



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 624

Resolution calling upon the Mayor to apply for the enrollment of New York City in the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Community Rating System.

By Council Members Ulrich, Richards, Treyger, Chin, Gentile, Rose, Maisel, Cabrera, Levin, King and Espinal

Whereas, Superstorm Sandy hit New York on October 29, 2012, affecting neighborhoods citywide; and

Whereas, During Superstorm Sandy, the Brooklyn-Queens Waterfront, Southern Queens, Southern Brooklyn, Southern Manhattan, and the East and South Shores of Staten Island were exposed to waves, storm surge and widespread inundation; and

Whereas, These inundated areas of the city contained nearly 88,700 buildings, 23,400 businesses and more than 300,000 housing units which were home to approximately 686,000 New Yorkers; and

Whereas, Building damage in these areas of the city was extensive and in many cases devastating; and

Whereas, Superstorm Sandy highlighted New York City's vulnerability to flooding and the importance of flood insurance; and

Whereas, In 1968, the federal government established the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), because it had been difficult historically for homeowners to obtain flood insurance from private insurers; and

Whereas, Most flood insurance policies that are purchased by homeowners and businesses in New York City are purchased through the NFIP, which is administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); and

Whereas, For decades, the owners of buildings that are located within the 100-year floodplain and that have a federally-backed mortgage or have received federal disaster aid have been required to purchase such flood insurance; and

Whereas, Two recent changes in federal government policy, both of which were planned before Superstorm Sandy hit, will increase the number of New Yorkers who are required to purchase flood insurance and will cause increases in flood insurance premiums going forward; and

Whereas, The first of these changes, the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012, eliminates NFIP policyholder subsidies and grandfathering, which previously kept flood insurance premiums below actuarial rates; and

Whereas, The second change is an update of the FEMA maps, called the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), that define the 100-year floodplain in New York City; and

Whereas, The updated FIRMs are expected to be finalized in 2015, and a preliminary version that was released in 2013 re-defines New York City's 100-year floodplain such that it includes a significantly greater number of buildings; and

Whereas, As a result of these policy changes, the number of buildings located in New York City's 100-year floodplain is expected to increase to 71,500, and the number of New Yorkers required to purchase flood insurance will increase correspondingly; and

Whereas, Additionally, as a consequence of these federal policy changes, New Yorkers who are required to purchase flood insurance will face escalating and, in some cases, extremely high flood insurance premiums; and

Whereas, The NFIP's Community Rating System (CRS) is a voluntary program, wherein municipalities that enroll in the program can reduce flood insurance premiums by implementing advanced floodplain management measures; and

Whereas, A municipality that enrolls in the CRS can reduce flood insurance premiums in 5% increments, up to 45%, by completing certain creditable activities relating to disseminating public information about flood risks, increasing flood preparedness, adopting more stringent flood zone maps and promulgating regulations to better protect buildings and other infrastructure from flood damage reduction; and

Whereas, The majority of municipalities that successfully participate in the CRS realize a flood insurance premium discount of between 5% and 20%; and

Whereas, The chief executive officer of a municipality can apply to enroll such municipality in the CRS by sending a formal letter of intent to FEMA and requesting inclusion in the program; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the Mayor to apply for the enrollment of New York City in the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Community Rating System.

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