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****PRESS RELEASE****

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Tourist Helicopter Regulations Move Forward in City Council

Environmental Protection committee hearing on bills introduced by Council Members Menchaca, Rosenthal, and Chin marks the first time that legislation will be heard on limiting helicopter noise

CITY HALL – This afternoon, the City Council’s Committee on Environmental Protection will hear testimony on legislation by Council Members Carlos Menchaca, Helen Rosenthal, and Margaret Chin to regulate the tourist-helicopter industry in New York City and improve quality of life for residents across the City.

For the first time, residents will be able to voice their concerns on the record before the City Council, the City’s Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), and industry officials. This marks the first time that legislative action is presented before the City Council on helicopter noise.

“Today’s hearing represents an important commitment on the part of this City Council to address this loud concern and to stand in solidarity with New Yorkers and elected officials at all levels of government who have been diligently advocating for sensible solutions to this problem. Today, in fact, is transformative because it is the first that this issue is given air time at a hearing, with a piece of legislation, and with all of our City watching. This solution is one that we hope will continue to be supported by our colleagues in government, and New Yorkers alike because it addresses real environmental and quality of life issues created by this industry. I thank Council Members Rosenthal and Chin for their continued support in this fight” **said Council Member Carlos Menchaca, prime sponsor.**

"Today we take a stand against the relentless noise of helicopters that plague my district every day. On some days helicopters fly overhead 18 times an hour, up and down the Hudson, and the noise pervades the park, the streets, and even people's homes. I am grateful to Council Members

Carlos Menchaca and Margaret Chin for our collaboration on this issue and to Environment Committee Chair Costa Constantinides for giving this legislation a hearing. Our residents must have a voice as we move forward in working with the administration and the helicopter industry," **said Council Member Helen Rosenthal, co-prime sponsor.**

"For the first time, New Yorkers dealing with the persistent and growing problem of helicopter noise have the opportunity to voice their concerns in an official forum. These men, women and children have the right to live, work, and go to school in a city free from the incessant noise of tourist helicopters, along with the fumes that emanate from unnecessary helicopter take-offs and landings from the Downtown Manhattan Heliport in my district," **said Council Member Margaret Chin, co-prime sponsor.** "I ask that my colleagues in government hear their pleas for action and support our legislation to clear the skies over our homes, parks and waterways of tourist helicopter flights. I would like to thank Council Members Menchaca and Rosenthal for joining me in this fight to improve the quality of life for thousands of New Yorkers."

"Today's hearing is a crucial first step in solving a problem which the City has long ignored and indeed created – the horrible noise and air pollution from nonessential tourist helicopter flights operating out of City-owned Downtown Heliport," **said John Dellaportas, president of Stop the Chop NYNJ.** "City Councilmembers Menchaca, Rosenthal and Chin are to be commended for putting people first and wealthy private interests second."

"Today's hearing represents a triumph for community residents that for too long have been plagued by these tourist sightseeing helicopters. The noise and air pollution, the health effects, the disturbance to everyday life and livelihoods of millions of New Yorkers for too long have been ignored and today's hearing and support from multiple elected officials in all levels of government shows that it will no longer be tolerated. New York City will no longer allow this assault on citizens in the form of these sightseeing helicopter tours." **said Craig Abruzzo, Vice President of Stop the Chop NYNJ.**

The issues around tourist helicopter flights are well documented both by local groups, including Stop the Chop NYNJ, and by national policy and advocacy organizations like the National Resources Defense Council who offer in their report, *Needless Noise: The Negative Impacts of Helicopter Traffic in New York City and the Tri-State Region*, that indeed helicopters are unnecessarily causing stress on residents in our area.

At the center of constituent concerns is the creation of noise pollution around waterfront communities, most prominently in Brooklyn and Manhattan. For that reason, the legislation being heard today seeks to regulate tourist helicopters to limit noise pollution. Police, fire, news, and charter helicopters will be unaffected by the legislation.

The legislative package, which includes two bills, will do the following:

- **Int. 859-2015** would prohibit the operation of Stage 1 and Stage 2 tourist helicopters—the loudest and most polluting helicopter types in use—on city-operated heliports.

- **Int. 858-2015** would prohibit the operation of Stage 3 tourist helicopters on city-operated heliports, subject to approval by the United States Secretary of Transportation

"I have long called for an end to the incessant nuisance posed by the high volume of tourist helicopter traffic over our homes, parks, schools and workplaces," **said Congressman Jerry Nadler**. "We should not be protecting a single tourist experience at the expense of the quality of life and safety of New York residents along the tourist helicopter flight paths. Thank you to Councilmembers Rosenthal, Chin and Menchaca for their leadership in introducing legislation to address this problem, and thank you to Councilmember Constantinides and the Committee on Environmental Protection for holding today's hearing."

"Helicopter noise has greatly affected the quality of life for Brooklyn and Manhattan residents and these flights also raise serious safety concerns. It is long past time to reinstate a ban on tourist helicopters over New York City. I applaud Council Members Menchaca, Rosenthal, and Chin for putting forth these sensible proposals to reduce helicopter noise that disrupts our community," **said Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY)**.

"I strongly support New York City Councilmembers Carlos Menchaca, Helen Rosenthal, Margaret Chin and others for standing up for residents on both sides of the Hudson who are plagued by the non-stop buzzing of helicopters overhead," **said U.S. Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ)**. "Residents want these tourist helicopters grounded and they deserve relief from the incessant noise and pounding headaches. The threat to public safety is very real and very troublesome, and this commonsense bill attempts to protect the people both in the air and on the ground. Solving this problem will take a unified effort at all levels of government, and I'm pleased that the New York City Council is joining in the fight to improve public safety and the lives of our constituents. The New Jersey State Legislature is already considering legislation to ban tourist helicopter flights and I applaud the New York City Council for taking this important step."

"Manhattan is home to more than 1.6 million people -- so when sightseeing helicopters buzz over our streets, a handful of people are inflicting a ton of extra noise and pollution on tens or even hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers," **said Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. "Thank you to my colleagues in the Council for moving this legislation forward today."

"My constituents deserve quiet and peace of mind in their homes—but how can that be when they have mayhem in the skies directly overhead at all hours of the day and night? Homeowners in my district have reported to me witnessing helicopters flying no more than a quarter mile from each other, in opposite directions, and no more than 200 feet above their homes! The noise and menace they pose are a nuisance, and one that should not be tolerated. Int. 858 and Int. 859, and Reso. 892, which will reduce noise caused by sightseeing helicopters, will start to address these issues. Helicopter operators must be made to honor the 1999 noise reduction agreement, which required that aircraft flying in between New Jersey and the Downtown Heliport fly entirely over a water route. Stronger enforcement of this rule is one of my top priorities," **said Council Member Debi Rose**.

"Today we are taking steps aimed at reducing the noise pollution our residents endure from tourist helicopters. Unlike other helicopters used for news coverage and emergencies, tourist helicopters are the loudest and most polluting types, and for this reason, our legislation is needed", **said Councilman Vincent Gentile**. "I am happy to lend my support to this measure and I look forward to the day needless noise and pollution from above is eradicated."

"Let's be clear: no neighborhood impacted by tourist helicopter noise has ever found it acceptable -- that's why the problem has been shifted to a single heliport," **said State Senator Daniel Squadron**. "But, the headache is still just as pounding as it was when Giuliani banned them from the east side. Tourist choppers in the middle of the city make no sense and should be banned once and for all. I thank Councilmembers Chin, Menchaca, and Rosenthal for introducing these pieces of legislation, as well as Congress-members Nadler and Velázquez for their long-term partnership on this issue."

"New York may be the city that never sleeps, but that shouldn't be because of noisy tourist helicopters outside our windows. The harm caused by these helicopters from noise and air pollution far outweighs any benefit to the city. I thank Council Members Menchaca, Rosenthal, and Chin, as well as their colleagues, for taking steps to ban the noisiest choppers from our skies," **said State Senator Liz Krueger**.

"For too long, my constituents along the West Side have been subjected to low-flying tourist helicopters in their communities. Curbing the use of tourist helicopters on city-operated heliports is an important step toward the goals of reducing noise and air pollution in our dense urban environment. I'm grateful to my colleagues Council Members Menchaca, Rosenthal, and Chin for their leadership on this issue that will greatly improve quality of life conditions for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers, including those who seek the solitude of Hudson River Park," **said State Senator Brad Hoylman**.

"New Yorkers are already besieged by near-constant noise from honking cars and deafening trains, to commercial truck traffic and perpetual construction. The people have had enough," **said Assembly Member Linda B. Rosenthal**. "While we are largely forced to accept much of this inescapable noise, we can do something to stop the humming of tourist helicopters flying way too low over and through our residential communities. I look forward to working closely together with my colleagues to stop the chop and protect our communities from incessant helicopter noise."

"The never-ending attack on Downtown Brooklyn's quality of life by the tourist helicopters is unacceptable. As a city we need to work together to limit the amount of noise caused by tourist helicopters in our skies, to meet the federal noise reduction standards. I thank my friends in the City Council for submitting important legislation that will lead us in the right direction," **said Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon**.

"While helicopter businesses provide jobs and contribute to our state's economy, the quality of life of New Yorkers must be respected," **said Assembly Member Aravella Simotas**. "I look forward to a solution that ensures that helicopter noise no longer disrupts the lives of my neighbors in Astoria."

“These helicopters are disruptive, unnecessary, dangerous, and destructive to both our environment and our quality of life,” **said Paul Rieckhoff, a Battery Park City resident, founder and CEO of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, and a first responder.** “On fair weather days, helicopters fly by in close to 30 second intervals. At one point, I’ve counted five different aircraft overhead our community at the same time. This is completely unacceptable. I stand with the leaders from Stop The Chop NYNJ and over two dozen elected officials to call on our city to stop this madness and stand with the families of our community.”

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