



Legislation Text

File #: Res 2256-2009, **Version:** A

Res. No. 2256-A

Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to approve, legislation revising the priority occupancy clauses of the Mitchell-Lama housing program to give priority admission to veterans of the Iraq, Afghanistan and Gulf Wars and to their widows and widowers and to widowers of Vietnam War-era veterans.

By Council Members Brewer, Sanders, Mark-Viverito, The Speaker (Council Member Quinn), Comrie, Fidler, Foster, Gentile, Gonzalez, Jackson, James, Koppell, Liu, Recchia Jr., Vann, Weprin, Lappin, Nelson Arroyo, Barron, Mealy and Rodriguez

Whereas, According to statistics from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), based on the 2000 Census, New York City was home to approximately 348,722 veterans at that time; and

Whereas, Although statistical calculations by the VA estimate that in 2009 the number of veterans in NYC is approximately 225,270, many veterans groups disagree with that estimate believing the methodology is flawed, and cite numbers much closer to 300,000; and

Whereas, Returning veterans often confront an array of problems during their transition to civilian life including the lack of affordable housing options; and

Whereas, According to an updated 2008 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey (HVS), the Citywide vacancy rate for rental apartments was only 2.91 percent; and

Whereas, This low vacancy rate is an indication of the City's affordable housing crisis; and

Whereas, Some veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have faced extended tours of duty which may have created financial hardships for many of them and their families, since military pay is more often than not substantially less than the amount such individuals earned in civilian employment; and

Whereas, Veterans are disproportionately represented in the homeless population with the VA estimating that one-third of the nation's homeless population has served in the military; and

Whereas, An already difficult transition to civilian life can be exacerbated by New York City's scarcity of affordable rental apartments, which may add to the risk of veteran homelessness; and

Whereas, In enacting the Mitchell-Lama program the New York State Legislature attempted to remedy a serious shortage of decent housing by providing affordable housing for individuals and families whose incomes were too high for public housing, but not high enough to afford housing developed through private enterprise; and

Whereas, The financial welfare of New York State residents serving in the military and their families would be advanced by the enactment of laws designed to ease the transition from military to civilian life; and

Whereas, The Mitchell-Lama program could help ease a veteran's financial hardship by providing safe, decent and affordable housing; and

Whereas, Veterans who served from January 1, 1963 through May 7, 1975, the official end of the Vietnam War, and their widows, receive a preference in a Mitchell-Lama development if the veteran served for at least six months (unless that time was shortened because of injury or death) and received a discharge other than a dishonorable discharge, but widowers of Vietnam War-era veterans do not receive such a preference; and

Whereas, Currently veterans of the Iraq, Afghanistan and Gulf Wars receive no priority admission or preference to a Mitchell-Lama development under any existing statutes; and

Whereas, At this time of a general economic downturn, it is more crucial than ever that assistance be provided to grant veterans and widows and widowers of veterans priority access to affordable housing, such as the Mitchell-Lama program, so that returning veterans, as well as veterans who served in recent prior conflicts, may avoid financial hardship; and

Whereas, The men and women who sacrifice so much for this nation should be afforded every opportunity to receive access to affordable housing; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to approve, legislation revising the priority occupancy clauses of the Mitchell-Lama housing

program to give priority admission to veterans of the Iraq, Afghanistan and Gulf Wars and their widows and widowers and to widowers of Vietnam War-era veterans.

LS #7639

12/08/09

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