



Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title: Resolution calling on the appropriate committee of the Council of the city of New York to address the policy that Central Park cannot be used for political rallies.

Sponsors: Bill Perkins, Charles Barron, Leroy G. Comrie, Jr., Letitia James, Hiram Monserrate, Annabel Palma, James Sanders, Jr., Larry B. Seabrook, Albert Vann, Robert Jackson

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Res. No. 673

Resolution calling on the appropriate committee of the Council of the city of New York to address the policy that Central Park cannot be used for political rallies.

By Council Members Perkins, Barron, Comrie, James, Monserrate, Palma, Sanders, Seabrook, Vann and Jackson

Whereas, It has become apparent that the Administration no longer wants political rallies to be held on Central Park’s Great Lawn or the North Meadow because of concerns that the grass will get damaged; and

Whereas, In wishing to hold a protest march and rally on August 29, 2004, the day before the Republican National Convention, United for Peace and Justice (“UPJ”) applied for a permit from the Department of Parks and Recreation (“Parks”) to conclude their march with a rally on the Great Lawn in Central Park; and

Whereas, UPJ applied for the permit nearly a year in advance of the rally date and stated on the application that they expected as many as 250,000 people to participate in their march; and

Whereas, In April, Parks denied the permit request on the grounds that after spending \$18 million to rehabilitate and restore the Great Lawn in 1996, the Great Lawn could now only accommodate 80,000 people and that the grass would be destroyed by a rally of 250,000 people; and

Whereas, UPJ’s appeal of Parks’ decision was denied in May, 2004 on the same grounds - that the Great Lawn would be destroyed; and

Whereas, When UPJ sued the City in order to hold their rally at Central Park, the New York State Supreme Court refused to issue an injunction that would have forced the City to issue the permit; and

Whereas, The Court hinted that UPJ could have won if they did not wait until the last minute to sue the City; and

Whereas, Central Park has been used in the past for many large scale concerts, rallies and other events in the past: 750,000 at a 1982 anti-nuclear weapons rally; 750,000 at the 1991 Paul Simon concert; 250,000 at a 1993 Pavarotti concert; 130,000 at the Mass by Pope John Paul II; and 250,000 for the 1997 Garth Brooks concert; and

Whereas, Since the renovations, Parks still allows concerts, such as those performed by the New York Philharmonic and Metropolitan Opera and the 2003 Dave Matthews Band concert, to take place on Central Park's Great Lawn; and

Whereas, It was revealed during UPJ's suit against the City that the Parks and the Central Park Conservancy allow for two New York Philharmonic concerts, two Metropolitan Opera performances and up to two more events on the Great Lawn each year; and

Whereas, Using the excuse of protecting the grass from damage may save some grass, but it also damages our far more fundamental First Amendment rights of speech, association and assembly; and

Whereas, Central Park should be accessible to all New Yorkers, including large groups, whether it be for recreational, entertainment, religious, or political activities; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the appropriate committee of the Council of the city of New York to address the policy that Central Park cannot be used for political rallies.

LS# 1540
11/3/04
SD