Legislation Details (With Text)

File #:	Res 1221-2012	**Version:**	*	**Name:**	Promoting the enfranchisement of NYC voters through the provision of Russian translations of voting materials.
Type:	Resolution			**Status:**	Filed
				In control:	Committee on Governmental Operations
On agenda:	2/29/2012				
Enactment date:				**Enactment #:**	

Title: Resolution calling upon New York City's Board of Elections to promptly and fully comply with both the spirit and letter of the New York State Election Law by promoting the enfranchisement of New York City voters through the provision of Russian translations of voting materials.

Sponsors:

Indexes:

Attachments:

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
2/29/2012	*	City Council	Introduced by Council	
2/29/2012	*	City Council	Referred to Comm by Council	
12/31/2013	*	City Council	Filed (End of Session)	

Res. No. 1221

Resolution calling upon New York City's Board of Elections to promptly and fully comply with both the spirit and letter of the New York State Election Law by promoting the enfranchisement of New York City voters through the provision of Russian translations of voting materials.

By Council Members Fidler, Recchia, Greenfield, Nelson, Arroyo, Comrie, Gonzalez, Jackson, Koo, Koslowitz, Lander, Lappin, Garodnick, Brewer, Chin, Dromm, Ferreras, Gentile, James, Koppell, Levin, Rose, Williams, Mark-Viverito, Palma, Rodriguez and Rivera

Whereas, In 2009, then New York State Governor David Paterson signed S.552/A.1559 into law, adding section 3-506 to the New York State Election Law, directing the New York City Board of Elections to provide voting materials in the Russian language; and

Whereas, The law also requires that any information provided on the Board of Elections' website in a language other than English also be provided in Russian; and

Whereas, The law directs the New York City Board of Elections to draft and disseminate citywide, a booklet containing a voter registration form in English with instructions in Russian, additional instructions in

Russian on criteria and applications for absentee ballots, and a section with general voter information, such as frequently asked questions, in Russian; and

Whereas, The American Association for Russian Language, Culture and Education estimates, based on census and marketing data, that there are 600,000 Russian-American residents in New York City and the Modern Language Association lists Russian as the third most commonly spoken non-English language in New York State, after Spanish and Chinese; and

Whereas, Despite the fact that this law took effect on January 1, 2010, the main website of New York City's Board of Elections is lacking in both the quantity and accessibility of Russian language materials; and

Whereas, The only Russian language link on the main website of the Board leads to a 2009 document in Russian on registration and voting, despite the fact that the same document was updated in 2012 in the four other languages in which it is offered; and

Whereas, The "poll site locator" section of the website has been translated into Spanish, Chinese and Korean, but not into Russian, despite the fact that section 3-506 of the State Election law requires the Board to "provide the same information in Russian that it provides in languages other than English on its website;" and

Whereas, The Board's main webpage has multiple links in multiple languages to a webpage explaining the new voting system but does not have a Russian language link to such webpage; and

Whereas, There is Russian language information on the new voting system, but it can only be accessed by first unintuitively selecting another, non-Russian language link to the webpage and then selecting the Russian language option; and

Whereas, These oversights and omissions, even if corrected in the short term, raise questions as to the Board of Elections' commitment to complying with this law and the promotion of language accessibility; and

Whereas, The federal Voting Rights Act clearly displays an understanding that enfranchisement can sometimes depend on the accessibility of language appropriate voting materials, with 42 U.S.C. section 1973AA-1A declaring that "The Congress finds that, through the use of various practices and procedures,

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citizens of language minorities have been effectively excluded from participation in the electoral process," and that "in order to enforce the guarantees of the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to the United States Constitution, it is necessary to eliminate such discrimination;" and

Whereas, It is entirely against both the spirit and letter of New York State law as well as the spirit of the federal Voting Rights Act to impede the access of a sizeable group of New York citizens to the voting process by failing to accommodate the language they speak, especially when that group was specifically targeted for assistance by the State; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon New York City's Board of Elections to promptly and fully comply with both the spirit and letter of the New York State Election Law by promoting the enfranchisement of New York City voters through the provision of Russian translations of voting materials.

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