



THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

CITY HALL
NEW YORK, NY 10007
(212) 788-7116

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

March 14, 2007

Contact: 212-788-7116
Release # 026 -2007

COUNCIL VOTES TO BAN METAL BATS IN HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL GAMES

Also votes on full equality bill for domestic partners, measures to improve safety for commercial bicyclists

City Hall, March 14, 2007 – City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn and members of the City Council will vote on five bills and three resolutions at today’s Stated Council meeting.

The full Council is scheduled to vote on legislation that will:

- Ban the use of metal bats in New York City high schools;
- Require business owners to provide helmets and safety equipment to employees using bicycles;
- Require business owners that have employees using bicycles to post a sign detailing bicycle safety rules and guidelines;
- Codify the City’s ban of trans fat in food service establishments; and
- Grant domestic partners the same benefits and services the City offers to married couples.

The Council will also vote on resolutions:

- Calling upon the New York State Board of Elections to certify paper-based voting technology;
- Calling upon the Department of Education to assess its decision to decrease milk choices in public schools; and
- Calling upon Congress to pass to the Uniting American Families Act, a bill before Congress that would allow citizens and legal residents of the United States to sponsor their same-sex partners for immigration.

METAL BATS BILL

Following several hearings, members of the City Council will vote to ban the use of non-wood bats in public high schools. The legislation, sponsored by Council members James Oddo and Lewis Fidler, would only allow wood bats that have been approved by Major League Baseball for Major or Minor League play to be used in high school baseball games. This measure would take effect on September 1, 2007.

There have been several incidents in which children have been injured due to the use of metal bats. Last summer, two young players suffered serious injuries when they were hit by line drives off metal bats. A Staten Island pitcher was also struck in the face by a line drive that caused extensive cranial injuries.

Council member **Oddo** said, “We believe metal bats pose a risk to student athletes above that inherent in the sport. That’s simply unacceptable.”

Council member **Fidler** said, “This is not about whether baseball should be the crack of the bat or the ping of the bat. It’s about eliminating unnecessary risk from high school competition before one of our kids gets hurt or killed for no reason.”

Speaker Quinn said, “My colleagues at the City Council have taken up this issue because of the ample evidence that shows metal bats significantly increase the risk for young athletes. We think this is an appropriate safety step for us to take to protect our high school athletes.”

COMMERCIAL BICYCLIST SAFETY BILLS

The Council will vote on two pieces of legislation to improve bike safety for commercial riders in New York City. The legislative measures include:

- **Requiring business owners that use bicycles to provide, at the business owner’s expense, bike helmets and proper safety equipment to employees.** To ensure better protection of commercial bike riders, employees would be required to wear helmets provided by their employers during duty. Business owners who do not provide proper safety equipment could be held criminally liable. Additionally, commercial bike riders who do not wear proper helmets could be fined and found guilty of a traffic violation.
- **Requiring that businesses owners display bicycle safety procedures and guidelines for both owners and riders.** This notice would be openly displayed in English, Spanish and any other language predominantly spoken by bike operators at the business. Business owners who fail to post safety procedures could be fined and held criminally liable.

Transportation Committee Chair **John C. Liu** said, “Today’s Council vote is a necessary step to protect the safety of workers who bicycle on our streets. Restaurant delivery workers and messengers work in hazardous conditions when navigating City streets on bicycles. Being on a bicycle while making a delivery is actually an extension of the workplace. As such, the business owner has a responsibility to provide basic occupational safety equipment such as bike helmets to their workers.”

Council member **Alan Gerson** said, “Bike messengers and delivery people are an integral part of New York City’s economy. Assuring that they have basic safety equipment on the job is an obligation of the city. This law will save lives.”

“Who objects to signs that instruct employees to wash their hands, tell pregnant women not to drink, and illustrate the Heimlich maneuver?” said Council member **Gail Brewer**. “As Mayor Koch himself once learned, when saved by the Heimlich maneuver in a restaurant, these forms of instruction work. Let’s do all we can to get bike riders educated, too, and help make the streets safer for all New Yorkers.”

TRANS FATS BAN

Following the decision of the New York City Board of Health to ban the use of trans fats in restaurants and other food service establishments, the Council will vote to codify this measure into the City’s Administrative Code. This action will ensure that the newly enacted trans fat ban cannot be reversed by subsequent administrative action.

“New York City is a culinary capital of the world, and a ban on trans fats here will send a message around the country to keep our citizens alive and healthy. We have already made our streets the safest of any big city, now we can say the same for our restaurant tables,” said Council member **Peter Vallone Jr.** “We have seen other cities follow our lead, like Philadelphia and Los Angeles, and our actions today will codify our decision, encouraging others to ban these harmful substances.”

Health Committee Chair **Joel Rivera** said, “The intake of trans fats in partially hydrogenated oils is a major cause of coronary heart disease. My support of this bill reflects the concern that New Yorkers of all ages need to be eating healthier foods. This bill is a small step in that direction.”

DOMESTIC PARTNERS FOR FULL EQUALITY BILL

The Council will vote on the Domestic Partners for Full Equality bill to guarantee all domestic partners in New York City equal access to City benefits and services. This bill, sponsored by Council members Maria Baez, Rosie Mendez and Bill deBlasio, requires that any benefit or service directly provided by the City of New York to persons based on spousal relationship shall also be fully available to persons who are domestic partners.

Said **Speaker Quinn**, “Through activism and hard work, New York’s LGBT community has come a long way in the last few decades. We have secured laws on gay rights, domestic partnership, and transgender civil rights. This legislation proactively ensures that in New York City, whatever married couples are entitled to, domestic partners will be entitled to as well. Since we cannot anticipate what benefits might be available down the road, this legislation will ensure that we will not have to fight for equal rights and access every time a new City benefit or service is available.”

“The passage of this Domestic Partnership bill will ensure that couples registered as domestic partners are equally afforded the same benefits and services provided by the City of New York,” said Council member **Maria Baez**. “I wholeheartedly believe that by ensuring equality for couples in spousal relationships and registered domestic partnerships, we also constructively prohibit discrimination.”

“When a segment of the population is denied even one benefit under the law, simply because of whom they choose to love, something is wrong,” said Council member **Rosie Mendez**. “The Domestic Partner for Full Equality Bill will begin to right that wrong.”

“New Yorkers who are in domestic partnerships deserve the very same benefits and protections that married couples receive,” said General Welfare Committee Chair **Bill deBlasio**. “This bill marks an important step forward in ensuring we guarantee equal rights for all New Yorkers.”

VOTING TECHNOLOGY RESOLUTION

The Council will vote to encourage the New York State Board of Elections to certify Paper Ballot Optical Scan (PBOS) voting systems as the new voting technology for New York City. The PBOS system, which has been used in elections nationwide for over thirty years, is considered a highly reliable voting method which permits easier verification, simpler audits and faster recounts. The PBOS system, which is less expensive than the Direct Recording Electronic system, which is the alternative technology that the State Board of Elections is considering for certification and use by local boards of election.

“The cornerstone of democracy is to make sure that every vote counts – optical scanners have proven to be the most reliable voting system,” said Council member **Charles Barron**. “The passage of this resolution is a timely, important and victorious step in the right direction. The Board of Elections is urged follow the recommendation of the City Council and the countless other community groups, advocacy organizations, and concerned voters who represent the voice of the people. Further, the New York City Council is setting an example for the entire country as preventing voting irregularities is a serious national issue.”

PUBLIC SCHOOL MILK CHOICES RESOLUTION

The Council will vote to encourage the Department of Education to review the impact of its decision to decrease milk choices in New York City’s public schools. Milk choices are now limited to 1% and non-fat milk, with chocolate milk served on occasion. The decision to discontinue serving a wider variety of milk was made as an overall effort to reduce childhood obesity.

While the decision to eliminate whole milk has not been questioned, some pediatricians and nutritionists are concerned that limiting milk choices too strictly may decrease the overall consumption of milk, reducing the likelihood of a child meeting his/her daily requirements for calcium and other essential nutrients.

“As a parent with two children in public school, I know first hand how tough it is to try and get kids to drink milk,” said Council member **deBlasio**. “Eliminating low-fat flavored milk options in schools has given kids fewer choices and opportunities to get the vitamins and calcium they need. As sodas and other sugary drinks become increasingly popular with our kids, we need to make sure that milk remains a staple in every child’s diet.”

IMMIGRATION RIGHTS FOR SAME SEX COUPLES RESOLUTION

The Council will vote to call upon the United States Congress to pass the Uniting American Families Act (UAFAs). The UAFAs is a congressional bill that would allow citizens and legal permanent residents in bi-national same-sex relationships to sponsor their foreign-born partner for immigration benefits to the United States. Currently, federal immigration law does not recognize same-sex relationships.

Speaker Quinn said, “I want to thank Congressman Nadler for his tireless work on this landmark legislation. As a country founded upon the tenants of tolerance and equality, we must provide fair and equal treatment , regardless of the gender of their partner, to all new Americans.”

“We in the Council have always sought to have equality and equal access for our constituents. To deny or discriminate based on race, religion, or ethnicity is fundamentally wrong,” said Council member **Kendall Stewart**. “To do so based on sexual orientation is equally wrong. New York City is an equal opportunity city, and so we would like to sound our voice on behalf of all domestic partners on this unjust practice.”

###