



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 30, 2015
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RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS PUBLIC HEARING AND SIGNS INTROS. 898-A, 890-A, 900-A, 914-A, 915-A, 743-A, 783-A, 956-A, 982-A, AND HOLDS PUBLIC HEARING FOR INTRO. 314-A

Mayor Bill de Blasio: We've got a lot to do today. Welcome, everyone.

Okay, we're going to open up today with Intro. 743-A, which creates the Office of Labor Standards. The sponsor is our speaker, Melissa Mark-Viverito. We are very happy to say in this city – we are now at an all-time high for employment in New York City – 4.2 million jobs now in New York City, the most we've had in our entire history. That's the good news.

The bad news is, too often, there are workers, especially in low-wage industries, who face poor working conditions, who face wage theft, harassment, and even worse.

With this bill, we take a big step forward to protect vulnerable workers and to strengthen our workforce. The office will make sure that rules, regulations, and laws designed to improve the working conditions and practices – working practices – are implemented and enforced, and that workers and businesses know these laws and understand them. And when city labor laws have been violated, the office will have the authority to conduct investigations, serve subpoenas, and impose civil penalties. The office will also make sure that employees receive the compensation and benefits they have earned and they deserve, and will develop ways to ensure that some of our most vulnerable workers, which often includes women, people of color, immigrants, and refugees, are treated fairly and justly.

We'll be working with all stakeholders to determine the most effective place to house this new office within our city government, and we'll have an announcement about that new development early next year.

I want to thank Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito for her leadership and all of the advocates who work so hard on this legislation. And – is Daneek here? He is not here. I was going to introduce Daneek Miller – I'll thank Daneek Miller. And since Daneek Miller is not here, we're going to go straight to – yes? – we're going to go straight to hearing from the one person who is signed up to speak on this bill, from Make the Road New York, Meg – is it Fos – ?

Meg Fosque, Make the Road New York: Fosque.

Mayor: Fosque. Meg Fosque. Welcome.

[...]

[Mayor de Blasio signs Intro. 743-A]

Mayor: Okay. Now, Intro 314-A establishes another critical new part of our city government – the new Department for Veteran Services for this city; and the sponsor, Council Member Eric Ulrich, the chair of our Committee on Veterans.

The new department will be the first ever stand-alone city agency to coordinate our ambitious agenda to serve our veterans. And I'm speaking both in my capacity as mayor, but much more importantly as a son of a veteran when I say I'm very, very glad to see this day.

And I've talked about it many times, for my wife and I, both our dads served in combat in World War II, so we understand very personally that what happens to our veterans is not only a lasting impact on their lives – their service in the military, and the things they come home with, and the challenges they come home with – but it affects the entire family. And it keeps affecting that family for years and years. And it's our job to find every way we can to serve our veterans.

It's been a high priority for this administration from day one, and I'm very proud to say, after almost two years, we've helped over 1,700 previously-homeless veterans to find permanent housing. And we're going to continue on that effort. We're going to continue to work to help find jobs and health services, in particular mental health services, for our veterans and their families as they go through the transition back to civilian life. And this new department will serve as a direct hub for this effort – better connecting our veterans' families to the resources and services they need.

Again, want to thank Councilman Ulrich and, of course, Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito.

And now, we should hear from the shy and retiring commissioner of the, now, Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs – soon to go through its metamorphosis – Commissioner Loree Sutton.

[...]

Mayor: Thank you very much, Dan. I agree with you on the hard-charging part too. And, again, we'll be signing the bill at an upcoming ceremony and certainly want to welcome all the folks who worked so hard, all the advocates, and all the folks who serve our veterans who worked so hard for this day to join us for that ceremony.

Let me turn us now to our next piece of legislation, which is Intro. 783-A.

Intro. 783-A is another step in our efforts to put pressure on unscrupulous landlords in New York City. I always say they are not the majority of landlords, but we do have a number of unscrupulous landlords who have made life miserable for their tenants.

This piece of legislation aligns the interest rate for unpaid bills for emergency residential building repairs with the interest rate for unpaid property taxes, which is set by the City Council each year. The sponsor is Council Member Jumaane Williams.

In Fiscal '14, HPD conducted emergency repairs and demolitions in nearly 9,500 properties. In so many cases where landlords failed to address urgent repair issues, HPD stepped in to correct violations that threatened safety and accessibility for tenants. HPD has kept residents and the public safe, often making entire buildings livable again through these emergency repairs. But because HPD, a city agency, is performing repair that is actually the owner's responsibility, we legitimately send that bill to the owner. And this legislation raises the interest rate on late payment of that bill. It sends a message to landlords that if they are irresponsible, there will be real consequences.

I want to thank Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito for her support, our HPD Commissioner Vicki Been for working closely with the Council on this bill, and Council Member Jumaane Williams, who is not with us – correct? Okay.

So with that we're going – do we have any comments from the audience? No? Shall we sign the bill? We will sign the bill.

[Mayor de Blasio signs Intro. 783-A]

Mayor: Okay. And now, let's discuss a package of bills that strengthens New York City's open-data approach – Intro. 898, sponsored by Council Member Fernando Cabrera; Intro. 898-A, sponsored by Council Member Vinnie Gentile; Intro. 900-A, sponsored by Council Member Ben Kallos; Intro. 914-A, sponsored by Council Member Ritchie Torres; Intro. 915-A, sponsored by Council Member Jimmy Vacca, chair of the Committee on Technology.

Our launch of Open Data for All is part of our mission to make government more transparent. Open data makes it easier for New Yorkers – the tech savvy and the tech un-savvy alike – to access, navigate, and understand city data. We're already traveling all over the city talking to graduate students in Queens, talking to entrepreneurs in Harlem, to local elected officials in Brooklyn, and people everywhere about how to put Open Data to work so New Yorkers can make informed decisions and become more engaged in their communities – and have all the information they need right at their fingertips.

Together, all five bills help make it easier for anyone, anytime, anywhere to engage with the data to help them better know their city, and to inspire them to develop ways to make our city better.

I want to thank Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and Council Member Ritchie Torres for their efforts.

And now I want to introduce our commissioner for the Department of – now, DoITT always gets me – Information, Technology, and Telecommunications – there we go. We all say DoITT so often – Department of Information, Technology, and Telecommunications, Anne Roest.

[...]

[Mayor de Blasio signs Intros. 898, 898-A, 900-A, 914-A, and 915-A]

Mayor: Okay – but, wait, there's more.

Okay. Now we're going to talk about Intro. 956-A, which extends the bio-technology tax credit for three years. The sponsors are Council Members Dan Garodnick and Julissa Ferreras-Copeland.

The New York City Bio-Technology Tax Credit allows emerging bio-tech companies to claim a refundable tax credit of up to \$250,000 dollars for facility upgrades, employee training, and operational costs. We are investing considerable resources to help New York City become the home for more and more bio-tech companies. Our environment is ideal for these firms. We have the research institutions, the innovative thinkers, and a thriving healthcare sector for them to work with. And we make very clear through all of our efforts that the bio-tech industry is not just for Silicon Valley or Cambridge, Massachusetts, but it belongs here more and more. We want to make sure this important industry can grow and thrive here and will hire New Yorkers and enable our city to be part of discovering the next great advances in technology that will improve our lives and health.

This bill will certainly make that – help make that happen.

I want to thank Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Council Member Dan Garodnick, Maria Torres-Springer, the CEO of New York City Economic Development Corporation, and our Department of Finance Commissioner Jacques Jiha, and now would like to introduce one of the co-sponsors and the chair of the Committee on Finance, Council Member Julissa Ferreras-Copeland.

[...]

[Mayor de Blasio signs Intro. 956-A]

Mayor: Okay. Julissa, come back – there’s more legislation.

Intro. 982-A – this is actually the last piece of legislation, okay – Intro. 982-A extends the current rate of the tax on hotel rooms for another four years. The sponsor is Council Member Julissa Ferreras-Copeland.

In 2008, the City Council passed legislation to increase the hotel-room tax rate from 5 percent to 5.875 percent. It has resulted in millions upon millions of dollars in additional revenue for the city, thanks to our record number of tourists. Last year – this is an amazing figure – 56.4 million visitors to our city, a record – and those visitors booked 32.5 million nights in hotel rooms, also an all-time record.

Extending the tax rate will give us another banner year to help sustain the economic benefits of tourism in New York City, to fund all of the things that make possible the great environment here – to fund public safety, to fund our cultural institutions, our schools, etcetera – all the things that make New York City great and a great place to visit.

I want to thank Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, our finance commissioner, Jacques Jiha, and, now, once again, Council Member Julissa Ferreras-Copeland.

[...]

Mayor: Before we sign the legislation – no speakers? – okay, before we sign the legislation – just a quick summary of today in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, let us sign this last piece of legislation.

[Mayor de Blasio signs Intro. 982-A]

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