



Legislation Text

File #: Res 1852-2009, **Version:** *

Res. No. 1852

Resolution urging the Governor of the State of New York and the New York State Legislature not to cut State funding to zoos, botanical gardens and aquariums.

By Council Members Recchia Jr., Avella, Brewer, Fidler, Gennaro, Gentile, Gonzalez, James, Koppell, Mealy, Nelson, Palma, Rivera, Stewart, Weprin, Foster, Gerson, Jackson, Mark-Viverito and Sears.

Whereas, According to a recent article in *The New York Times*, the State budget cut funding 55 percent to New York State's zoos, botanical gardens and aquariums, also known as "living museums" during the 2008-2009 fiscal year; and

Whereas, The article also reports that the Governor's proposed budget for the State's 2009-2010 fiscal year will eliminate funding to all 76 zoos, botanical gardens, and aquariums throughout New York State; and

Whereas, New York's living museums serve a vital role to the State's environmental agenda and contribute millions of tourism dollars to the New York State economy; and

Whereas, The proposed cuts seriously endanger the financial stability of New York's living museums that host 12 million visitors annually; and

Whereas, In New York State, a strong and widespread nonprofit arts sector provides cultural opportunities while also creating jobs and generating taxes; and

Whereas, New York State's nonprofit arts sector, which includes the zoos, botanical gardens and aquariums, contributed \$7.7 billion to the State's economy in 2005, comprising 30 percent of the total arts industry statewide, according to the Alliance for the Arts; and

Whereas, The Alliance for the Arts data also indicates that cultural institutions are a significant source of tax revenue for New York State, generating a total of \$1.2 billion in taxes in 2005, which is an addition to the

\$904 million in local taxes generated for New York City that year; and

Whereas, The Bronx Zoo and the New York Aquarium, alone, draw approximately 2.7 million visitors annually, employ 1,000 staff members and contribute almost \$300 million to the economy every year, as reported recently in *The New York Times*; and

Whereas, According to the February 2009 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report, New York City's 311 Customer Service Center received 7,841 cultural-related inquiries from July through October 2008; and

Whereas, The report revealed that within that time period over 50% of such inquiries pertained to finding a zoo, aquarium or botanical garden; and

Whereas, A 2008 national public opinion survey revealed that 79 percent of Americans believe that zoos and aquariums are good for their local economy and that 80 percent believe that zoos and aquariums should be supported by government funding, according to the Wildlife Conservation Society; and

Whereas, Such living museums are not just recreational, but have an educational component as hundreds of thousands of school children and adults visit such institutions each year to learn about science and horticulture, appreciate nature and further explore how they can help protect our environment; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York urges the Governor of the State of New York and the New York State Legislature not to cut State funding to zoos, botanical gardens and aquariums.

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11:20 a.m.
TC