



# THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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**\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\***

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## **COUNCIL TO CRACK DOWN ON NEGLIGENT BARS AND CLUBS, FALSE ID MAKERS**

**City Hall, February 28, 2007** – City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn and members of the City Council will vote on seven bills and two resolutions at today's Stated Council meeting.

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

- Enable the City to shut down businesses selling or making fake ID's;
- Require the installation of security cameras at club entrances and exits; and
- Establish an independent monitoring program for clubs with serious or repeat violations.

Additionally, the Council will consider bills to:

- License and regulate pedicabs;
- Require tax preparation companies to provide clients with a customer bill of rights;
- Approve a budget modification to recognize \$2.2 billion more in City revenues; and
- Extend the life of the Wetlands Task Force.

The Council will also vote on resolutions to:

- Call upon the State Legislature and State Liquor Authority to modify the use of bottle services in nightlife establishments; and
- Call for a symbolic moratorium on use of the 'N' word in New York City.

### **NIGHTLIFE SAFETY LEGISLATION**

The Council will vote on a legislative package to strengthen nightlife security and crack down on negligent clubs and bars. The four legislative measures being voted on today include:

- **Providing the use of independent monitors for clubs with serious or repeat violations.** Clubs that commit serious violations may be permitted, at their own expense, to hire safety monitors in lieu of license suspension or revocation. Monitors, who will be approved by the NYPD, will work with the Police Department to establish and implement various actions for the club to become safer and more responsible. These actions include requiring non-compliant clubs to use ID scanners or institute additional training for cabaret employees.
- **Requiring the installation of security cameras at club entrances and exits.** Cameras will help fight crime in and around clubs. If an investigation into a crime is warranted, law enforcement will have greater information to prosecute criminals. Also, this legislation contains several important privacy safeguards against the improper use of camera recordings. For example, recordings must be stored in a restricted area and only authorized personnel will have access to

film . Illegal dissemination of recordings could result in the club’s license suspension or revocation and a fine ranging from \$5,000-\$50,000.

- **Expanding the nuisance abatement law to allow the City to shut down businesses making or selling fake ID’s.** Underage drinking is a major contributor to problems associated with New York City nightlife. By making it easier to target producers and sellers of fake ID’s, the Council will ultimately make it more difficult for underage teens to use them to enter nightclubs and bars.
- **Calling upon the State Legislature and State Liquor Authority to modify the use of bottle services in nightlife establishments.** To reduce excessive alcohol consumption in City nightlife establishments, the Council will vote on a resolution calling upon the State Legislature to require that the practice of bottle service – the increasing common practice of requiring patrons to buy full bottles of alcohol instead of individual drinks – be limited to circumstances where it is controlled and monitored by a waiter or waitress. The resolution also calls on the New York State Liquor Authority to establish such monitored service as part of licensed alcohol-serving establishments’ “best practices.”

**Speaker Quinn** said, “In recent months the City’s nightlife industry has been marred by a number of high profile tragedies and acts of violence – many of which were linked to problems with club security and management practices. This package of nightlife safety legislation aims to help solve those problems and to ensure that nightlife in New York City is safe and secure. Moving forward, we will continue to work with members of nightlife community, the Administration and enforcement agencies to make sure that New York City will continue to have the safest, most exciting nightlife in the world.”

“These bills represent months of work and compromise that will keep New York nightlife both vibrant and safe,” said Public Safety Committee Chair **Peter Vallone, Jr.** “They give us the ability to weed out the bad apples - which turn a blind eye to violence, fake IDs and other crimes - while letting the majority of responsible bars and clubs flourish. Let’s keep the nightlife headlines where they belong: off the front page and on Page Six.”

“New Yorkers and visitors to our city deserve and require assurance that their ‘night on the town’ will not result in personal tragedy,” said Consumer Affairs Committee Chair **Leroy Comrie.** “By mandating cameras at club entrances and hiring independent safety monitors to prevent violent incidents, NYC nightclub patrons will be able to enjoy themselves knowing that every attempt will be made to ensure their safety.”

“There is clearly a need to monitor the dispensing of alcohol at bars and clubs that require bottle service for a table. We are sending a clear message to the State that its action is crucial,” said Council member **Melinda Katz.**

## **PEDICAB LICENSING AND REGULATION**

In efforts to improve transportation safety and reduce congestion, especially in the Midtown area where hundreds of pedicabs are now operating without any regulations or safety measures, the Council will vote on legislation regulating pedicabs. Key features of the bill include:

- Creating licensing and insurance requirements for pedicab businesses and drivers;
- Permitting no more than 325 pedicabs to operate in the City at any one time;
- Limiting business owners from owning and operating more than 30 pedicabs at one time; and
- Requiring pedicabs owners to post fare calculations, like taxi cabs.

Additionally, this legislation requires each pedicab to conform to several safety standards, including allowing no more than three passengers per cab; installing brakes that are impervious to rain or wet conditions; and having headlights, tail lights, and turning signals. All pedicabs must be annually inspected by the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) and are required to display a DCA-issued license plate.

Transportation Committee Chair **John C. Liu** said, “Pedicabs provide another option for the riding public in our transportation system. This legislation strikes a balance that ensures convenience, safety, and competition. Properly regulated competition between different transportation modes for scarce street space and traffic lanes will ultimately benefit us all.”

Eighteen months after the enactment of the law, the DCA, in conjunction with the Department of Transportation and the NYPD, will be required to issue a report to the Council focusing on pedicab consumer safety and the effects on traffic and congestion.

### **TAX PREPARATION CONSUMER BILL OF RIGHTS**

To protect consumers who use tax preparation services from unexpected fees, high interest rates and other unfavorable charges, the Council will vote on legislation requiring companies to provide an improved Tax Payers Bill of Rights. The bill aims to protect consumers from making uninformed choices like taking out high-interest, fee-laden, short-term loans to obtain immediate tax refunds from the IRS.

“Far too often, unscrupulous tax preparers take advantage of hard working New Yorkers,” said Investigations Committee Chair **Eric Gioia**. “This bill helps to level the playing field. New Yorkers work hard day in and day out and they're entitled to what is rightfully theirs. They shouldn't get taken to the cleaners when doing their taxes.”

As part of the Consumer Bill of Rights, tax preparation businesses must provide clients with a written estimate of the total cost of services, an interest rate estimate for a Refund Anticipation Loan, and a written estimate of the period of time it takes for a client to receive a refund.

### **BUDGET MODIFICATION**

The Council will vote to approve a budget modification to recognize \$2.2 billion more in City revenues than originally projected. As a result of these increased resources, \$1.9 billion will be placed in a budget stabilization account to offset the Fiscal 2008 budget gap. Following collective bargaining agreements with District Council 37, the majority of the remaining funds will be allocated to cost of living increases for all City workers not covered by other existing City contracts. \$11 million will also be allocated to the New York Medical Examiners Office for Ground Zero recovery efforts.

“The revenue surplus will allow New York City residents to enjoy the fruits of the City's current financial success while at the same time providing us with the capability of paying down future debt to ensure a prosperous future,” said Finance Committee Chair **David Weprin**.

### **WETLANDS TASK FORCE EXTENSION**

The Council will vote to extend the duration of the Wetlands Task Force. To strengthen the protection of the City's wetlands, the task force, created in 2005, is reviewing the technical, legal, environmental and economic feasibility of transferring City-owned wetlands to the jurisdiction of the Department of Parks and Recreation.

The task force is required to submit a final report to the Mayor and Speaker Quinn no later than three months before its scheduled expiration. The finalization of the Task Force report awaits the completion of

an assessment regarding Arlington Marsh, a high-priority wetland in Staten Island. Today's vote would extend the term of the task force to December 31, 2007.

### **SYMBOLIC MORATORIUM ON THE 'N' WORD**

Mirroring similar proposals on the state and federal level, the Council, at the request of Council member Leroy Comrie, will vote on a resolution calling for a symbolic moratorium on use of the 'N' word.

"Given the recent events surrounding the Michael Richards incident and the current campaign in many quarters to abolish the use of this hateful term, I thought it would be appropriate to encourage my fellow New Yorkers to join this movement," said **Council member Comrie**. "It is my hope that this resolution will spark a dialogue in all communities and begin to move our society, especially in our entertainment culture, toward a place where the use of the 'N' word is simply unacceptable in any context."

Said **Speaker Quinn**, "I applaud Council member Comrie's commitment to educate and uplift our community through this symbolic moratorium. Words have power and history, and we must recognize the association of debasement and inequality this word brings. As we work to make discrimination a thing of the past, let us also make the 'N' word history."

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