

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS

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December 14, 2009
Start: 1:13 pm
Recess: 2:45 pm

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E:
JAMES SANDERS, JR.
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Council Member Tony Avella
Council Member Gale A. Brewer
Council Member Lewis A. Fidler
Council Member Letitia James
Council Member Melissa Mark-
Viverito
Council Member Michael C. Nelson

A P P E A R A N C E S [CONTINUED]

Tony Avella
Opening Statement
Committee Member
Committee on Veterans

James Sanders, Jr.
Opening Statement
Chairperson
Committee on Veterans

Gale A. Brewer
Opening Statement
Committee Member
Committee on Veterans

Matthew Carlin
Counsel
Committee on Veterans

Robert V. Hess
Commissioner
Department of Homeless Services

Julie Walpert
Assistant Commissioner
Division of Housing Supervision
Housing Preservation and Development

Roger Newman
Commissioner
Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs

Selina Copa
Iraq Veterans Against the War

Lionelle Hamanaka
Military Families Speak Out
Veterans for Peace

A P P E A R A N C E S [CONTINUED]

Did not appear:

Tom Syracuse

Veterans for Peace

Dan Rossi

Veteran Vendors

Ed Daniels

Chairman

Incarcerated Veterans Consortium, Inc.

Joan Polvony

Policy Analyst

Committee on Veterans

Ashwin Goroteo

Staff member

Committee on Veterans

1 [START 1001.MP3]

2 MR. ISRAEL MARTINEZ: Sound check
3 for the Committee on Veterans Affairs, December
4 14th, 2009. This hearing is being recorded by
5 Israel Martinez, taking place, 250 Broadway, 14th
6 Floor, 1:00 o'clock approximately.
7

8 [END 1001.MP3]

9 [START 1002.MP3]

10 [Gavel banging]

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quiet please,
12 find your seats.

13 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: This meeting
14 will now come to order. I am Councilman Sanders
15 and I apologize, as you may know that there have
16 been a Stated Council meeting has just finished
17 and you will see people come in. There are other
18 Committee meetings happening at the same time so
19 you're going to see people coming in and coming
20 out. But even before I start I'm going to take a
21 point of privilege and allow my colleague Council
22 Member Avella to make a statement.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER AVELLA: Thank you
24 Mr. Chair. I do--is this on? I do apologize but I
25 do have to get back to my District Office. We are

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2 closing up the office. I am leaving at the end of
3 December. I'm obviously in support of the
4 resolution that is being heard before the
5 Committee today but I must express my
6 disappointment that a resolution, a similar
7 resolution that I introduced in 2006, Reso 4,
8 which would ask the Housing Authority to give
9 preference to veterans is not on the agenda. And
10 I think it's languished in the City Council for
11 years and I think that's unfortunate.

12 This is one time I won't blame the
13 Administration but I will blame the leadership of
14 the Council for not putting it on the agenda. How
15 could you put on this resolution without putting
16 on the other? Clearly, we have an ever increasing
17 number of homeless veterans and we need to do more
18 for them. So I'd urge you, Mr. Chairman, 'cause I
19 know you're new as the Chairman of this Committee
20 to consider that Reso 4, having the Housing
21 Authority give preference, be given as much weight
22 as the resolution that's currently on the agenda
23 today. Thank you.

24 [Pause]

25 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Hello, hello?

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2 Ah, all right. I just was thanking you Sir for
3 all of the hard work that you have been in 100%
4 attendance I believe. Outstanding.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AVELLA: Yeah, so
6 far unless I miss the last meeting--

7 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: [Interposing]
8 Well, well, well, well [laughing] so I want to
9 thank you for all of the good that you have done.
10 You have been a very passionate and powerful voice
11 on the issues that you have believed in and I
12 believe New York City is a better place for it.
13 Your resolution, your position is just as valid as
14 any, Sir, and I just wanted to state that for the
15 record. I thank you very much for your
16 participation again.

17 [Applause]

18 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Good
19 afternoon. I'd like to thank everyone for coming
20 to today's hearings. My name is Council Member
21 James Sanders, Jr. And I'm the Chair on the
22 Committee on Veterans Affairs. I am also a
23 veteran. I'd like to take a moment to thank our
24 men and women in uniform for their sacrifices on
25 behalf of our country.

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2 Today's hearing will address
3 housing options for returning veterans in New York
4 City. Also on the agenda is a resolution calling
5 upon the State to pass legislation to expand the
6 preferences for Mitchell Lama housing to veterans
7 of the Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq wars, which is
8 currently limited to Vietnam-era veterans, the
9 legislation of course.

10 We introduce this resolution and
11 the Speaker of the City Council, Christine Quinn,
12 Council Member Gale Brewer and I held a press
13 conference at City Hall about it the week before
14 Veteran's Day. I was very touched by the personal
15 story of the mother who spoke at the press
16 conference. She enlightened us regarding the
17 problems of her son, a recent veteran, has had
18 finding suitable housing in New York City.

19 Ms.--and I'm going to ruin her name
20 and I apologize in advance--

21 [Off mic]

22 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Hamanaka. I
23 can do that. Who is expected to testify today has
24 lived in Mitchell Lama housing for... huh, many
25 years because her husband was a Vietnam era

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2 veteran who received preference under the current
3 law. Ms. Hamanaka's son's experience is typical
4 of the housing issues faced by returning veterans
5 to New York City which as of 2008 had a net rental
6 occupancy rate of only 2.91%.

7 Studies have also demonstrated that
8 the cost of living in New York City is higher than
9 any other city in the country. In addition the
10 problems faced by veterans in finding housing in
11 New York City can, unfortunately, lead to
12 homelessness. A disproportionate number of our
13 City's homeless served in the armed forces. It is
14 estimated that one-third, I'm always shocked when
15 I read this and hear of this, it is estimated that
16 one-third of all of our homeless are veterans.

17 In addition a recent report found
18 that returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan
19 were becoming homeless faster than those who
20 served in the Vietnam War. This is simply
21 unacceptable. There are numerous programs on
22 various levels of government to help veterans
23 obtain housing, several of which we're expected to
24 hear about at this hearing. There is no question
25 that we need to do more.

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2 However even for existing programs
3 there is a chronic problem in communication with
4 veterans. Many veterans simply are not aware of
5 what services are available and where to obtain
6 them. We hope to explore how we can improve the
7 ways in which this important information is
8 disseminated to returning veterans who settle in
9 New York City.

10 Today we hope to hear from several
11 witnesses regarding ways that we can help find
12 veterans, that we can help veterans find housing.
13 We will also hear from advocates and
14 organizations, from the private sector, regarding
15 housing options for veterans. This Committee
16 hopes to explore various ways where we can help
17 our returning veterans with this critical part of
18 their transition from the military because a safe,
19 stable home is an absolutely necessity and part of
20 a successful transition to civilian life. How
21 true.

22 I want to recognize from Brooklyn,
23 we have Council Member Fidler; Brooklyn again,
24 Council Member James; and Manhattan's best, of
25 course, Council Member Brewer. Who also, Ms.

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Brewer would you care to make a statement?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Very quickly. I want to thank you for putting this item on the agenda and I think the Hamanaka family which is a family of tremendous substance and commitment to our City would be--is very pleased, I think I can say this for them, that this discussion has not only led to resolution and we hope very much passes and goes to make sure that legislation passes in Albany which is where we have to put the pressure, but also that this hearing is giving us the opportunity to talk about the larger issues.

And I think, I know the family and all West Siders and all New Yorkers would be--are very pleased that we are having this discussion. And I hope very much it leads to more support for housing for returning vets. The Mitchell Lama program is somewhat unique in that it has already a certain preference as you indicated. And all we're doing is just adding to that as opposed to changing the entire policy.

And so I hope that this hearing leads to better policy and I look forward to it.

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2 And I want to thank the Hamanaka family and
3 certain you, Mr. Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Thank you
5 very much and New York City is in your debt for
6 putting this forward. Sir, would you mind calling
7 the first witness.

8 MR. MATTHEW CARLIN: Our first
9 panel we're hearing from, Robert Hess, the
10 Commissioner for the Department of Homeless
11 Services; Julie Walpert, Assistant Commissioner of
12 Housing Preservation and Development; and Robert
13 Newman from the Mayor's Office, Commissioner for
14 the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs.

15 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Thank you.
16 Sir, would you being? Good to see you again.

17 COMMISSIONER ROBERT V. HESS: Thank
18 you Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon to you Mr.
19 Chairman and members of the Committee. Thank you
20 for the opportunity to testify before you today.
21 I am Robert Hess the Commissioner for the
22 Department of Homeless Services and I'm here to
23 update the Committee on the significant strides
24 made by New York City and its goal to improve
25 services to homeless veterans. I will highlight

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2 the additional housing options we have developed
3 for homeless veterans since I last had the
4 opportunity to testify before you.

5 In December of 2006 the City of New
6 York and the Federal Department of Veterans
7 Affairs created a task force charged with
8 developing a strategic plan to end veterans'
9 homelessness in New York City and to end the need
10 for any veteran to sleep on the streets or in our
11 shelter system. Less than three years later the
12 initiatives created by this unique partnership
13 have led to impressive results.

14 Having served in the Army and being
15 a veteran myself I can say that I have a personal
16 stake, as you do, in this mission. I take pride
17 in the work we do for our veterans and am rewarded
18 when we can keep someone who has served and fought
19 for this country from spending a night on the
20 streets or in our shelter system.

21 I'd like to acknowledge my
22 colleague and fellow veteran, Commissioner Roger
23 Newman. Commissioner Newman was appointed by
24 Mayor Bloomberg to serve as the City's first
25 Commissioner for the Office of Veterans Affairs,

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2 focusing on issues impacting the men and women who
3 have served this country. Since his appointment
4 two years ago, Commissioner Newman and I have
5 fostered a remarkable relationship between our two
6 offices.

7 Today I'm happy to join him as I
8 discuss some of our collaborative successes in
9 moving homeless veterans into permanent housing.
10 Today we see remarkable success in the number of
11 veterans living in the DHS system. I'm pleased to
12 report that DHS has seen a 62% reduction in the
13 number of veterans living in a shelter thanks to
14 our permanent and short-term housing programs.

15 In early 2007, DHS housed about 750
16 single adult veterans on any give night in our
17 shelter system. Today only 192 (sic) veterans
18 remain in the system, 292 too many but a great
19 reduction, with the majority of our veterans, 371
20 being supported in short-term housing facilities
21 located in Brooklyn and Queens. The City of New
22 York and the Federal Department of Veterans
23 Affairs are demonstrating remarkable collaboration
24 to benefit homeless veterans. By partnering our
25 resources we are serving veterans in an efficient

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2 and effective manner that is quickly becoming a
3 national model.

4 The task force has kept us laser
5 focused on our veterans' goals and has led to
6 great success. New York City and the VA's
7 comprehensive approach maximizes resources through
8 partnership focusing on permanent housing and
9 providing much needed specialty service to New
10 York's veterans through programs such as Project
11 Torch, short-term housing facilities, and HUD VASH
12 [phonetic] supportive housing vouchers.

13 Project Torch, the multipurpose
14 center is our central port of intake and it's
15 located in Brooklyn but this is our central point
16 of intake for all veterans. It serves as a one-
17 stop shopping and is jointly operated by the VA
18 and the City of New York. Now Project Torch
19 veterans can, of course, receive needed housing
20 services both temporary and permanent, but they
21 also receive much more: medical services, access
22 to cash pension services, even short-term
23 financial assistance or one-shots through HRA, are
24 all available at Project Torch. The center
25 jointly staffed by the VA and DHS is a national

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model.

Many of our veterans continue on from Project Torch to what I consider to be a major accomplishment, our short-term housing for veterans. Short-term housing provides transitional housing with dignity and respect as veterans work to move back into homes of their own. Our Borden Avenue facility houses 243 short-term units for both men and women. And our Porter Avenue facility provides 138 short-term units.

Combined, these facilities bring together a unique continuum of care with Porter Avenue facility focusing on employable veterans and recovery from addictions, and Borden Avenue facility assisting all other veterans with a variety of needs. These beds, the short-term beds, annually receive over \$4 million in support from the VA to supplement our local resources.

And we've not stopped there. In October we opened a veteran-specific 40-bed safe haven in the Bronx which provides clients with immediate safe housing alternative to the street. This safe haven facility provides onsite social services, access to benefit counselors and other

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2 VA resources. In addition to having staff and
3 resources to meet their specific needs, vets will
4 also benefit from being surrounded by their peers
5 at a safe haven. Over \$500,000 annually is
6 provided by the VA to support this endeavor. And
7 it also supplements our local resources.

8 Our ultimate goal though, of
9 course, remains to move our veterans into homes of
10 their own. Through Federal partnerships with HUD
11 and the VA, New York City received more than 1,000
12 Section 8 VASH vouchers, the equivalent of an \$8
13 million in assistance annually which match housing
14 with supportive services and VA case management
15 for our most vulnerable veterans, helping them
16 live successfully on their own. Since the task
17 force was created, more than 2,300 veterans have
18 moved from shelter and the streets to permanent
19 housing. No small accomplishment.

20 Through strong relationships with
21 valuable partners like the VA and the Mayor's
22 Office of Veterans Affairs, DHS is consistently
23 looking to the future and evaluating ways we can
24 better serve the veteran population to ensure that
25 those who defended us receive nothing but the best

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2 when they return home. I give my heartfelt thanks
3 for your attention to this important matter. And
4 at the conclusion of the testimony of the panel,
5 I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.

6 COMMISSIONER ROGER NEWMAN: [Off
7 mic] Yeah I'm actually here today, I'm not making
8 a formal testimony--

9 [Off mic]

10 COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: [off mic] But
11 I'm available to answer...

12 MS. JULIE WALPERT: Good afternoon
13 Chairman Sanders and members of the Veterans
14 Committee. My name is Julie Walpert and I'm the
15 Assistant Commissioner for HPD's Division of
16 Housing Supervision. I'm responsible for the
17 oversight of the City's Mitchell Lama program.
18 HPD supports providing a preference to recently
19 discharged veterans on the Mitchell Lama waiting
20 lists. It recognizes the obstacles that veterans
21 face in returning to civilian life and wants to
22 show such veterans our country's respect and
23 gratitude for their service.

24 We are in the process of drafting
25 legislation for passage in Albany that would

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2 extend a veteran preference to include current
3 veterans and their surviving spouses who have been
4 discharged within the last five years. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: I do want to
6 recognize that Council Member Viverito has--is
7 also here today. I will start with a quick
8 question myself, just as a point of clarification,
9 Commissioner as you had mentioned and perhaps I
10 heard you wrong, something that you call permanent
11 short-term housing. Was there a comma in there or
12 was there--is there more to that than I
13 understand.

14 COMMISSIONER HESS: No, what we've
15 done, Mr. Chairman, is the result of the work of
16 the task force in our efforts to help veterans not
17 need to enter the shelter system is we've created
18 kind of two efforts. The first effort is short-
19 term housing for veterans with supportive services
20 and that's the housing I described at Borden
21 Avenue and at Porter Avenue. And then the second
22 is permanent supportive housing, either access to
23 housing through New York, New York 3 units if
24 appropriate or through HUD VASH. And so that's
25 the distinction on the models of housing that are

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2 supportive through the City and the Federal
3 government.

4 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Thank you
5 very much Sir. Council Member Fidler.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Thank you
7 Mr. Chairman and I want to thank the three of you
8 for your efforts. I do want to ask you,
9 Commissioner Hess, a question about some of the
10 numbers that you laid out because, you know,
11 there's a considerable controversy in the City as
12 to whether or not there are more or less homeless
13 on our streets. And, you know, the fact that
14 there are fewer veterans in the system doesn't
15 necessarily mean that there are fewer veterans out
16 there. And so I guess the question I have for you
17 is does your homeless count, your annual homeless
18 count, ask people whether or not they are veterans
19 and if so of what era?

20 COMMISSIONER HESS: The annual
21 homeless count or the HOPE count which will occur
22 again the 3rd Monday in January does not ask that
23 specific question. I think what we do do however
24 is that throughout the year we have outreach teams
25 on the streets 24 hours a day, 7 days a week,

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2 accumulating a wide array of data that's much more
3 client-specific to the people we're seeing on the
4 streets on a day to day basis.

5 And there we do ask that question
6 and we've seen about 17% of the individuals that
7 we've contacted or come in contact with on the
8 streets self-report as veterans. Now that number
9 may be a little low because we have some folks
10 that don't tell us they're veterans and perhaps
11 they are.

12 And so one of the things that we're
13 working with the VA to do next, both for people
14 that are currently on our streets and for those in
15 our shelter system is to do a more specific match
16 with the VA to try to determine exactly how many
17 of the individuals in our shelter systems are in
18 fact veterans and how many of those individuals we
19 contact on the streets may be veterans. But at
20 the moment the data we've collected from the
21 streets through our outreach teams is showing
22 about 17% of the people on the street self-report
23 as veterans.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: So if you
25 extrapolate from that number to last year's HOPE

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count, what was the count, total number of homeless that were found in the HOPE count last year?

COMMISSIONER HESS: It was right at, I think, 2,300. So that would make it, well let me do some quick math here. So say roughly, 340 plus--so just under 400 veterans on the street based on the 17%.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Well I have to tell you I'm dubious as to the HOPE count because I know that the youth count is 3,800 and so I find it, you know, a little hard to accept that number. But at least that gives us some notion as to what DHS thinks is on the street that is not showing up at your intake center for any kind of housing assistance. So what efforts are being made to find those veterans that are not availing themselves of service? And, you know, I'd like to think that they would prefer not to be homeless so what are we doing to find them?

COMMISSIONER HESS: Well as I mentioned, we have found them on the streets. That's how we determined the 17% number of self-report. We're working with those veterans every

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day to help them move off the streets into housing.

We most recently opened a 40-bed safe haven where veterans that are living on our streets can move directly into the safe haven without going through any bureaucracy or any intake. In addition to that there are other veterans on the streets that we're working to move towards housing. Just because they're on the streets doesn't mean they haven't come into Project Torch. Some have. And we're helping to move them to housing.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER:

Commissioner, someone can come into Project Torch and still wind up sleeping on a subway grating at night?

COMMISSIONER HESS: If they chose not to come in that night to our facility, yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Because, I mean even by your count, and again Commissioner I think your count is low, even by your count there are a hundred-some-odd veterans that you've identified--

COMMISSIONER HESS: [Interposing]

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Well--

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: --because

you--

COMMISSIONER HESS: --about 400.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: --no there are 100 that are not in your shelter system. You have 292 today. So if you think there are 400 out there on any given night, that means that a third of them have chosen not to come in or a quarter of them.

COMMISSIONER HESS: I think you're misunderstanding my number.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Perhaps, it wouldn't be the first time.

COMMISSIONER HESS: The 17% of the 2,300 would suggest that we have approximately 400 veterans that tonight are sleeping on our streets. That's separate and apart from the veterans sleeping in our shelter system or the veterans sleeping in short-term housing or the veterans that are already in our safe haven.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Right--

COMMISSIONER HESS: [Interposing]

So we are--

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: --as the
3 Chairman is whispering to me then that's worse
4 than I thought. So that means there are 400
5 veterans who are still sleeping on the street
6 tonight.

7 COMMISSIONER HESS: That's right.
8 Sadly, tragically, that's right. And we know--we
9 know who they are--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER:
11 [Interposing] How... and you know who they are.
12 Well. And that means there have to be veterans
13 out there that you don't know and homeless people
14 out there that you don't know. So I am a little
15 perplexed by that. And I understand that you
16 cannot compel someone who walks into your program,
17 walks into your intake, to accept shelter. What
18 reason is given by people who choose not to accept
19 your shelter? Why would anyone prefer to sleep in
20 Grand Central Station than sleep in your shelter?

21 COMMISSIONER HESS: I think there's
22 a variety of reasons. And we have talked to
23 literally hundreds of people that have made that
24 choice and have slept on our streets. And
25 generally what people will tell you is they've

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2 been on the streets for years, years ago they had
3 an experience with the shelter system that they
4 didn't like.

5 They will almost uniformly tell you
6 that oh the shelter system may work for thousands
7 of New Yorkers who are in there, having for them
8 to have to go into a large congregate facility is
9 not something that they're willing to do. And so
10 I think there's a variety of reasons. What we
11 have found both with veterans and non-veterans on
12 the streets that have been on the streets for
13 years and are not coming into the shelter system
14 for whatever reason is when we've opened safe
15 havens and when we've created other options they
16 have by and large come in.

17 And so the opening of the veterans'
18 safe haven is an important step in that direction.
19 We're also using and I should say we're also
20 putting on the table millions of new stimulus
21 dollars to buy additional stabilization beds to
22 help people move from the streets into housing.
23 And veterans will have that opportunity as well.
24 And so we're trying to develop the kinds of
25 housing models that people that are living on the

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streets have told us will work for them.

And in fact there's been a couple thousand people who have moved off the streets in the last couple of years just because this strategy and the availability of housing other than shelter. And so we're seeing a lot of success. Notwithstanding that there are clearly, we think about 2,000 people still on the streets, so we still have a lot of work to do. And about 400 of those we believe to be veterans.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Well Commissioner I wish you God Speed with an emphasis on the speed, you know, based upon the numbers you're presenting here and I'll say for the fourth time I think they're all extraordinarily undercounted, you know, you have 292 in the shelter system, you have 371 in short-term housing, and you have 400, you know, who have not availed themselves of either. And so that's about 400 of about 1,1000, you know, you know, you put that onto a Chancellor Klein test score you get a failing grade, right? So--

COMMISSIONER HESS: [Interposing]
Well I don't know. We also--

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COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER:

[Interposing] And I want to be fair because I know there are some people who would reject housing in the Taj Mahal. I understand that. There are people with disabilities, mental disabilities and otherwise, who just are, you know, militantly disconnected and do not want. I understand. You will never get 100%. It's sad but I'm not laying blame. All right? I'm not laying blame in that respect.

But I think we need to do better, not just for veterans, for everybody. And I would ask that as you continue to revisit the HOPE count, that more is asked so that while you're not just counting that I know I've always asked that age be included and I think you ought to ask about military status as well. I think that, you know, is an important thing, you know, as we try to solve this problem together, the more we know about the problem, the better prepared we are to create solutions.

And I, you know, will continue to work with you both as your Services Chairman and as a member of this Committee to try and find

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those solutions. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER HESS: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Thank you

Sir. I want to just add one, another possibility of why people are, the veterans are not going in, to many veterans that was their point--their time of service was one of their highest points that they reached in their life. They feel it almost a noble point. To say that you are now homeless, they can't say it. The fall is too far.

So under those conditions they may never say that they are veterans. They feel shamed, greatly shamed. However we can reach them by having other veterans in places where they can go where they don't have to come from a point of shame but of empathy. Where people can be empathetic towards them. Having said that I will call upon Council Member Brewer who gave us this brave legislation.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you

very much Mr. Chair. I guess for Julie, my question is does HPD have priority for any veterans for any housing? IN other words, obviously we're trying to get Mitchell Lama but

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2 for returning Iraq and Afghanistan, is there any
3 priority anywhere? Maybe you wouldn't know beyond
4 HPD but...

5 MS. WALPERT: Well there's priority
6 actually in the Mitchell Lama program for disabled
7 vets--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:
9 [Interposing] Okay.

10 MS. WALPERT: --the State passed
11 that legislation two years ago.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It doesn't
13 matter which service--

14 MS. WALPERT: [Interposing] It
15 doesn't matter.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: --or which
17 years. So it's all--

18 MS. WALPERT: [Interposing] Right,
19 just--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: --disabled
21 vets.

22 MS. WALPERT: I believe so. It's
23 disabled vets who can prove that they were
24 disabled, you know--

25 [Off mic]

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MS. WALPERT: It's actually, I think it's defined by--

[Off mic]

MS. WALPERT: It doesn't talk--I don't think it talks about percentage. I mean I think it gives what paperwork we need, you know, it's very--it's a little bit bureaucratic on our side but we say we don't know anything--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:

[Interposing] It's the military that decides--

MS. WALPERT: --you know, to administer.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: My husband is one. So I know it's the military that decides.

MS. WALPERT: Right. So--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:

[Interposing] It doesn't seem--

MS. WALPERT: --as soon as they have the paper that shows that they're disabled, they rise to the top of an open waiting list.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. That is what--are there any for non-disabled vets except for the hope of the Mitchell Lamas. In other words is there--you may not know but like no

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2 public housing is what Tony Avella said. I don't
3 know, HDFCs? Is there anything else that veterans
4 are eligible for?

5 MS. WALPERT: I don't know.

6 COMMISSIONER HESS: HUD VASH.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay can
8 you translate?

9 COMMISSIONER HESS: Yeah. There is
10 a--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:
12 [Interposing] I'm sorry.

13 COMMISSIONER HESS: --separate
14 allocation of Section 8 certifications--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:
16 [Interposing] So Section 8.

17 COMMISSIONER HESS: Yes. That
18 comes from HUD but it's supported with VA case
19 management and supportive services. And so we've
20 received 1,015 last year--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:
22 [Interposing] 1,015.

23 COMMISSIONER HESS: Yes and--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:
25 [Interposing] Okay and last year in 2008'09--

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COMMISSIONER HESS: [Interposing]

Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: --or '09-
10, okay.

COMMISSIONER HESS: And we expect
to get another 1,000 this year. And those are
specific to homeless veterans.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Are
we using them all?

COMMISSIONER HESS: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And so
1,015 families are now housed with Section 8
certificates or in place or both?

COMMISSIONER HESS: I think there's
about 1,000 certificates have already been issued.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

COMMISSIONER HESS: I can't tell
you that they're all housed and leased up. That's
a process--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:

[Interposing] Okay so the problem is that with the
certificates it's very hard if they're the same
problems in terms of finding an apartment--

COMMISSIONER HESS: [Interposing]

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That's right.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: --that's why I'm asking.

COMMISSIONER HESS: That's right.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: In other words--

COMMISSIONER HESS: [Interposing] There are the same challenges that anyone else with a Section 8 would have.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. So they may have the certificate but they may not be able to find housing.

COMMISSIONER HESS: We have found that they have by and large found housing but it takes a while.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: All right. So is there some way of getting an update on that?

COMMISSIONER HESS: Yes. We can get an idea on--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [Interposing] Because it's not a big number compared to the larger Section 8. And--

COMMISSIONER HESS: [Interposing] Yes.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: --you're going to get another 1,000 even though Section 8 is having all these changes in Washington this coming year--

COMMISSIONER HESS: [Interposing]
Yes. Separate--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: --October-ish?

COMMISSIONER HESS: [Interposing] --separate appropriate from Congress--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:
[Interposing] Right 'cause it comes--

COMMISSIONER HESS: --it's already been--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: --from defense. Probably Under--

COMMISSIONER HESS: [Interposing]
Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: --something like that.

COMMISSIONER HESS: So we'll get--I think we'll get the second thousand.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I guess my question then would be would this particular group

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2 of people I think we should be really pushing to
3 get owners or whatever to work with them on
4 Section 8. Does somebody actually do that case
5 work?

6 COMMISSIONER HESS: Yes. In fact
7 the VA has assigned case work, housing counselors,
8 and we provided housing counselors and apartment
9 location assistance through the DHS office of
10 Project Torch.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I
12 mean--all right. The other thing is when you--and
13 this is my ignorance. When you leave the military
14 and you come--do you know who's coming into New
15 York? Roger may know this. Because like before
16 people become homeless, is there some way of
17 stopping it by having some discussion when they're
18 discharged? I don't know anything about this. I'm
19 really ignorant so. I know how to get out of jail
20 but I don't know how to get out of the military.

21 COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: There is
22 actually no way of knowing in advance who's coming
23 back to New York.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

25 COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: If they

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register with the VA then that's one way of identifying if they're here or not.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: They would register for medical probably with the VA or?

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: Well if, when you're discharged, they do, you have to do a discharge summary.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right.

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: And you have an address, the address where you enlisted from.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right.

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: So it's assumed that a lot of people will go back to that address but not necessarily.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Does the VA tell you like when people are registering with them even though it wouldn't be the whole universe?

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: Well what I've been able to do recently as I had mentioned at the last hearing is that I've been able to secure names from the VA. They have a special program called RONA and so they have sent me all of the addresses and names of people who've been

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discharged from the military since 9/11.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And you've been able to--wherever possible, it's not always possible to reach out to them to say--

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: [Interposing]
It's--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: --we would like to work with you--

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: [Interposing]
It's--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: --and give you support.

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: It's listed by the five Boroughs by zip code. And what we plan to do is send out mailings to those individuals, letting them know what services are available--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:
[Interposing] Try Facebook.

[Chuckling]

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: No I'm serious. With all due respect to the mailings--

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: [Interposing]
Um-hum.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: --sometimes there are other--I mean just don't do just mailings, that's the only thing I'm saying 'cause if--

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: [Interposing] Well we--the only information I have though--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [Interposing] That's how I get everybody.

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: --the only information that they sent is the addresses actually. Now we do have a Facebook--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [Interposing] You don't need an address for Facebook Roger.

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: Well we have Facebook online on the website and--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: You don't - Facebook. All right. So I'm just saying is I would make that a huge priority and obviously if any of us can help because we know our neighborhoods, we would be glad to. Just so the people don't--I just think you have to try to stop it before--

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: [Interposing]

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Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: --it starts and try to be supportive. The other thing is regarding the Albany, what are we doing once this legislation is drafted to actually make it pass? 'Cause I know it's one thing to draft legislation on the Mitchell Lama, Julie, but what are we doing to make it happen?

MS. WALPERT: We actually have a lobbyist, Joe Rosenberg is our Intergovernmental Deputy Commissioner and he lobbies--I'm sorry--and he lobbies in Albany--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:
[Interposing] Yes we know that.

MS. WALPERT: --for us. So--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:
[Interposing] So is he--but this is going to be a priority for the Mayor's Office not just for Joe to get this through?

[Off mic]

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: You've got to go through the system first. Does that mean like a January push?

[Off mic]

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. And
3 then finally are there any other grants for
4 housing that the Federal government or Department
5 of Defense has, thinking outside the box, that
6 could be of assistance? Other--are you applying
7 for every possible opportunity for this group of
8 individuals, even supplemental money, you know,
9 etcetera.

10 It, really, I don't know, it just
11 feels so terrible to have this number of people
12 with the Department of Defense spending \$1
13 trillion a minute or whatever it is and not be
14 able to supplement whatever rent is necessary to
15 be able to keep people in their homes. I mean the
16 one-shots should be so available to this
17 population, it's just frustrating. Go ahead. Any
18 possible other grants?

19 COMMISSIONER HESS: We believe
20 we're accessing all the available--currently
21 available Federal opportunities and we'll continue
22 to look for additional opportunities. One of the
23 interesting things that's happened recently in the
24 VA is the creation of a new research arm. And
25 they have then the opportunity to do many more

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2 demonstration projects we think. So we've begun
3 to have some discussions with that part of the
4 Secretary's Office to see if we couldn't bring
5 some interesting demonstration projects that would
6 move veterans faster to permanent housing here in
7 New York City. And so we're--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:

9 [Interposing] Well what would be an example of how
10 you might do that? What would be an example of
11 what you would give in answer to an RFP?

12 COMMISSIONER HESS: Well if

13 there's--if there's veterans that need a specific
14 kind of supportive housing for example, we could
15 craft that into--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:

17 [Interposing] Like accessible or something.

18 COMMISSIONER HESS: Yes. We could

19 craft that into a demonstration project and ask
20 the VA to fund it. And then measure the results.
21 And so those are the kinds of things that we're
22 thinking about now. You know, one of the
23 interesting things under HUD VASH for example is
24 they'll pay the rent once you get in but they
25 won't pay a security deposit. So we're using HRA

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one-shots--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:

[Interposing] Um-hum.

COMMISSIONER HESS: --to pay the security deposits so the veteran can move in under HUD VASH. And so there's collaborations like that as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It's absolutely outrageous that the Department of Defense doesn't pay for it. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Thank you very much Council Member. Council Member James.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Commissioner Hess is there--do you assess those individuals who currently enter the system at Bellevue and/or enter the system at Bedford Atlantic or at Pomoja House, whether any of those individuals formerly served in any of our neighbor armies?

COMMISSIONER HESS: Yes. 30th Street in particular.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Yes.

COMMISSIONER HESS: And so everybody who comes into 30th Street goes through a little bit of an information gathering interview.

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2 And the veteran status is one of the questions
3 that asked. Now again that's self-reporting and
4 as the Chairman mentioned not every veteran is
5 ready to tell us they're a veteran when they first
6 come in. But to the extent that they identify
7 themselves as a veteran then we'll take them,
8 we'll transport them to Project Torch.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Um-hum.

10 COMMISSIONER HESS: So that we can
11 get them short-term housing there as opposed to
12 the shelter system if they want that. But just or
13 more importantly is access to the wide array of VA
14 benefits. So one of the little-known facts is
15 that probably 75% of the veterans that come to us
16 experiencing homelessness are eligible through the
17 VA for what's called non-service connected cash
18 assistance. And I forget the amount. It's \$700,
19 \$800 a month, something like that.

20 [Off mic]

21 COMMISSIONER HESS: How much is it?
22 \$724 a month. And so we're trying to make those
23 connections. Sometimes, that's not a lot of
24 money, but in some cases that is enough to help a
25 veteran remain out of a shelter system.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So they will
3 be able to access all of these services in
4 addition to the Section 8 vouchers--

5 COMMISSIONER HESS: [Interposing]
6 That's right.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: --at the 30th
8 Street facility?

9 COMMISSIONER HESS: That's right.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Do we know
11 how many veterans are currently at Bedford
12 Atlantic and/or Pomoja House?

13 COMMISSIONER HESS: We know--I
14 don't know the exact numbers off the top of my
15 head I can tell you that 292 veterans still remain
16 in our shelter system today.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Are there
18 any services--veterans' services--services for
19 veterans that are offered to those individuals who
20 self-report at Bedford Atlantic and/or Pomoja
21 House--

22 COMMISSIONER HESS: [Interposing]
23 Yes. They are also advised of and directed to
24 Chapel Street to Project Torch--

25 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:

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[Interposing] Right.

COMMISSIONER HESS: --so that they can access the full array of benefits that the VA can provide.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Do you know whether or not in the recent, I think it's a Resolution they referred to it in Washington that was forwarded to the President of the United States whether or not there were any funds that were cut for veterans' services?

COMMISSIONER HESS: I do not know of any funds that were cut for veterans' services. Our pitch to the Federal government has been frankly that because of the task force work that we started here in New York City in 2006, we believe that we are well positioned to be the first city in this country to end veterans' homelessness.

And therefore the research office at the VA Secretary has put together should look to us for demonstration projects and help us do this first so that the rest of the country can learn from that success. And so we're working very hard to try to bring new dollars into New

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2 York City out of the Administration as a result of
3 the commitment of the President and the Secretary
4 to end veterans' homelessness.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Do you know
6 whether or not the Governor in his deficit
7 reduction plan reduced funds for veterans and--

8 COMMISSIONER HESS: [Interposing] I
9 do not know.

10 COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: [Off mic]
11 [Interposing] No.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: No he did
13 not or no you don't know.

14 COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: [Off mic] He
15 did not.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay. And
17 do you know whether or not as we move forward and
18 to negotiate the budget in the City of New York
19 whether or not the Mayor of the City of New York
20 plans to increase funds for veterans in his
21 budget?

22 COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: [Off mic]
23 There's no plans to do that.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: No plans
25 either way?

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COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: [Off mic]

Correct. At least - - .

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay. And are we lobbying or advocating to, for the Mayor of the City, to do just that? To increase funds for veterans in the City of New York since he's publicly--

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: [Off mic]

[Interposing] Well we don't know, - - to my office. That's--

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:

[Interposing] To your office, yes. To increase the capacity of your office and direct services to veterans in the City of New York since the budget under this Administration is pretty abysmal.

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: Well I think, one of the things that we have to realize is that the City provides services to vets through the various agencies, for instance, DHS provides a tremendous services to veterans as the Commissioner has just mentioned--

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:

[Interposing] But isn't it true that most of those funds are pass-through funds from either the

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Federal government or the State?

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: No.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: No?

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: No.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: They're
direct funds from our tax levy dollars?

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: Well in the
case of either they're our tax levy dollars or in
some cases they're grant money.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay. Thank
you.

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: But before I-
-I just want to make one point. Commissioner Hess
was talking about the veterans on the street. And
I, you know, I agree that that should not happen.
But I think one of the points that he raised that
maybe I should just sort of reiterate and that is
the outreach teams. Because one of the things that
I do know is that vets are very, very hard to
bring in off the streets.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Hum.

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: One reason is
what the Chairman said and the other reason is the
fact that they're trained and so they know how to

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survive. So one of the things that the outreach teams do is that they actually have people who are out on the streets on a daily basis--

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:

[Interposing] Um-hum.

COMMISSIONER NEWMAN: --they

actually establish relationships with these vets. And what happens frequently is once the relationship is established, there's a level of trust that's there. And in many cases they've been able to bring vets off the street because of that relationship.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: My last

question, I apologize, there is an armory in Brooklyn at Crown--excuse me, at Union and Bedford which I believe is run by the military and is often rented out for parties and such. Why is that armory not used to house veterans? Does anyone know? Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Thank you

Council Member. Your questions are insightful as always. I did have--let me--I want to do something a little different. Have we--I'm trying to look at some of the factors causing people to

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get out there, to become homeless.

Is there any branch that is giving more to the homeless population? Or any MOS, any job description. I have a theory that the line units will be out there more. I have the theory that the infantry will be out there more. I'm a former infantryman myself. Is there any research being done on which branch is leading to this more?

COMMISSIONER HESS: I've not seen any research along those lines.

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Do we, can I suggest that you also, just for the sake of to speak of the MOSs, to speak of what did you do while you were in service, because we're discovering that they're starting to look at the post-traumatic business. They're also looking at the problems with violence in the family of folk in the military. And they're starting to isolate certain things.

COMMISSIONER HESS: Um-hum.

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: A certain spirit de corps, a certain mindset that is leading to certain things, perhaps you can work with it

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2 there. If we could find out which branch, if
3 there was a difference, then we can--then as part
4 of the obligation of that branch to start working
5 on this problem with us.

6 If there was any truth in this.
7 There may be no truth at all, maybe it has nothing
8 to do with what you did while you were in service
9 or anything like that but I really have a feeling,
10 I speak as a Marine Corps infantryman, your
11 survival skills in the urban jungle are not really
12 post-Marine Corps are not really the number one
13 interest of the Marine Corps.

14 COMMISSIONER HESS: That's true.

15 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Your
16 survival, doing which they want you to do is
17 primary; everything else is not really worked on.
18 These may be people with fewer resources to begin
19 with, fewer talent, skills, whatever you want to
20 say, call it, to begin with, giving them fewer to
21 go back to, fewer to turn to when they're out of
22 that.

23 If we were going to look at this it
24 would be useful to find out the next question, are
25 you a veteran, what branch were you in. I mean

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2 that's going to be an easy conversation if they
3 say the first, the second one usually rolls from
4 that. But one next step, what MOS, what did you
5 do while you were in there because, again, if we
6 could find that correlation, then we have some leg
7 to stand on to speak to that branch and say you
8 need to help us.

9 What you are doing is helping to
10 produce a problem. You need to help us. You have
11 to do what you're doing but maybe you can do it in
12 a different way or maybe you can give us some
13 support on this.

14 COMMISSIONER HESS: You know it's
15 an interesting question and we'll talk to the VA
16 about that and see what jointly might be done. It
17 actually reminds me that probably six months ago
18 we testified in Washington before a House
19 Subcommittee on this very issue and the Chairman
20 brought up the same issue. You know, what can we
21 do before soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines
22 leave the service to try to help them avoid
23 ultimately falling into the experience of
24 homelessness?

25 And it's a complicated question. I

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2 can only remember back a very long time ago when I
3 left the military and I don't think anything
4 anybody said to me at that final station before
5 being discharged, I was listening to. I'd of
6 signed almost anything, right? All I knew is that,
7 you know, when it was all said and done I got to
8 take that uniform off and I was a civilian again.
9 And so, you know, going through the various
10 medical checks and psych checks and all that, I'd
11 of told them anything. I think in honest, back as
12 a young 20-something-year old soldier.

13 And so I'm sure you may be able to
14 relate to that experience. And so it's trick when
15 people are about to get out of the military. And
16 it's trick for the VA because some of us really
17 didn't necessarily even have a lot of trust of
18 government agencies after we left the military.
19 And so I think it is tricky how you pursue that
20 but it's an important question to pursue. And so
21 we'll talk with the VA about that.

22 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Just wanted
23 to vouch for much of what you said and to--but
24 there's some slight difference. I, as a disabled
25 vet myself, and that's why I was questioning what

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2 does disabled mean, the percentage of the
3 disability, which leads to different government
4 resources.

5 COMMISSIONER HESS: Right.

6 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: I had a
7 person work with me; a person sat down with me and
8 really helped me find some resources that I would
9 not have found otherwise. I found out how to--
10 there was a special program where the government
11 paid for my education. Not the GI Bill, some
12 other things that were in existence. Someone
13 worked with me. I agree the majority of my peers,
14 you know, they--all they wanted was their idea of
15 freedom or their version of it.

16 COMMISSIONER HESS: Right.

17 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: However we
18 have to find ways and if we can do it this way,
19 it's a good thing.

20 COMMISSIONER HESS: Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Are there any
22 more questions by anyone? If that's the case, I
23 want to thank this panel very much for testifying
24 and continue to do the good work even as you go I
25 want to thank you all and hope that your Christmas

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2 is good and point out that I'm going to tour with
3 the Commissioner of Homeless Affairs. He has some
4 facilities that he wants to show me, of the good
5 work that they're doing, and I'm interested in
6 seeing that. Even as before we call it, you're
7 excused, even as we are getting--

8 COMMISSIONER HESS: [Interposing]

9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: --to call the
11 next person, I want to point out that Council
12 Member Fidler is doing a toy drive. He has the
13 largest, as he's told me, so see if I do this
14 right, the largest Toys for Tots in the City is
15 taking place in his Democratic Club and I--this
16 Thursday night. Sir would you be kind enough go?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: [Off mic]

18 And that's relevant to veterans...

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: [Off mic]

20 The Marines.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: [Off mic] Oh

22 the Marines are - - .

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: The

24 Marines' Toys for Tots Drive.

25 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Oh I stand

1
2 corrected. I thought everyone knew that Toys for
3 Tots was Marine Corps. I stand corrected. Can we
4 call our next witness?

5 MR. CARLIN: Our next witness is,
6 our next panel, Lionel Hamanaka from Military
7 Families and Veterans for Peace; and Tom Syracuse,
8 Veterans for Peace.

9 [Pause]

10 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Even as she
11 gets comfortable, let me remind everybody there's
12 no people who really like peace more than
13 veterans. There's no community that is for peace
14 more than veterans. The further away you've been
15 from war the more you seem to like it, the closer,
16 the more you want peace. A just peace, but peace
17 nonetheless.

18 [Pause]

19 [Off mic discussion about other
20 witnesses]

21 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Why don't we
22 call them all and give them three minutes each.

23 MR. CARLIN: Okay. Selina Copa,
24 Iraq Veterans Against the War; and Dan Rossi,
25 Veteran Vendors.

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CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: In the order that you were called, that is how you will speak.

MR. CARLIN: Does anybody have any copies of their statements?

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: And we're going to give, we're going to give three minutes or two minutes? Which is your clock?

MR. CARLIN: I don't know - - .

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Okay.

[Off mic crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Got to alert him.

[Pause]

MR. CARLIN: Okay. Three minutes. You want to do three minutes each? Yeah.

[Pause]

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Good to see you although I've ruined your name, will you ever forgive me. I've done such horror to your name.

MS. ZENO HAMANAKA: You talking to me?

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Yes. Was it-

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MS. HAMANAKA: [Interposing] Well I

1
2 didn't notice it at all. My name's Zeno Hamanaka
3 and I'm glad to see you.

4 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Look at that.

5 [Chuckling]

6 MS. HAMANAKA: Yes I'm a member of
7 Military Families Speak Out, a national peace
8 group of more than 4,000 families related to
9 soldiers who have served since 9/11. My son came
10 back from deployment in Iraq and Afghanistan and
11 could not find a job or affordable housing. He
12 had to take a job 6,000 miles away and break up
13 his family so he could put food on the table.

14 Over 1,500,000 US soldiers have
15 served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.
16 696,000 solders were in the Gulf War, yet the New
17 York City Mitchell Lama legislation, coverage for
18 veteran priority housing, ran out 34 years ago in
19 1975, effectively ignoring the courage, commitment
20 and sacrifice of our New York State veterans for
21 the past three wars. After putting their blood on
22 the line, these veterans earned the support of our
23 government and its institutions and agencies.

24 Thousands of New York State
25 veterans have given their all on the battlefield,

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2 enduring desert heat, dehydration, bombs, IEDs,
3 separation from children, spouses, dissolution of
4 families, the deaths or wounds of their comrades
5 and the threat of disease. Certainly conditions
6 most of us will never experience and all for
7 meager pay.

8 Veterans are our kids, neighbors
9 and co-workers and need our help. We need to help
10 them get their homes, health and future going. I
11 have met kids who enlisted at 17, came back to New
12 York City and wandered lost for months or years
13 until connecting up with our nexus of services.
14 These veterans need a welcoming network in their
15 own neighborhoods. And an important part of that
16 is having a place to live. One-third of the
17 homeless are veterans. We implore you to extend
18 the Mitchell Lama clause extending priority
19 occupancy in Mitchell Lama housing to include
20 veterans of the Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq wars.
21 We need to make a breakthrough.

22 In their letters of support,
23 Speaker Quinn and Congressman Rangel wrote about
24 exploring other ways to increase veteran housing
25 opportunities and we will pursue these as well.

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2 On the one hand it will reduce homelessness,
3 suicide, substance abuse, PTSD and domestic
4 violence. On the other hand it will increase
5 employment and the kind of environment that the
6 great City of New York need to maintain its place
7 as a center of world tourist, the arts and the
8 financial capital of the free world.

9 There have been many great veterans
10 who returned to serve us all, for example,
11 President John Kennedy. We applaud the working
12 group for veterans of the City Council that Ms.
13 Povome [phonetic] told me about. Please include
14 us; please let us be part of that.

15 New York State and New York City
16 would get \$133 million in Federal funds per 1,000
17 vets on the GI Bill over 4 years. This does not
18 count unemployment insurance or the money their
19 families will spend on them.

20 Okay I've passed out charts for you
21 all. I also want to thank Senator Adams from New
22 York State Legislature, Congressman Rangel; my own
23 City Councilwoman who I of course think is the
24 best, Gale Brewer and Speaker Quinn, and HPD for
25 being open to this change. And I want to comment

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2 that when I went to Albany and spoke to a woman in
3 the Department of Social Services, every veteran
4 that goes through--gets discharged up there, they
5 talk to, personally. They interview them to see
6 if they have PTSD or what their situation is. I
7 hope that we can be just as good as Albany in
8 doing that.

9 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: I thank you.

10 Ma'am.

11 MS. SELINA COPA: I'm Selina Copa
12 from Iraq Veterans Against the War. This issue
13 has a particular significance to me because I just
14 came home from overseas on October 15th of this
15 year. And I was very fortunate to have a family
16 support network. Were it not for that I might
17 well have been in this situation.

18 Council Members, on your work
19 today, on your way to this hearing, I guarantee
20 you that you saw homeless veterans from Iraq and
21 Afghanistan. You may not have recognized them
22 because they may not look like what you're used to
23 looking for. Some of them are relatively clean-
24 cut. They are highly mobile and often travel
25 light. They are thinking tactically.

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2 Some of them may in fact have
3 disability especially Post Traumatic Stress
4 Disorder. Many of them have adjustment
5 difficulties that are preventing them from
6 adapting to successful civilian life. But this
7 does not mean that you should count them out.
8 This does not mean that you should write them off.
9 And this does not mean that these veterans have no
10 more to contribute to New York City.

11 With all respect to Council Member
12 Fidler, who comes from my home Borough of
13 Brooklyn, veterans who come down with adjustment
14 difficulties or trauma, veterans who are sleeping
15 on the streets or in the subways at this moment,
16 don't want the Taj Mahal, they want safe,
17 independent housing. They want a leg up so that
18 they can return to contributing.

19 These veterans gave as much as they
20 could. They wrote a blank check to the United
21 States of America up to and including my life.
22 They are committed to service. And if you help
23 them, if you allow them this access to Mitchell
24 Lama, if you allow them these hands-up when they
25 need it, I guarantee you that these veterans will

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2 contribute and continue to contribute to New York
3 City and be successful, productive members, as
4 many of them as can, of this society.

5 Council Member Sanders stated that
6 it's very difficult for veterans to admit that
7 they are homeless. And as someone who works as a
8 veteran's organization I can say that this is
9 absolutely correct. We know many veterans who
10 come to us rather than the City because they're
11 willing to accept help from their veterans rather
12 than go to a homeless shelter.

13 Going to a homeless shelter for
14 many of them means admitting failure. It means
15 saying that they have failed as citizens and they
16 have failed as veterans. Many veterans will not
17 accept placement in a homeless shelter. Even
18 though it be well intentioned, even though it be
19 as much as they can because it means that they are
20 a veteran and they cannot help themselves any
21 longer.

22 I urge you to allow them to provide
23 for them the opportunity to have independent
24 housing, to allow them to lead independent lives,
25 to allow them access and priority to Mitchell

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2 Lama. Thank you Council Members for your time. I
3 appreciate that. I hope you remember the veterans
4 when you continue to do your duties.

5 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: We'll respond
6 when you guys finish. Sir.

7 MR. DAN ROSSI: Good afternoon
8 Council. I'm proud to be here. I thought this
9 Mitchell Lama thing was a done deal. I read about
10 it over a month ago and I don't see how they could
11 say no to something like this. It's--they're not
12 giving anyone anything except a priority on the
13 list. I've lived in Mitchell Lama housing. My
14 family did. It's great housing. I would never
15 say anything bad about it.

16 And I've come, I guess, full
17 circle. I was homeless for seven months, not due
18 to any drugs or things like that. If anyone knows
19 me that's the furthest thing in the world, just
20 illnesses of my family. And when it came down to
21 the bottom, the only people that helped me were
22 other disabled vets.

23 And it's hard to even say this now,
24 because this probably is the first time I'm ever
25 admitting this, and as far as pride and things

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2 like that, I did two tours in Nam. I would go
3 over there and fight right now if they would let
4 me. So that's who I am.

5

6 About three years ago when I
7 finally was able to admit to myself that it was
8 either work or that would be the end for me and my
9 wife; I did what I always did. I vended. And I
10 asked friends of mine to loan me a pushcart so
11 that I could go back to work. And at the time I
12 didn't have a license anymore. Because of the
13 illnesses in my family, I made everything lapse.
14 I kind of gave up.

15

16 And two vets, disabled vets, came
17 and... Well they worked the cart for me to put food
18 on the table. And over a period of time I got
19 back on my feet. I got my license and I
20 reinvented myself as to who I was. And... I haven't
21 forgotten. I've started a little company where
22 all the people that work for me are veterans,
23 disabled and that.

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25 It went as far as last week I was
26 arrested because I was supporting these men. I
27 feed disabled vets and homeless vets every single
28 day. Everyone knows that if they come by us

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2 they're going to eat, whether they're vets or not,
3 just homeless, anyone.

4 [Pause]

5 MR. ROSSI: I don't know what to
6 say. I don't--I was going to talk more about Mr.
7 Hess and the fact that Legal Aid filed a lawsuit
8 last week against him for not doing everything he
9 just said he was doing. But I don't know as much
10 about that.

11 And I know there's--as far as the
12 VA goes, if you go to the VA and ask for money, no
13 one's giving you money. I don't know where that
14 came from, you know? As far as the Mitchell Lama
15 housing, of course this has to go to any possible
16 thing that you could do to prevent a person from
17 going homeless, you've got to do it. That's all
18 I've got to say. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: I'll respond
20 in a few. Council Member James.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: I don't know
22 what you say after that. All I can say is strong
23 men cry and thank you for your service to this
24 country. And to the other soldier, I just want to
25 thank you for all that you have done so that we

1
2 can be free. Truly I can know the members on this
3 panel appreciate it and we'll do all that we can
4 to provide for additional services to the men and
5 women of our war veterans.

6 My question is I saw, I think,
7 within the last two weeks that there was a
8 program, I believe, that was being offered by
9 Columbia University to allow veterans to attend
10 their university free, is that an isolated?

11 MS. COPA: No Ma'am, actually.

12 The--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:

14 [Interposing] Or was that part of the GI--

15 MS. COPA: --the Yellow Ribbon
16 program. And it actually helps out, it
17 supplements the GI Bill.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay.

19 MS. COPA: A lot of universities,
20 especially in New York City are offering that and
21 CUNY as well is offering it. And there's been a
22 bill for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans so--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:

24 [Interposing] What is it called? Yellow?

25 MS. COPA: The Yellow Ribbon

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program is when private colleges donate additional funds to match what the VA is providing.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And CUNY Currently offers Yellow Ribbon?

MS. COPA: CUNY actually doesn't need to offer a Yellow Ribbon program because the great State of New York will pay for the education of any Iraq or Afghanistan veteran.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Right.

MS. COPA: So a CUNY education is free all the way. In fact I'm about to attend Brooklyn College myself--

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:
[Interposing] Congratulations.

MS. COPA: - - .

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And SUNY as well? Do you know if SUNY--?

MS. COPA: [Interposing] SUNY does not need to offer the Yellow Ribbon program because it's covered fully by the GI BILL.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Excellent.
Okay--

MS. COPA: [Interposing] So if you in fact served after 9/11, you can in fact get a

1
2 first-rate education courtesy of Senator Webb's
3 bill. The problem again with that is that it does
4 provide a little bit--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:

6 [Interposing] Um-hum.

7 MS. COPA: --towards housing and
8 helping out--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:

10 [Interposing] Um-hum.

11 MS. COPA: But it also only covers
12 the months you're in school.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Ah.

14 MS. COPA: And only those months
15 where you attend more than two-thirds of the
16 month, so if your school starts say January 15th--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:

18 [Interposing] Um-hum.

19 MS. COPA: --you won't have any
20 housing money for January.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Hum.

22 MS. COPA: And unfortunately,
23 although I certainly wish it were otherwise, the
24 landlord still wants the rent--

25 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:

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2 [Interposing] Of course, of course. And let me
3 ask you this other question. As part of stimulus
4 or any initiative that the President is putting
5 forth to stimulate our economy are there any
6 assistance for down payment assistance to purchase
7 homes?

8 MS. COPA: The VA loan program.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Um-hum.

10 MS. COPA: Actually will give a
11 loan without a down payment. But it also is a
12 later commitment and not necessarily something
13 veterans first fresh from service are really going
14 to be able to do. So after some time, for
15 instance, we referenced some time with assisted
16 apartment dwelling--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:

18 [Interposing] Um-hum.

19 MS. COPA: --many in fact will be
20 able to purchase homes, stimulate New York's
21 economy--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:

23 [Interposing] Right.

24 MS. COPA: --but that's not
25 something they can do right after they get out of

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the service for most of them.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: As far as you know is there a preference for veterans for NYCHA units? New York City Housing Authority?

MS. COPA: I'm not--

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:
[Interposing] No.

MS. COPA: --familiar with that.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: And HPD, is there a preference for any HPD development? No. And so--and Mitchell Lama as far as you know is-- this bill has been introduced in both houses in the legislature? No.

MS. HAMANAKA: Just the--

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:
[Interposing] Batting zero.

MS. HAMANAKA: --Senate.

MS. COPA: In the Senate.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: It's just in the Senate but not in the Assembly. Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: I just wanted to respond and say Albany is a very unique place, Sir.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:

Dysfunctional.

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Yeah, I'm
trying to be nice here.

[Laughter]

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: And it's not
a guarantee of anything that happens. The
boldness of Council Member Brewer and others who
have put this common sense legislation, just
common sense, but who says that common sense is
common. Council Member Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you
very much. I believe that at the press conference
there was a representative of Assembly Member
Huntley from your area, I think, and also Senator
Adams. And I believe we heard today from HPD that
they're working on the legislation. So it's the
slowest process I've ever seen.

But we will be pushing, once the
City Council hopefully passes the Resolution which
I hope will go toward the end of this year, then
we will push even harder in Albany. Because we'll
have a large contingent from the City of New York
stating they're supportive.

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2 My question is, first of all thank
3 you for your testimony, my question is does
4 Homeless Services or the Mayor's Office of
5 Veterans Service ever reach out to any of your
6 organizations? Particularly those who are
7 returning to state that they could use some
8 support or ideas about how to expand the
9 opportunities.

10 Because it's my experience and I
11 think yours that when you're talking peer to peer,
12 experience to experience, you have more support
13 from those needing the services. I think that's
14 what you're saying. So has anybody ever called
15 you to say we could use some support--?

16 MS. COPA: [Interposing] Ma'am,
17 we've never gotten a phone call but we eagerly--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:
19 [Interposing] That's what I was--

20 MS. COPA: --welcome one.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That is
22 what I was afraid of. Is there somebody here
23 still from the Mayor's Office who would follow up
24 with that? Is anybody here?

25 [Off mic]

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COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That there's a reach out. With all due respect, Brooklyn College is very fortunate and before you know it you'll be running the college. I can just tell from your personality.

The other question I have is how do you think better communication could exist in New York similar to Albany because you mentioned, you know, that when people are discharged in Albany there's a communication. When I asked that of Roger Newman he indicated that it's harder in New York. Of course I don't think anything is harder, you should just do it. But my question is how do you think we should have better communication when people are discharge so that they do know about the benefits and are able to get housing in particular?

MS. HAMANAKA: I just think it should be part of the exit interview.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

MS. HAMANAKA: You know? Just make up a little pamphlet say look if you want someplace to live, call this number--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:

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[Interposing] Um-hum. It seems logical to me.

MS. HAMANAKA: --you know, and whatever--and also in Massachusetts they have set up where they have veterans on their outreach teams.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Exactly. That's my question, okay.

MS. HAMANAKA: So all the homeless people--the people who go out on the teams--street to deal with any PTSD or homeless problems are all vets themselves. They're recently returned and they know how to talk to them.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Great. Thank you Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Council Member Fidler.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Thank you Mr. Chair and first I want to share the expression of gratitude from Council Member James and I just wanted to clarify a remark that may have been misunderstood. I share this gentleman's skepticism about the performance of New York City when it comes to homeless services.

I've, as Chairman of the Youth

1
2 Services Committee; I've held 15 hearings on what
3 we believe to be 3,800 children who are homeless
4 on the streets of the City of New York every
5 night. So I am extraordinarily skeptical that
6 there are only 2,300 homeless people on the
7 streets of the City every night.

8 I recognize that as we deal with
9 children that there are some that we call
10 disconnected. Some that I call militantly
11 disconnected. They want no part of society no
12 matter how good the deal is. I would never
13 suggest that veterans will hold out for the Taj
14 Mahal. I'm sure that, you know, any, you know,
15 anything better than substandard housing would do.
16 And that is why I am a co-sponsor of this
17 Resolution.

18 I just wanted to be sure you
19 understood where I was coming from. It was,
20 obviously, sometimes my points are a little more
21 obscure than, you know, you have to follow the
22 Council playbook I guess to know that Commissioner
23 Hess and I have gone at it a number of times and I
24 was just trying to be diplomatic. So. Thank you.

25 MS. COPA: Thank you Council

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Member, I appreciate that, certainly.

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: I certainly wanted to underline my colleague's point that he is one of the most ardent people on this issue. He has fought long and hard when others were not fighting long and hard and he's certainly been out there on this issue. I want to commend you for choosing Brooklyn College. I graduated Brooklyn College. Yes you can take over and run it. I did.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [Laughing]

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: I want--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: -- - - .

CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: [Chuckling] I also want to point out that Speaker Quinn wanted to be here at this, at our hearing. She, of course, has been caught up, there's so much stuff happening across the street. Your last point that you made was you were saying you implored the Council Members to do everything and not to forget.

As a Marine we take pride in never leaving anyone on the battlefield. That we will sacrifice too, to bring one home. So I take that

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2 to heart and I take it very seriously. And we
3 will do our best on this issue as we will still
4 fight over the issue of vending and other
5 services. No we have not forgotten these things
6 at all. I want to thank this panel very much for
7 all of what you've done for New York. And you've
8 made this a better place and by therefore making
9 the country a better country. Thank you very
10 much.

11 MS. COPA: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: would you
13 call the next witness?

14 MR. CARLIN: Is Mr. Syracuse here?
15 Okay. Our last witness is Ed Daniels,
16 Incarcerated Veterans Consortium, Inc.

17 [Pause]

18 MR. ED DANIELS: good afternoon
19 Sir. Good afternoon. My name is Ed Daniels. And
20 I'm the Chairman of the Incarcerated Veterans
21 Consortium, Incorporated. It's a nonprofit
22 organization that's been existence since December
23 the 12th of 2000. And we was formed essentially to
24 assist those veterans and/or their family members
25 who served this country and for whatever reasons,

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2 they had problems when they got out and wound up
3 in the judicial or the legal system.

4 Prior to--well I didn't come here
5 with a prepared testimony; actually I came to
6 listen today. And while listening I listened to
7 some things that I think deserve some
8 clarification and some corrections. Because
9 people made some misquotes and being in this
10 field, as I said, I used to work for the City
11 University of New York as an Assistant Director
12 for the Central Office of Veterans Affairs before
13 that office closed in 1995.

14 And at that point in time we had
15 started developing the Incarcerated Veterans
16 Consortium. It wasn't incorporated at that time
17 strictly because it was a thing that came out of
18 the largesse of a lot of different people, from
19 the clergy to people that worked in the Parole
20 Department, the Correction Department, throughout
21 the City, teachers, etcetera.

22 And at that point in time after our
23 office closed it was then that I embarked on, with
24 a group of other people, do to something in the
25 service of those that were honorably discharged

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2 that suffered from the trauma of what they went
3 through in the military in defense of this country
4 and everybody here that benefits from that
5 sacrifice.

6 Now. When we talk about--when I'm
7 talking about corrections and things, Commissioner
8 Hess said there was like 992 veterans that they
9 have in the system, if I heard him correctly,
10 talking about homeless veterans. But it
11 proportionately is much larger than that. And I've
12 been in this field long enough to know. I'll give
13 you an example.

14 My friend and I had a late dinner
15 from a thing that Ms. Hamanaka gave last Friday at
16 this church that we spoke at. And one the way
17 back we were going out for dinner 'cause it was
18 late. And there's this church on 96th and
19 Amsterdam. And as we came, as we came up to get
20 on the bus, he said look at all the homeless
21 people on the steps of the church.

22 And I said how many do you think
23 over there are veterans. And I says--he says well
24 I don't know. I said well we could go over there
25 and count but, you know, it's kind of late. They

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were bedded down for the night so we didn't do anything about it.

So the question is how could you tell me how many there actually are in the system when you don't do a very accurate count. I think it was a year or two ago when they publicized that they wanted people to go out and do this and a bunch of us from different veterans organizations, Pat Toro from VVA 32, myself and a whole bunch of us wanted to be a part of it.

But for whatever reason, we weren't invited. We don't even know if it was done. And then certainly we've had for the longest time asked them to create a sheet where they specifically ask are you a veteran. Now when he said something about 30th Street and self--

[[Bell ringing]

[Off mic]

MR. DANIELS: [chuckling] about self, identify yourself as a veteran, well, you know, I've been in this business. I've seen people that came out of the Gulf War that didn't even know they were a veteran. And I can tell you I was doing petitioning for a candidate for office

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2 about two or three years ago and I was at 150th
3 Street and 8th Avenue and I happened to talk to
4 this young man, just brother sitting on the steps,
5 and we was talking and he says, well I didn't even
6 know I was a veteran. I didn't think I did--I had
7 any entitlements. I said yeah you do man.

8 So when you talk about a lot of
9 people are blind to that. They're unknowledgeable
10 because they haven't been educated properly. And
11 a lot of people are here to service them. And it
12 may seem like I'm bouncing around but I know
13 there's a time limitation and I see quite a few
14 people are left.

15 And I'm sad to see that because
16 it's important that if you're interested in what
17 you're doing that you participate and participate
18 fully. Because this is a very, very serious
19 matter as far as I'm concerned when people have
20 put their life on the line for everybody else and
21 you get the benefits of it and then you can't give
22 them a piece of the pie, to keep them in a
23 helpless situation.

24 Now when we talk about the pension
25 part, the pension or what they say, what he said

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2 about service-connected--non-service-connected or
3 VA, veterans can get this money, like \$925, it's
4 not actually \$925, it's \$965 for a single veteran.
5 And it's VA non-service connected pension.

6 Unlike you and I, who went to
7 school off of voc rehab, but that's what you're
8 talking about, but I know what you're talking
9 about is voc rehab and they pay for your tuition,
10 they pay for your books. You want to do
11 work/study; they give you money for that. You
12 have a greater ability to do things like that that
13 the guys on the regular GI Bill do not get.

14 So when you talk about the pension
15 part it's actually detrimental. It's not been
16 official to anyone to get it because if you're a
17 single vet and \$965, what housing can you get? You
18 can't get any housing. If you get any housing, if
19 you're looking at papers, they say if I want a
20 room it costs me \$150 to \$170, \$175 a week.

21 You multiply that by 4, you see
22 what you've got, then you say well wow man, I'm
23 spending over \$700 for my rent. Well I have to
24 eat. I have to buy clothing. I have to travel.
25 And there's other stuff that comes in that I can't

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account for.

So what is--and the bad thing about pension when I bring this--I like this because pension, you can't make any other money. Any time you go out and you win the Lotto, the government says you got overpaid. We're going to charge you for this. If you win \$1 million, believe me brother, they're going to get all of it 'cause that's the way--they're going to tabulate it so they get all that money back from you.

You can't get anything that requires you to give your Social Security or your name, anything that's legal, you cannot do it. You can't get anything other than your pension money.

So you become a survivability problem. The way the rents are being increased right now, when you talk about it, the guy says well I'm better off living in the shelter but the shelters are demoralizing. If you look at, if you talk about being at Borden Avenue, if you talk about the veteran's SRO at 118th Street, if you talk about the SRO at 1150 Commonwealth Avenue, yes.

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2 But you see what happens is when
3 people get caught up on the morass and they stay
4 there for so long, they get very depressed and
5 they just get stagnant. They don't see any hope.
6 And they go so depressed it's just hard to get
7 them moved.

8 They had a meeting last week and
9 the people said something about how the Iraqi and
10 Afghanistan veterans are coming into the shelters
11 quick, getting their housing and getting out
12 quick. I said listen, talk to me in five or ten
13 years. Then you tell me about what they're doing
14 because just like the Vietnam veterans, they were
15 fine. But when the nightmares became daymares and
16 they couldn't afford, they couldn't stay on the
17 job and they couldn't get enough drugs or alcohol
18 to keep that at bay, everything deteriorated--
19 everything fell apart.

20 And the same thing, I hate to say
21 it, in most--in all probability is going to happen
22 with the Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. But
23 there's one key ingredient here, everybody should
24 take their notice of, it's going to be worse. We
25 went maybe once, like Dan and myself went twice.

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2 Let's talk about guys now--and
3 women now going three, four and five times, and
4 you're talking about rotating these troops in
5 Afghanistan. We don't have people to rotate to
6 Afghanistan. These are people, these are
7 retreads, reused. If you want to talk about
8 really if you're going to do escalation, which
9 nobody wants to talk about, the only sensible
10 thing would be draft them. That would be the only
11 think you could do.

12 If you want--if you don't want this
13 situation to reach catastrophic levels, draft
14 people that haven't been in it. Because when you
15 send people four and five times, brother, you've
16 got a disaster on your hands coming. You know?
17 And we are not preparing for it at this particular
18 point in time. And when--what we're giving
19 everybody is piecemeal compared to what we get.

20 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Let me
21 interject--

22 MR. DANIELS: [Interposing] And I
23 just want to address--

24 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: [Interposing]
25 If you can make it fast Sir.

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2 MR. DANIELS: Okay. I wanted to
3 address your point which you were talking about,
4 there's no difference in the branch because, you
5 know, I'm sad to hear you say that because I've
6 seen that in the VA where they try to pit one
7 service branch against the other. If you look at
8 war pictures from Normandy and the Battle of the
9 Bulge, if you talk about you're going to go in
10 from the ground, wars are not won from the ground;
11 wars are not won primarily from the air. You
12 can't.

13 The airpower is only to get enough
14 of the enemy to allow the ground people to come in
15 and mop it up and do what they have to do. And
16 why I'm raising this issue is because I was at the
17 VA about a week ago.

18 And I was talking to one of the
19 people that worked at the VA and now he's a
20 service officer. And he was talking about this
21 Air Force guy, pilot. That he was--went to
22 Vietnam, flew a lot of combat missions. And what
23 happened with him? He had a severely bad case of
24 PTSD.

25 And for whatever the reason because

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2 he as Air Force and no matter how many the
3 commanders done told what he was doing, yes he was
4 bombing in Cambodia and Laos and he's talking
5 about how he flew over this and he could see the
6 people running as he's blowing them up with napalm
7 and everything else, they wouldn't give--they
8 wouldn't validate his claim. So I would hate to
9 think that we would get into that 'cause I really
10 don't want to get into that.

11 And the last thing I wanted to say
12 is last week I was out for about a month,
13 unfortunately, I had something happen and, you
14 know, I had an illness problem--

15 [Crosstalk]

16 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: [Interposing]
17 Sir, Sir, I've got to give you--

18 MR. DANIELS: [Interposing] I know,
19 I know, I'm ending it now--

20 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: [Interposing]
21 Okay. - - Sir.

22 MR. DANIELS: --I'm going to tell
23 you--I'm ending it now. The fact of the matter is
24 last week, going into the office, I mean talking
25 about homes for people, there is no housing for

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2 the veterans or anybody else because what really
3 needs to be done is have some income-based
4 housing.

5 And I raise this because last week
6 from Monday until Thursday, every day of the week
7 we had somebody calling my office, talking about
8 do you have any housing for veterans or can you
9 assist in housing for veterans. There is no
10 housing for veterans - - and when you talk about
11 this issue, what the City needs to do is galvanize
12 people of good will and say listen, let's do some
13 income-based housing. Let's stop not throwing
14 this hyperbole. Let's not keep doing. We've got
15 a lot of luxury housing now that is empty because
16 people don't have the money to rent them. So--

17 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: [Interposing]
18 Sir. Let me stop you and say I agree with much of
19 what you have been saying. And on another day we
20 need to speak more as an uncle now of my nephew
21 who has done three terms in Iraq. And there's
22 talk that he's now headed to Afghanistan. I'm
23 very concerned.

24 I can see the impact on my own
25 nephew so I'm very concerned. My point that I was

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2 making was not so much to put services against one
3 another but I really, as a ground pounder, I must
4 say that after all is said and done, the wars are
5 won, one on one. However that's a ground
6 pounder's perspective. And that's an
7 infantryman's perspective.

8 However I do believe that the
9 infantry is used to a large degree as cannon
10 fodder and as such they are really not being
11 prepared. And certain branches, they're used for
12 cannon fodder more. And under those conditions,
13 I'm going to--I want to see if there is any
14 correlation because then the other guys, the
15 people using them in this fashion have an
16 obligation to help. If you set these young people
17 out there, then you have an obligation. And we in
18 government should fulfill our obligation to make
19 sure that they see it through. I'm going to give
20 you ten seconds for the last word and then I'm
21 going to close--

22 MR. DANIELS: [Interposing] The
23 last-the last--

24 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: --up--this is
25 the last one.

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2 MR. DANIELS: The last--that's Mr.
3 Syracuse there. He just came in. The last word.
4 I mean I want to get into this 'cause I may have
5 the same type of ego about the Air Force--

6 [Laughter]

7 MR. DANIELS: --but the reality--

8 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: [Interposing]
9 Oh that's a terrible cough. I'm sorry.

10 MR. DANIELS: --yeah I know. But
11 the reality is ground people can't win the war by
12 themselves--

13 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: [Interposing]
14 [Laughing]

15 MR. DANIELS: --and neither can the
16 Air Force.

17 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: So what
18 happened before there was an Air Force?

19 MR. DANIELS: What happened before
20 the Air Force--?

21 [Laughter, crosstalk]

22 MR. DANIELS: We we're--

23 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: [Interposing]
24 I'm sorry.

25 MR. DANIELS: We weren't born.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: But we still
3 won wars.

4 MR. DANIELS: No, no, no--

5 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: [Interposing]
6 Yours is the last word. I messed up. Yes Sir,
7 yours is the last word.

8 MR. DANIELS: Well, you know, the
9 other thing is when they talk about increasing
10 funds for their NYCHA. This is the last word--

11 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: [Interposing]
12 Absolutely. Ten seconds Sir.

13 MR. DANIELS: Okay. Ten seconds,
14 two and two. The last word is with NYCHA. NYCHA
15 is one of the worst organizations--

16 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: [Interposing]
17 Sure.

18 MR. DANIELS: --I know of and right
19 now I'm going to tell you I've got about three or
20 five cases coming up right now with NYCHA trying
21 to put out veterans and their families.

22 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: Hum.

23 MR. DANIELS: NYCHA has no
24 consideration for veterans. They won't even give
25 them; remaining family member status and they're

1
2 very difficult when it comes to say, to them, the
3 person has been living here all their life. They
4 was born here, raised here, but NYCHA has nobody--
5 as the Mayor's Office had said at one point in
6 time they had a relationship with NYCHA, about
7 that--they have no relationship with NYCHA because
8 if they do, it's very--it's a very poor
9 relationship. And it has no substance--

10 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: [Interposing]

11 I will agree with you on that--

12 MR. DANIELS: [Interposing] And if
13 you want to do anything substantive for veterans,
14 make sure that they refund the Veterans Resource
15 Centers who actually done the work, those five
16 entities from Staten Island, Manhattan, the Bronx,
17 Brooklyn and Queens were the ones--

18 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: [Interposing]

19 Well put.

20 MR. DANIELS: --that served the
21 veterans.

22 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: I'm going to
23 let you have that and draw your attention to Ms.
24 Angela from my team over there. On another day we
25 should talk and you should tell me about your

1
2 organization. But I'm going to declare this
3 meeting at a conclusion. And I'm going to run out
4 of here--

5 [Gavel banging]

6 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: --I
7 apologize. I'm due downstairs in five minutes to
8 get picked up.

9 [Background conversation]

10 CHAIRPERSON SANDERS: I also want
11 to thank--I do want to thank the great staff that
12 has worked well in putting these hearings
13 together. I want to thank Matthew Carlin the
14 counsel, Joan Povano [phonetic]--ooo Lord I'm
15 messing up, save me from myself, Povolny, I can do
16 this. I can do this, our Policy Analyst. And
17 Ashwin Goroteo [phonetic], of course, absolutely.

18 [Background conversation]

19 [END 1002.MP3]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Laura L. Springate certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura L. Springate". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Signature Laura L. Springate

Date December 21, 2009