



## Legislation Text

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### Res. No. 2301

Resolution calling on New York City to rename the Manhattan Detention Complex located at 125 White Street after Benjamin Ward, the City's first black Police Commissioner.

By Council Member Gerson, Avella, Barron, Fidler, Jackson, James and Weprin.

Whereas, The Manhattan Detention Complex was previously named the Bernard B. Kerik Complex, in honor of the man who served as Commissioner of the New York City Police Department ("NYPD") from 2000 to 2001; and

Whereas, On June 30, 2006, after an eighteen month investigation conducted by the Bronx District Attorney's Office, Mr. Kerik pled guilty to two ethics violations and was ordered to pay a \$221,000 fine; and

Whereas, The naming of the detention center after a distinguished public servant is a worthwhile idea; and

Whereas, In contrast to the actions of the former Police Commissioner which make it inappropriate to name an institution of justice after him, Benjamin Ward's distinguished record as Commissioner of the New York City Department of Corrections and Commissioner of the NYPD make him an ideal candidate for such an honor; and

Whereas, Mr. Ward's personal story is inspirational, as he came from humble roots to earn a position with the 80<sup>th</sup> Precinct in Crown Heights, Brooklyn in 1951, then an all-white neighborhood where he was the first black police officer; and

Whereas, Mr. Ward quickly rose through the ranks through hard work and brilliance, evidenced by the top honors he received from Brooklyn College and Brooklyn Law School; and

Whereas, In 1975, Mr. Ward was appointed state commissioner for correctional services, where he

successfully addressed many of the problems that he believed had caused the Attica state prison revolt four years earlier, particularly the issue of racism among correction officers; and

Whereas, In 1979, Mayor Koch appointed Mr. Ward police commissioner, and he served for more than five years, facing challenges including a crack epidemic that brought with it a huge surge in addiction, homelessness, murder, theft, robbery, and gang warfare; and

Whereas, Mr. Ward achieved national visibility by becoming one of the nation's first promoters of community policing; and

Whereas, Under his leadership, the NYPD increased the number of African American officers by 17 percent, Latino officers by 60 percent and female officers by an astonishing 85 percent, without the mandate of legislation or affirmative action policies; and

Whereas, Mr. Ward earned a reputation for uprightness and candor, in part by accepting responsibility for police brutality when officers tried to impose a curfew in Tompkins Square Park in 1988; and

Whereas, The City of New York would do well to honor one of its most distinguished and pioneering public servants who, through his dedication to fairness and justice, transformed the city's landscape in terms of crime, race relations, and the increased opportunity for an increasingly diverse police force to serve the community; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on New York City to rename the Manhattan Detention Complex located at 125 White Street after Benjamin Ward, the City's first black Police Commissioner.

JCG  
12/02/09  
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