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MAYOR DE BLASIO & DEP ANNOUNCE \$115 WATER BILL CREDIT FOR NEARLY 52,000 LOW-INCOME HOMEOWNERS

Home Water Assistance Program – started last year – expands to tens of thousands of senior or disabled New Yorkers; saves most participants 25 percent on annual water bill

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio and New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Emily Lloyd today announced that nearly 52,000 low-income, senior, or disabled homeowners across the city will receive an automatic credit of \$115.89 on their next water bill, saving most participants approximately 25 percent on their annual bill.

“The holidays can be expensive – and this credit will provide some much-needed relief to low-income, senior, and disabled homeowners,” said **Mayor de Blasio**. “Our Home Water Assistance Program is just one way in which we’ve focused on providing relief to New York City’s water customers – from the lowest water rate increase in over a decade, to freezing the minimum charge.”

“Thanks to Mayor de Blasio’s leadership, we’ve been able to extend a credit of \$115 to nearly 52,000 low-income homeowners across the city,” said **DEP Commissioner Lloyd**. “The Home Water Assistance Program is another example of how DEP is following through on the Mayor’s promise to help low-income customers, while still keeping water and sewer rates affordable for all New Yorkers.”

The credit is part of the Home Water Assistance Program, which was first introduced by the de Blasio Administration in 2014. Last year, 12,500 homeowners who qualified for the Federal Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) received the credit. This year, DEP has expanded the program to include those who receive a Senior Citizens Homeowners Exemption or a Disabled Homeowners Exemption for property taxes, bringing the total to nearly 52,000 homeowners.

DEP has partnered with the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the Department of Finance (DOF) to identify qualified one- to four- family homeowners that received a HEAP or low-income property tax benefit in 2015.

Homeowners do not have to do anything to receive the credit; it will appear on the next water and sewer bill for qualifying customers.

“We are very pleased to partner with DEP and HRA in support of the Mayor’s program to provide financial relief to those New Yorkers who need it most. This is an important initiative for homeowners as it reduces their water bill during what is a costly time year,” said **Department of Finance Commissioner Jacques Jiha**.

“The expansion of this credit helps an increased number of homeowners who are low-income seniors or have disabilities pay their water bills, and supports our overall efforts to address income inequality for the most vulnerable New Yorkers,” said **HRA Commissioner Steve Banks**.

DEP proposed these changes to the New York City Water Board, which adopted them as part of the FY 2016 Water and Sewer Rate schedule. In addition, as part of DEP's commitment to providing the highest quality service while ensuring effective and fair revenue collection, for the last two years the minimum charge has been frozen for those customers who use less than 100 gallons of water each day. This means that roughly 25 percent of single family homes, many of them owned by seniors, have seen no water rate increase during that time. DEP has also expanded the leak forgiveness program, which has saved customers more than \$83 million in leak-related water charges since 2011.

"This is the type of help that Bronxites and residents all over the city need, especially during the holiday season when expenses can go through the roof for many families and every little bit can help," said **Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.** "Budgets can get real tight during this time of the year, and this water bill credit is a huge boon for our homeowners who are trying to make it through the holiday. I want to thank Mayor de Blasio and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection for making this relief possible for Bronx homeowners."

State Senator Diane Savino said, "I am pleased to see the continued success of the Home Water Assistance Program. It is vital to those residents on a fixed income to obtain financial relief, especially those who will receive the credit under the program's new growth."

"I too often encounter residents who are overcome with the expense of their water bills, and the trend of increases that has persisted for many years" said **State Senator Marty Golden.** "This credit will help some of those most in need and who make sacrifices when paying bills such as their water bill. This is a step in the right direction in making New York City a more affordable place to call home, and it is my hope to work to create even greater incentives."

Assembly Member David Weprin said, "Thanks to DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd, 52,000 low-income homeowners will be receiving an unexpected holiday gift this season. This \$115 credit from the DEP will surely brighten the holidays for many working-class families and provide a much needed boost in the New Year."

"Any assistance to low-income homeowners is welcome news in the Bronx and New York City. Many families struggle from paycheck to paycheck and receiving a credit on their next water bill will likely go a long way to help" said **Assembly Member Latoya Joyner.** "I would like to thank Mayor de Blasio, the the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, the Human Resources Administration and the Department of Finance for their work in making sure that more than 52,000 households receive a credit of \$115 on their next water or sewer bill through the Home Water Assistance Program."

"As chair of the NYS Assembly Aging Committee, I know that for seniors and people with disabilities, water and sewer costs play an expensive role when it comes to keeping low- and fixed-income individuals in their homes" said **Assembly Member Steve Cymbrowitz.** "I applaud Mayor de Blasio and New York City Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Emily Lloyd for extending this credit to our vulnerable populations and making our city more affordable"

Assembly Member Michael Dendekker said, "I applaud Mayor de Blasio for taking this step to help homeowners with their water charges, especially in the holiday season when extra income is so often needed."

"No family should see their savings depleted or face the prospect of their water being shut off for not being able to pay their utilities. This new credit will make a real difference this holiday season in keeping water rates affordable for our most vulnerable citizens. I applaud the Mayor's leadership in expanding this important program and will continue to fight for the resources our families need and deserve," said **Assembly Member Phil Goldfeder.**

Assembly Member Joseph Lentol said, "I want to commend the Mayor for instituting this program which helps relieve some financial pressure low-income homeowners experience. We want to maintain as well as increase homeownership for low income individuals and families. This is one way of advancing that goal."

The Home Water Assistance Program is an excellent initiative that helps low income New Yorkers meet their essential needs. I applaud Mayor De Blasio and DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd for making this humanistic program a reality," said **Assembly Member Guillermo Linares**.

Council Member Costa Constantinides, Chair of the Committee on Environmental Protection, said, "The Home Water Assistance Program will go a long way to help low-income and senior homeowners this holiday season. The \$115 water bill credit helps New Yorkers who need it most. I thank Mayor de Blasio and DEP Commissioner Lloyd for their leadership on this important issue."

"The Home Water Assistance Program has been a huge relief for low-income New Yorkers. Expanding it so senior and disabled homeowners may also afford to pay for an essential utility is yet another example of this Administration's commitment to uplifting those who most need help and equalizing the distribution of the City's resources" said Council Member **Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, Chair of the Committee on Finance**.

Council Member Steve Matteo said, "Water bills hit the seniors and lowest income earners the hardest, and I am glad that the City is extending this benefit not only to another year but to more residents as well."

"High water rates have been a problem for many low-income, seniors and disabled homeowners during the last few years, so it is wonderful news that they will be receiving this gift in the mail right in time for the holidays," said **Council Member Donovan Richards**. "While we work to lower water rate increases across the city, every refund helps ease the burden on financially strapped New Yorkers. I'd like to thank Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Lloyd for ensuring that even more residents can benefit from this program, especially during the time of year where every dollar makes a difference."

"Every little bit counts for families trying to make ends meet this time of year. By expanding the Home Water Assistance Program, the de Blasio administration has given 52,000 New York homeowners and their families a much needed break just in time for the holiday season. I commend Mayor de Blasio and Commissioners Lloyd, Banks and Jiha for broadening access to this important program and working proactively to identify and assist those who qualify," said **Council Member Steve Levin**.

Council Member Vincent Gentile said, "Concerning low-income, senior and disabled homeowners, the Home Water Assistance Program and this credit is a great step towards water bill relief in our City. We must keep working to ensure bill relief for all New York City water customers."

"During this era of ever-increasing water rates, it is a great relief for homeowners to gain access to the Home Water Assistance Program credit," said **Council Member I. Daneek Miller**. "I thank the de Blasio Administration for its leadership on this issue. On behalf of Southeast Queens and homeowners throughout the City, we look forward to continuing to find innovative methods to mitigate costly water and sewer rates."

"Special thanks to Mayor de Blasio and DEP in their efforts to provide financial assistance to low income homeowners. The Home Water Assistance Program is an affirmation to DEP's commitment to provide high quality service and fair revenue collection," said **Council Member Alan Maisel**.

DEP manages New York City's water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than nine million residents, including eight million in New York City. The water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, comprising 19 reservoirs and three controlled lakes. Approximately 7,000 miles of water mains, tunnels and aqueducts bring water to homes and businesses throughout the five boroughs, and 7,500 miles of sewer lines and 96 pump stations take wastewater to 14 in-city

treatment plants. DEP has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 in the upstate watershed. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program, with nearly \$14 billion in investments planned over the next 10 years that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. This capital program is responsible for critical projects like City Water Tunnel No. 3; the Staten Island Bluebelt program, an ecologically sound and cost-effective stormwater management system; the city's Watershed Protection Program, which protects sensitive lands upstate near the city's reservoirs in order to maintain their high water quality; and the installation of more than 820,000 Automated Meter Reading devices, which will allow customers to track their daily water use, more easily manage their accounts and be alerted to potential leaks on their properties. For more information, visit nyc.gov/dep, like DEP on Facebook at facebook.com/nycwater, or follow DEP on Twitter at twitter.com/nycwater.

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