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MAYOR DE BLASIO SIGNS INTO LAW BILLS TO INCREASE TRANSPARENCY IN VETERAN SERVICES

NEW YORK—Today, Mayor de Blasio signed five pieces of legislation into law – Intro 600-A, 611-A, and 619-A, in relation to increased transparency of Veterans’ services and increasing the size of the Veterans’ Advisory Board; Intro 74-A, in relation to creating a formal process to streamline the removal of downed trees; and Intro 423-A, in relation to several reports from Small Businesses Services and Mayor’s Office of Contract Services relating to the development of worker cooperative businesses.

The first set of bills, Intros 600-A, 611-A, and 619-A, strengthen the transparency of the Veterans’ Advisory Board and of various services provided to veterans by city agencies. Intro. 600-A requires various city agencies to report specific services provided to veterans. Intro. 611-A increases the number of members of the Veterans’ Advisory Board from nine to eleven members, six of whom would be appointed by the Mayor and five of whom would be appointed by the Council Speaker. Intro 611-A also requires each Veterans’ Advisory Board member to create an email exclusively for the purpose of the Board. Intro. 619-A increases the number of mandatory meetings held by the VAB from four to five each year, and requires the Mayor’s Office of Veterans’ Affairs to maintain and periodically update contact information of veterans’ organizations located within the city. These bills were approved by the City Council at the stated meeting on February 26.

“New York City’s veterans gave selflessly to protect our nation—and we must provide these dedicated men and women transparent and simple access to the services they need. These three bills will strengthen the City’s ability to support veterans and connect them to services they need and deserve. It’s only right that we fulfill our obligation to serve those who have so bravely served us and our nation,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “I want to thank Council Members Ulrich, Vallone, and Eugene, and Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, for sponsoring these bills.”

“The City Council is proud of its on-going efforts to strengthen and uplift New Yorkers,” said **Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**. “From supporting our City’s veterans and worker cooperatives to keeping our neighborhoods safe in weather emergencies, New York City is committed to helping all of our residents and I thank my Council colleagues for spearheading, and Mayor de Blasio for signing, this important package of legislation.”

“The Veterans Advisory Board does great work and strengthens the lines of communication between city government and local vets,” said **Council Member Eric Ulrich, Chair of the Council Veterans Committee**. “This legislation will allow for greater public input that will only enhance the ability of the Board to meet the challenges facing veterans and their families in our city.”

“The package of bills being signed in to law by the Mayor today will bring about positive and meaningful reforms to the Veterans Advisory Board. Collectively, these laws will make the Veterans Advisory Board more transparent and accessible to the public and will provide the Board with resources that will make them more knowledgeable about the veterans who live in our great city. It is my pleasure to have been the primary sponsor of Intro. 611A, which will not only make the Board a larger and more diverse body, but will improve communication between the them and our brave men and women who honorably served this country. Our

veterans are very special people and they deserve to benefit from newly created laws that have a positive impact on their lives and the lives of their loved ones,” said **Council Member Mathieu Eugene**.

“Now that Mayor de Blasio has signed my bill into law, we have taken a great stride towards ensuring that every veteran who returns to NYC is given every opportunity to prosper,” said **Council Member Paul Vallone**. “The data we will now have will go a long way towards allowing the Council and Administration to make effective and fruitful efforts at ensuring that veterans are taking full advantage of the services offered to them. I am proud to have passed this legislation, and as a member of the Committee on Veterans, I look forward to continuing to fight for every veteran that calls NYC home.”

Introductory 74-A requires the Department of Parks and Recreation to develop a formal process for the removal of trees on city property that have been downed or damaged as a result of severe weather conditions. This bill was approved by the City Council at the stated meeting on February 26. In his remarks, the Mayor thanked the bill’s sponsor, Council Member King, for supporting this legislation.

“I thank Mayor Bill de Blasio for signing Intro. 74-A, which establishes a common sense approach between our city agencies and local utilities in cases where downed or damaged trees and power lines on city property must be removed. This Mayor has been committed to disaster readiness and I appreciate that he recognizes the importance of this legislation to our city’s homeowners. The tree removal process would have been much simpler and swifter during Sandy if we had these protocols in place and now my fellow home-owning New Yorkers can have a little more piece of mind,” said **Council Member Andy King**.

Introductory 423-A requires the Department of Small Business Services and the Mayor’s Office of Contract Services to report on number and value of contracts awarded to worker cooperatives, which are companies majority owned and controlled by their employees. This bill was approved by the City Council at the stated meeting on February 25. In his remarks, the Mayor thanked the bill’s sponsors, Council Members Rosenthal, Arroyo, and Menchaca, for supporting this legislation.

“Worker cooperatives are a model for economic empowerment in our City, particularly for immigrant communities. In Sunset Park, worker cooperatives are thriving with the strong support of neighborhood organizations like Center for Family Life. With the passage of Intro 423-A, the City Council and the Administration will work as partners to assess how to support worker cooperatives by exploring those industries where worker cooperatives are operating and the potential for procurement opportunities. I commend the work of my fellow co-prime sponsors on this bill, Council Members Rosenthal and Arroyo, as well as the leadership of the Speaker and the Administration as we work collectively to grow the cooperative movement citywide,” said **Council Member Carlos Menchaca**.

"Worker cooperatives give workers good quality jobs, with high wages, good hours, and job stability. This democratic business model is a great tool to combat income inequality, and this bill will spread the word about worker cooperatives to the small business community. I'm pleased to join Council Members Carlos Menchaca and Maria del Carmen Arroyo as co-prime sponsors on this exciting bill," said **Council Member Helen Rosenthal**.

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