goodwin and Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin Kistler represented OPEIU extremely well,” continued Francis. “They strongly believe in the labor movement and understand our goals for the future, and presented the benefits of OPEIU membership to me, my executive board and my members in a way that made it clear we should join forces with OPEIU.”

“Members of the AMLU recognized that OPEIU is the right organization to help them achieve the benefits and protections they need,” said Goodwin. “We look forward to working with them to negotiate a strong contract that will afford them the respect they deserve and the salary and benefits they’ve earned.”

Prior to AMLU's formation in 2000, minor league umpires had been working with no representation. The goals of the AMLU's organizers was to secure health insurance, a benefit they were able to acquire for their members after several years of employment, as well as a ranking and promotion system to standardize movement up through the various leagues. Despite these changes and a strike that was honored by 100 percent of the minor league umpires in 2006, some key goals were not obtained.

Minor league umpires also work regularly in Major League Baseball, filling in for sick, injured or vacationing full-time umpires. More than 1,300 regular season MLB games had at least one AMLU member on the field in the 2009 season. In addition, all MLB umpires are recruited from the minor league system.

The life of a minor league umpire is difficult, with low pay, no vacation or sick time, as well as the inability to return home during the long season, which lasts from Spring Training in March to mid-late September. Salary for a minor league umpire starts at a mere \$1,800 per month, and is only paid during the season, forcing the umpires to work a second or third job during the off-season.

"We're now looking to take the umpires to another level and secure rights and benefits afforded to other baseball professionals, including wage improvements, job security and better working conditions," said Francis. "We look forward to bringing OPEIU's talents and resources into the world of professional umpiring to make these goals possible."

Professional employees in the areas of health care, education and aviation have been attracted to OPEIU and sought its representation in recent years.

ABOUT OPEIU

The Office and Professional Employees International Union represents more than 125,000 members in the United States, Puerto Rico and Canada. OPEIU represents employees and independent contractors in banking and credit unions, insurance, higher education, shipping, hospitals, medical clinics, utilities, transportation, hotels, administrative offices and more.

Professional organizations and Guilds affiliated with OPEIU are a diverse group that includes physicians, pharmacists, chiropractors, appraisers, podiatrists, dentists, clinical social workers, hypnotists, teachers and helicopter pilots.

PHOTO CAPTION: Association of Minor League Umpires (AMLU) President Shaun Francis (seated, second from left) and Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) International President Michael Goodwin (seated, second from right) sign the affiliation agreement. AMLU will now be known as AMLU/OPEIU Guild 322. Also pictured are (standing left to right) Tom Clarke, AMLU Recording Secretary and Justin Vogel, AMLU Vice President; (seated, far left) Jeffrey Klinghoffer, AMLU Secretary-Treasurer; and (seated, far right) Kevin Kistler, OPEIU Director of Organization and Field Services.