

2010 Action Report



Office of
Bill de Blasio
PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

A Message from Bill de Blasio

To the People of New York City,

At my inauguration I said that my office would be a place where the voice of the people would speak loudly. Over the past year we have worked hard to achieve that goal. Our office has demonstrated that when New Yorkers participate in the decisions of their government, we all achieve better results for our City.

In 2010 New Yorkers came to our office when their voices were not heard:

- **Public school parents** who saw the quality of their children's education suffer when their concerns about the co-location of schools were ignored;
- **Outer borough residents** who were stranded on unplowed streets during December's blizzard and couldn't get the City to send plows or even ambulances when they needed them.
- **Tenants** whose landlords disregarded the dangerous living conditions in their buildings, despite the numerous and severe housing violations that were racked up.



Here is what we accomplished:

- We helped restore housing to over 1,000 affordable housing voucher recipients who had their vouchers revoked, potentially saving up to \$52 million in taxpayer dollars that would have been spent on homeless shelter costs.
- We helped obtain tutoring service for 50,000 students who were failing Math and English after state test scores were recalibrated.
- We won reforms at the Department of Education to inform and engage parents before the Department closes schools or forces them to share space with other schools.
- We responded to over 1,000 complaints from New Yorkers after the December 26th blizzard and tracked, in real time, conditions at 55 hospitals during subsequent storms.
- We launched the *NYC's Worst Landlords Watch List* to pressure landlords who let their buildings fall into dangerous disrepair. In one instance because of the Watch List we recouped \$143,000 taxpayer dollars by forcing a listed landlord to pay overdue back fines.
- We documented problems New Yorkers faced in casting their vote at over 150 polling sites during the primary election and successfully got the Board of Elections to give voters a better process for the General Election.
- We successfully advocated to put term limits on the ballot in November, giving New Yorkers the final say on how long elected officials serve in City Government.
- We successfully pushed four major financial firms, Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan Chase Co., Morgan Stanley, and Citigroup, to adopt policies against spending any corporate treasury dollars in elections.

Even in the best of times, government struggles to come up with ideas that change New Yorkers' lives for the better. 2011 demands a new sense of energy and urgency from all parts of City government to continue to improve people's lives, even if we have fewer resources to back us up.

We need to reexamine the role City Government plays in promoting our economic growth. Are our tax dollars being used efficiently to create middle class jobs and support small businesses? Can our City's combined pension assets of over \$100 billion be redirected to focus on New York City-based businesses and initiatives? Are developers giving back enough to neighborhoods they build in by creating good local jobs and providing community benefits? With an appointee on the City Planning Commission and through my seat on the largest pension fund in the City, I will advocate for a more active strategy in directing government resources locally to create jobs and economic opportunity for all of New York City's residents.

Part of my role as pension trustee is ensuring that the companies we invest in maintain responsible corporate governance policies. However, the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision changed the role of corporations in our democracy, allowing them to use investments from public pension funds, institutional investors and shareholders to secretly fund their political activities in our elections. My office produced a report showing that a staggering \$132 million was spent by anonymous donors in the 2010 midterm elections; those shadowy donations will only increase as we move closer to the next presidential election. In 2011, I will rally other pension funds, elected officials, and everyday shareholders to get more companies to institute real accountability and transparency in their political spending policies. And to ensure that many recently formed non-profits are not abusing their tax-exempt status to funnel secret political donations, I will turn a spotlight on the biggest third-party spenders.

The Department of Education (DOE) is a \$23 billion operation that is not providing \$23 billion worth of results for our students. Public school parents are a resource for improving our children's education, but the top-down management style of the DOE views them as an obstruction, especially when it imposes drastic changes in schools. Struggling students who need the most help often get the least support from our education system. The consistent growth of red tape and bureaucracy at the DOE has opened the door to waste and inefficiency that we cannot afford in lean budget times. I will partner with public school parents to demand their voice be heard, and work to reform the Department of Education's costly overhead and services to help struggling students.

There are tenants in every part of New York City whose apartments are deteriorating to the point of becoming unlivable. This year my *NYC's Worst Landlords Watch List* exposed hundreds of buildings where tens of thousands of tenants live with lead paint, toxic mold, holes in their walls and ceilings, or go through winter without heat or hot water. This year I will continue pushing for City and State legislation that will impose tougher penalties for repeat offenders and reform the slow and ineffective process used to hold landlords accountable. My office will campaign with tenants to achieve substantial repairs to individual buildings and demand that bad landlords never receive taxpayer dollars through City leases.

The mission of the Public Advocate's office is to give the people a greater voice in their government, provide oversight when City Hall is failing to live up to its responsibilities, and provide all New Yorkers with direct advocacy to help them cut through red tape and get the services they need. Your participation in making Government work can give all New Yorkers a better City to live in. Please join us by visiting our website at www.advocate.nyc.gov or by calling 212-669-7200. My office looks forward to working with you in 2011.



Bill de Blasio
Public Advocate for the City of New York



Developing Jobs & Investing in our Economy

As we continue to recover from the recession, many New Yorkers are still looking for a job that can support them and their families and for a home they can afford. In these times of economic challenge, the first priority of government must be delivering on these needs. Through his appointment as a member of the City Planning Commission and as a trustee of the New York City Employees' Retirement System, Public Advocate de Blasio fights for development and investments that grow our City's economy. And through his oversight role, the Public Advocate works to expose any waste of the taxpayer's money.

PROTECTING TAXPAYER DOLLARS

No City Business for Bad Landlords

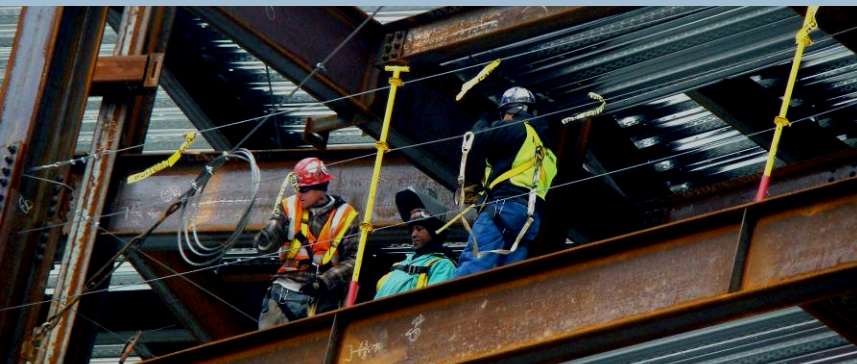
Public Advocate de Blasio believes in using New York City's substantial buying power to improve the lives of New Yorkers. The Office of the Public Advocate called on the Department of Citywide Administrative Services to reconsider its multi-million dollar office space leases with a landlord in the Flatbush Gardens housing complex in Brooklyn who had widespread housing code violations and safety hazards. As a result, the landlord outlined an accelerated repair schedule and repaid the City \$143,000 in back fines owed for emergency repairs to Flatbush Gardens.

Saving Taxpayer Dollars by Keeping New Yorkers out of Homeless Shelters



Shortly after the City proposed cutting \$25 million in funding for thousands of Section 8 housing vouchers, Public Advocate de Blasio released a report titled "Broken Promises," showing that housing these same families in homeless shelters would actually cost tens of millions of taxpayer dollars. The Public Advocate, allies on the New York City Council, and organizations like New York Communities for Change, the Legal Aid Society, and Coalition for the Homeless, ultimately won the restoration of over 1,000 vouchers, keeping thousands of New Yorkers out of shelter and potentially saving up to \$52 million in taxpayer dollars.

DEVELOPMENT THAT DELIVERS FOR NEW YORK



New York City needs to get more from development projects to put people to work and build affordable homes for the middle class. But we won't meet all those needs unless government takes an active approach and fights for the best possible deal from developers. Through his appointment of a member to the City Planning Commission, Public Advocate de Blasio fights for projects that create local jobs, produces the most possible affordable housing, and accommodates the needs of the community.

Riverside Center (Upper West Side, Manhattan)

- 100,000 square feet of new school space
- 500 units of affordable housing
- 900 construction jobs
- 1,400 permanent jobs

The handful of blocks north of 59th Street along the Hudson River is one of the last undeveloped frontiers in Manhattan. Initially, the site's developer, Extell, only planned to set aside 250 of the nearly 2,000 new apartments in the Riverside Center development for low-income and middle class families. While Extell's initial plan included lots of open space for recreation, neighbors were concerned that there was insufficient room for the children of new residents in the west side's already overcrowded schools.

After the local community board opposed the development, Extell improved its offer of affordable housing and promised to build a modestly sized 75,000 square-foot school. Public Advocate de Blasio supported the revised development, but he also called on the City and the developer to negotiate towards setting aside 30% of the units for affordable housing, and to double the size of the new school to meet community needs. The combined pressure from elected officials and local leaders resulted in a better deal: Riverside Center was approved with 500 affordable apartments and a new 100,000 square-foot school which will also generate 2,300 new jobs.

New Domino Project (Williamsburg, Brooklyn)

With so many construction sites stalled in Williamsburg, the New Domino project offered the chance to put thousands of New Yorkers back to work in the building trades. For neighborhood residents facing skyrocketing rents, it also provided a real opportunity to build large-scale affordable housing. The developer came to the table with the promise to provide 660 affordable apartments—30% of the total units.

- 660 units of affordable housing
- 3,500 construction jobs
- 1,300 permanent jobs
- New waterfront esplanade on the East River

Public Advocate de Blasio called on the Department of City Planning to support the New Domino project if the developer delivered on his promise of affordability. He also echoed community concerns regarding the stress the new residents would

place on Williamsburg's strained transportation system. The project was approved with the full 30% of apartments guaranteed as affordable, and with a promise to create 1,300 permanent and 3,500 construction jobs over the ten-year build-out period. To keep local subways from becoming overwhelmed, Public Advocate de Blasio is committed to enhancing bus and ferry service in North Brooklyn, even if it means using an initial public subsidy to prove to the MTA and private operators that there is demand.

Rose Plaza on the River (Williamsburg, Brooklyn)

- 3,500 construction jobs
- 1,300 permanent jobs
- 774 units of affordable housing
- Increase public waterfront access and green space.

South Williamsburg has reeled from the break-neck pace of development in recent years. The Rose Plaza development was a rare opportunity to carve out new affordable housing, especially for larger families with few options in the market. The developer's initial promise, that 20% of the units would be affordable housing, failed to meet the needs of a neighborhood where so many families had been priced out of their homes.

To fix this, the Public Advocate called on the Department of City Planning to oppose the project, and lobbied the developer to make at least 30% of units affordable. The developer eventually pledged to local officials that 774 apartments, equivalent to 30%, would be set aside for poor and middle-

income residents. Seventy-four of those units have more than three bedrooms and will meet the needs of larger families common in South Williamsburg. The Public Advocate ultimately supported the project after these concessions were made.



INVESTING FOR NEW YORK —

The Public Advocate is a trustee of the New York City Employees' Retirement System (NYCERS). As the largest pension fund in the city, with over \$37 billion in assets and more than 300,000 members, NYCERS has both huge responsibilities to hard-working New Yorkers and enormous clout on the national business stage. With pension obligations on the rise, it is more important than ever that the City's pension fund performs well. Public Advocate de Blasio has joined with other NYCERS trustees in leveraging the fund's investments to compel businesses in which NYCERS invests to become more transparent and accountable.

Protecting Our Investments

NYCERS is invested across the market in virtually every sector of the economy. The security of those investments depends on good corporate governance. Joining with other major public pension funds across the country, NYCERS lobbied Congress to pass financial reform that gave investors more direct representation in corporate boardrooms. NYCERS also presented stockholder resolutions to appoint truly independent board chairmen, repeal "classified" board policies, and establish majority voting procedures to elect directors.

Together, these reforms will ensure better corporate leadership to protect the interests of long-term stockholders.

- Total NYCERS assets, as of November 2010 \$37.8 billion
- Prior Assets, as of November 2009 \$35 billion

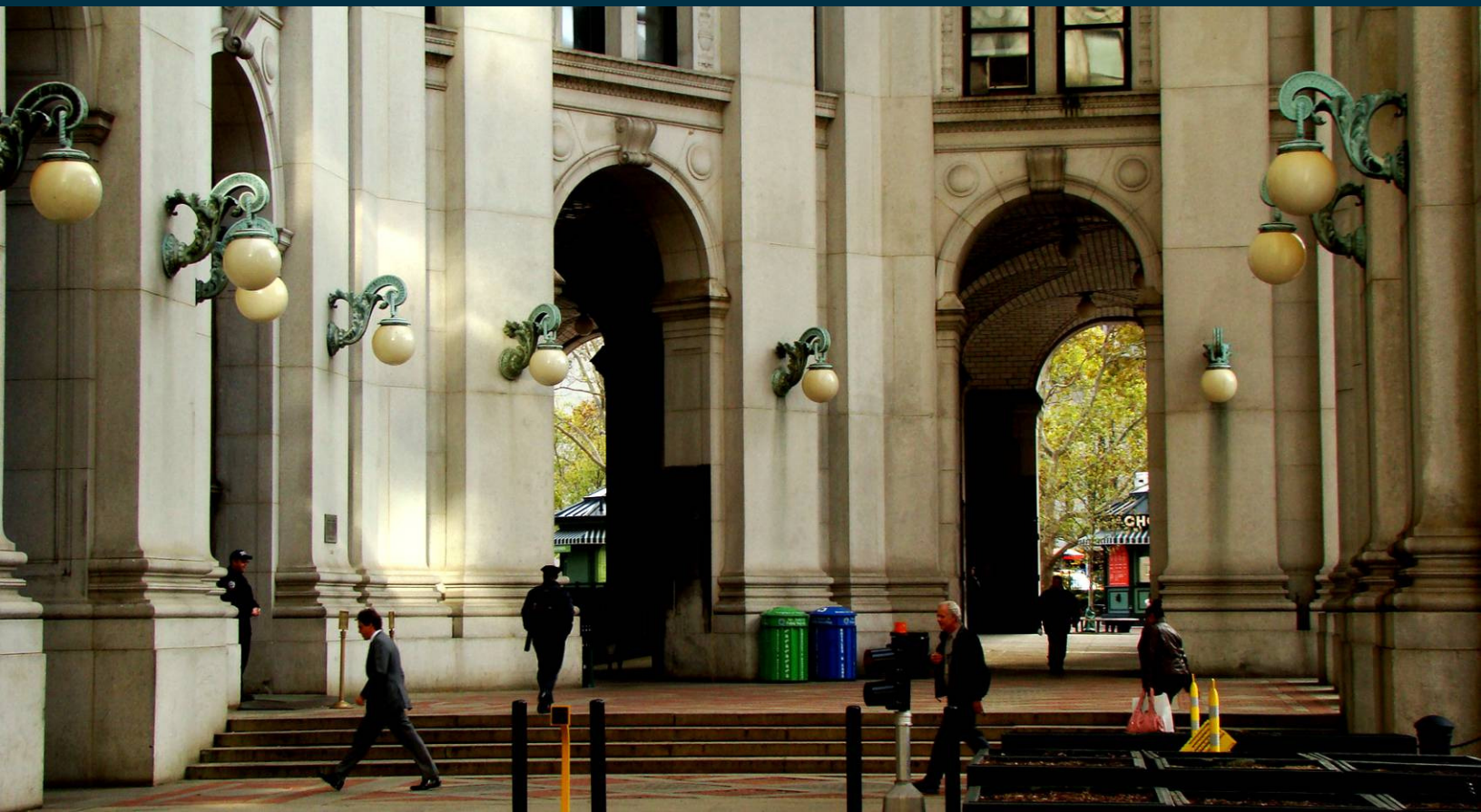
“By raising our voices together, institutional investors can help make sure that all shareholders get the information they need to properly hold corporations accountable”

Public Advocate Bill de Blasio

Active Investors

When companies discriminate against employees or engage in political debates, they often put their bottom lines in jeopardy. As an investor across all markets, NYCERS has an economic stake in companies acting as responsible corporate citizens. Moreover, Public Advocate de Blasio believes in the fund’s obligation to utilize its investments for the greater good. NYCERS is one of the nation’s most active pension funds on issues of social responsibility, economic justice, and environmental protection.

In tandem with the Office of the Comptroller and other NYCERS trustees, the Public Advocate worked to file proposals with major corporations to change practices that threaten both pension investments and the public interest. The City’s pension funds filed 106 proposals at 104 companies in 2010. In 2011, the fund is proposing actions to further strengthen the independence of members of the Board of Directors, improve corporate conduct on the environment and human rights, and prevent workplace and consumer discrimination.





Giving Parents a Voice & Students a Better Education

New York City public schools confronted some tough realities in 2010: harsh budget cuts, controversial school co-locations and closures, and the announcement of recalibrated state test scores that showed thousands more students were failing. Despite the difficult news, there remain untapped opportunities to transform education for the better. Parents and teachers can become viable partners in reform if they are meaningfully engaged in school decisions. More accurate scoring of tests enables us to identify struggling students and offer them the support they need to succeed. The Office of the Public Advocate has seized on these opportunities.

MORE INPUT ON MAJOR SCHOOL CHANGES ---

Anytime a school closes or relocates into a shared building, it can be difficult. A lack of communication with parents simply makes matters worse. A report by the Public Advocate and the Alliance for Quality Education, which included a survey of nearly 900 affected parents, found that many parents were in the dark when a child's school closed or relocated, and recommended new ways for the Department of Education to engage parents.

As a result, the Department of Education reformed its policies, incorporating the recommendations into a new City policy requiring public notices, community consultations, and stakeholder meetings when a school is being considered for co-location or closure.

When the Office of the Public Advocate surveyed 874 affected parents about major school changes, 44% had never even seen the Education Impact Assessment form the DOE used to solicit parent feedback.

50,000 STUDENTS NO LONGER LEFT BEHIND

When the State Department of Education retooled the way it scores Math and English exams, tens of thousands of New York City students who were previously considered proficient were found to have failed. The Office of the Public Advocate secured and publicly released detailed information from the City Department of Education on students newly classified as “non-proficient.” The Office strongly urged the State Board of Regents to hold the City accountable for helping these students catch up. After months of pressure, the Department of Education enacted a path to proficiency for students who had fallen behind. Following this and other advocacy, the City announced that it would provide tutoring services to 50,000 students.

Winning Reform:

New Steps Before Major School Decisions

- Community outreach prior to making any decision about moving or closing a school.
- More comprehensive “Educational Impact Statements” that detail shared use of gyms, cafeterias, libraries, and classrooms.
- Meetings between affected schools before, during, and after a co-location takes place.

GREENING NYC SCHOOLS: INTRO. 165-A

For years there was little effort to create real recycling programs in our schools, despite the amount of waste they produce on a daily basis. Public Advocate de Blasio previously worked with parents who were eager to make their schools more green and teach their children first hand to be good stewards of the environment. The School Recycling Bill (Intro. 165-A) was reintroduced by the Public Advocate in April 2010 and was signed into law by Mayor Bloomberg in August. Under the law, schools are required to provide paper-recycling receptacles in all classrooms and install recycling bins for cans and bottles in cafeterias and at school entrances.





Providing Oversight & Protecting New Yorkers

New York City's sprawling government is made up of more than 70 agencies, and those bodies do not always serve the public as well as they can. Through official inquiry, the Office of the Public Advocate breaks down barriers to government information that should be accessible to the public. The Office surveys New Yorkers who utilize City programs and analyzes constituent cases in order to identify areas where services are falling short, and recommends improvements. And as all agencies are forced to cut back in these tough budget times, the Public Advocate fights to preserve resources for the parts of City government that keep New Yorkers safe.

OVERSIGHT OF CITY HALL

Braving the Blizzard:

Department of Sanitation

After two feet of snow fell on December 26, 2010, many city streets remained unplowed, leaving residents stranded for days. The public was stunned and angered by an ineffectual storm response that resulted in ten snowbound hospitals, hundreds of emergency vehicles stuck in the snow, and many residential streets left impassable for days. With 311 overloaded and the City unresponsive to public complaints, nearly 1,000 New Yorkers reached out to the Public Advocate for help in the four days following the storm. Constituent case managers forwarded complaints to the Department of Sanitation and pushed to bring additional equipment and personnel to



NYC Hospital Watch

The Office of the Public Advocate has engaged the public in ongoing oversight of the City's emergency response. Following major weather events, NYC Hospital Watch tracks road conditions around 55 New York City hospitals based on firsthand reports from New Yorkers and community groups. Displayed in real time via an online Google Map, the tracker enables the Public Advocate's office to alert the Department of Sanitation whenever hospital access is blocked, and to enlist community help to clear the way if necessary.

the hardest hit neighborhoods, such as Borough Park in Brooklyn. In a report released just days after the storm, the Public Advocate fought for the City to modify its policies for declaring Snow Emergencies, coordinate snowplows with emergency vehicles, and prioritize plowing streets that surround hospitals. The City later adopted several of the Public Advocate's recommendations as part of a fifteen-point reform plan.



Making Every Vote Count: NYC Board of Elections

The introduction of new voting machines created problems for thousands of voters in New York City on Primary Day. Even before the first vote was cast, the Public Advocate and dozens of

elected officials pressured the Board of Elections to translate instructions for new voting machines into the different languages as required by law. In September 2010, the machines were utilized for the first time and voters' poor experience with them led to widespread complaints of machine malfunctions, privacy violations, and inadequate poll worker training. The Office of the Public Advocate documented such problems at more than 150 polling sites. Consequently, Public Advocate de Blasio demanded corrective action from the Board of Elections and relevant City agencies through his testimony before the City Council, State committees and in a letter to the Board. Two months later, poll workers received better training and interagency communication improved, leading to fewer electoral problems in the General Election.

Demanding Repairs: New York City Housing Authority

The largest landlord in New York is the City's Public Housing Authority (NYCHA). Public housing and rent assistance programs provide a safety net for thousands of families in need. At the same time, the Office of the Public Advocate received more complaints regarding the New York City Housing Authority than any other City agency. In fact, the number of NYCHA repair-related complaints *alone* exceeds that of all but a handful of City agencies.

1,636 NYCHA-Related Complaints

- 25% requested help getting repairs
- 22% reported problems with Section 8 vouchers
- 14% requested assistance with their application for housing assistance
- 10% requested a transfer from their current housing

Actions Undertaken by the Public Advocate's Office

- Contacting NYCHA to fast-track repairs for conditions that pose significant health and safety risks or that will worsen without immediate attention.
- Notifying applicants of crucial deadlines in the NYCHA application process.
- Helping NYCHA applicants update their NYCHA profiles when income, housing, or family situation changes.
- Helping secure priority placement for NYCHA applicants who face domestic violence or homelessness.



Exposing Landlords who Collect Taxpayer Vouchers While Ripping off Vulnerable Tenants

The Advantage Program is the Department of Homeless Services' principal tool for moving families from shelters to permanent housing. It provides vouchers to cover the cost of rent for up to two years, so that participants can leave the shelter system and live on their own. "Under the Table," a report by the Public Advocate, exposed widespread extortion by landlords who illegally pressured tenants into making additional payments above the contracted rent. These illicit payments undermined the program because they prevented tenants from saving money, undercutting their chance at becoming independent and squandering the City's investment.

According to the Public Advocate's survey of Advantage Program recipients:

- 28% were pressured by their landlord to make additional payments beyond their legal rent, with some paying as much as \$500 per month above their contracted rent.
- As a result of these side deals, some Advantage recipients paid thousands of dollars they would have otherwise saved over the course of the program.
- 100% of surveyed participants who notified the DHS about the additional payments were still forced to pay extra by their landlords even *after* notifying the Department.

PROTECTING TENANTS

NYC'S WORST LANDLORDS WATCHLIST
HELPING TO IDENTIFY, TRACK, AND TAKE EFFECTIVE ACTION AGAINST THE CITY'S MOST IRRESPONSIBLE LANDLORDS

“No tenant should ever be forced to live in unsafe housing.”
Bill de Blasio

Landlord	Borough	Address	Units	Total Infractions	Housing Violations	Status Updates
Alan Fein	Bronx	1553 Bryant Avenue New York, NY, 10467	62	Total: 1259	A Class: 226 B Class: 859 C Class: 173 I Class: 1	Last updated: 1/31/11 Report Additional Violations Report Resolved Issues

Tracking Irresponsible Landlords

Too often, landlords can let their buildings fall into dangerous disrepair without consequences. To empower tenants and bring public pressure to bear on irresponsible landlords, Public Advocate de Blasio launched *NYC's Worst Landlords Watch List*. The online watch list sheds light on some of the most neglected residential buildings in the city, and allows tenants to see the number of hazardous housing code violations for their building and others owned by the same landlord.

Since the launch of the *NYC's Worst Landlords Watch List*, nearly one hundred cases have been opened by the Public

Advocate's Office for tenants who need emergency assistance, report harassment by a landlord, or need assistance understanding their rights.

“The city’s worst landlords can no longer hide from responsibility while their buildings fall into dangerous disrepair. If you’re looking for an apartment, check for your potential landlord on the Watch List first. And if you’re living in a Watch List building, our call-in hotline and field organizers are here to help to you navigate the process of reporting bad conditions and getting them resolved.”

Public Advocate Bill de Blasio

NYC’s Worst Landlords Watch List by the Numbers:

- ✓ 403 buildings are on the Watch List
- ✓ 302 landlords own buildings on the Watch List
- ✓ 20,129 tenants live in Watch List buildings
- ✓ 13 landlords have made repairs resulting in 22 buildings being removed from the Watch List.

Turning up the HEAT: Intro. 951

In the last Fiscal Year, 114,004 New Yorkers filed reports claiming they lacked heat or hot water. This is frequently because too many landlords find it cheaper to deal with a violation and pay a fine instead of providing heat to tenants. To compel irresponsible landlords to stop shirking this basic responsibility, Public Advocate de Blasio introduced the Heat Enforcement for All Tenants (H.E.A.T.) Act in City Council. Under the bill, repeat offenders would be kept at the maximum fine level of up to \$1,000 per unit, per day, for a full two years after their first violation. This bill will generate additional revenue for the City that could be used to bolster inspection and emergency repair programs.

The Public Advocate is also working with the State Legislature on a new administrative tribunal that would fast-track emergency repairs for serious violations and more effectively collect fines from landlords who fail to provide heat.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Firehouses: Protecting Neighborhood Safety

When firehouses close, response times go up and entire communities are put at risk. So when 20 fire companies faced closure in 2010, Public Advocate de Blasio joined City Council Member Liz Crowley and allies in rallying to protect these essential public safety services. The final budget ultimately restored funding for all the companies.



Using Oversight to Protect Children

In 2010, the Public Advocate helped prevent budget cuts that would have shed thousands of at-risk families from the Administration for Children's Services case load. That safety net is essential to keep kids with their families and prevent them from entering the foster care system. Unfortunately, sometimes those services fail to detect the warning signs of abuse, as was the case in the tragic death of Marchella Pierce in August 2010. Following Marchella's death, the Public Advocate initiated an inquiry into the Administration for Children's Services' (ACS) handling of Marchella's case, the way in which

ACS monitors contracted providers in the field, and the effect of prior budget cuts on thousands of families' services. The agency's response revealed numerous lapses in the City's child welfare system that could put additional children at risk, and led to a formal process to review ACS procedures and cases.

Studies show that quality child care advances development of children's language and academic skills. Yet according to the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), only 27% of eligible New York City children currently receive child care.

Protecting Innocent New Yorkers

The NYPD's stop-and-frisk database swelled by 580,000 New Yorkers in 2009—85% of whom were people of color. In 2010, the Public Advocate de Blasio joined a coalition of elected officials and the New York Civil Liberties Union to prevent the NYPD from maintaining a permanent database of innocent New Yorkers. The coalition succeeded in passing a bill in the State legislature, which Governor Paterson signed into law, reforming the stop-and-frisk database to exclude anyone not charged with a crime.

Keeping Officers on the Beat

The Public Advocate joined members of the City Council in opposing budget cuts which threatened to thin the NYPD's ranks by an additional 900 officers. The cuts would have reduced the Department to its lowest levels since 1990, but were ultimately reinstated during budget negotiations.

Real Independence, Real Funding

Last year, the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) received more cases than in any year in its history. And yet, the Board struggled with a 10% budget cut from 2009 that crippled its ability to investigate cases before statutes of limitations expired. The Office of the Public Advocate successfully fought back further cuts to the CCRB's budget this year. Still, CCRB's consistent lack of funding continues to jeopardize its mission to "receive, investigate, hear, make findings and recommend action on complaints against New York City police officers." The Public Advocate pushed for independent budgeting for the CCRB during the Charter Revision process as a way to insulate the agency from damaging cut to its already slim budget.



Opening up Government & Organizing NYC

Trust in our democracy and engaging the people is the cornerstone of good and effective government. The Office of the Public Advocate fights for the people's right to access public information and to give them a greater voice in shaping the decisions of their government.

OPEN GOVERNMENT NYC

This year the Public Advocate launched Open Government NYC, an online hub for elected officials to disclose grant applications they receive before making discretionary funding decisions. Following the creation of Open Government NYC, the City Council announced that starting in Fiscal Year 2012 it would permanently adopt the same standard of transparency in the member item process.

Lobbyist Disclosure

When interest groups meet with elected officials, the public has a right to know. Public Advocate posts his meetings with registered lobbyists online for the public to see at: www.advocate.nyc.gov/lobbyist-meetings.

“Transparency is the best way to prevent potential fraud. Our new website will give New Yorkers a window into how their government works, and will provide an important safeguard against misuse of public dollars. I look forward to working with all my partners in government to bring a new level of transparency to City Hall.”

Public Advocate Bill de Blasio

KEEPING CORPORATE INFLUENCE IN CHECK

Tracking Corporate Spending

In August, the Public Advocate launched a website tracking which of the nation's 100 largest companies are spending under Citizens United, and which have agreed to reform their policies. The site allows users to contact corporations and urge them to reform their election spending policies. Four major financial firms, Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan Chase Co., Morgan Stanley, and Citigroup decided to adopt policies against spending any treasury dollars in elections following negotiations and discussions with the Office of the Public Advocate. For more information, visit: advocate.nyc.gov/corporate-spending.

Coalition for Accountability in Political Spending (CAPS)

The Public Advocate founded a national coalition comprised of government officials to demand accountability from companies that receive public investments or apply for government contracts. The coalition has members in five states. In the group's first action, Public Advocate de Blasio and New York State Comptroller DiNapoli sent disclosure requests to health insurance companies that have contracts with New York State worth a total of \$10 billion. More information available at www.saveourelections.com



CAPS Members

- ✓ New York City Public Advocate Bill de Blasio
- ✓ Illinois Governor Pat Quinn
- ✓ Pennsylvania Treasurer Rob McCord
- ✓ New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli
- ✓ North Carolina State Treasurer Janet Cowell
- ✓ Los Angeles City Controller Wendy Greuel

ORGANIZING FROM INSIDE GOVERNMENT



For someone looking to create a tenant or block association, or a group of concerned parents, getting started is often the most challenging part. On his first day in office, Public Advocate Bill de Blasio launched the Community Organizing and Constituent Services Department to help mobilize New Yorkers to play a more active role in City government. The Department helps newly-formed groups develop materials and organizing tactics so they can reach out their neighbors and engage the broader community.

Field organizers from the Office of the Public Advocate mobilized New Yorkers on dozens of campaigns in 2010. Here are some highlights--

Building Community Partnerships

The Community Organizing and Constituent Services Department launched an organizing toolkit in seven languages detailing information on how government functions and on action steps residents and groups can take to advocate for policy changes. More at advocate.nyc.gov/organizing-toolkit

Public Advocate de Blasio held community town halls in all five boroughs where residents and business owners could come to resolve complaints with City agencies. He also met with 16 community boards to avail the resources of the Department of Organizing and Constituent Services to local groups.

Help for Haiti

Following the devastating earthquake in Haiti, the Public Advocate organized a citywide street canvassing event with elected officials and volunteers asking New Yorkers to make a \$5 or \$10 donation via text message to support a Haiti relief fund. More than 6,000 flyers were distributed. Donations were directly sent to several non-profit organizations including the Red Cross.

Restoring Student MetroCards

When the MTA proposed to eliminate free student MetroCards, the Public Advocate organized volunteers at 20 transit stations around the City. Volunteers joined with student activists to circulate 28,000 handbills prompting thousands of calls and emails to Governor Paterson and state lawmakers, urging them to come to preserve the vital program for hundreds of thousands of students. While the MTA made deep service cuts elsewhere, student MetroCards were ultimately preserved.

Putting Term Limits to a Vote

When the long-awaited ballot question on term limits was placed on the *back* of November's election ballot, Public Advocate de Blasio launched a public information campaign reminding New Yorkers to turn their ballots over to cast their vote. Organizing staff circulated thousands of flyers in the subway and posted sample ballots for view on the Public Advocate's website.

“Government and democracy work best when citizens are engaged. In a place as diverse as our City, we need to give every community the ability to make Government accountable to its needs.”

Public Advocate Bill de Blasio

