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Rosenthal Calls for a Dynamic 311

Under proposed legislation, 311 would notify residents by email or text message of status updates and City inspector visits

Today Council Member Helen Rosenthal introduced legislation ([Int. 1051-2016](#)) to expand 311, New York City's non-emergency hotline, to notify residents by phone or email of status updates to their 311 complaint and the arrival date and time of a City inspector.

Detailed Feedback on 311 Complaints

Currently, 311 provides minimal information on the status of a 311 complaint; the options are either "pending" or "closed." 311 provides no description of the outcome of the case to the complainant. For example, if a tenant complains of mold and 311 lists the case as "closed," it is unclear if the inspector issued an order to the landlord to correct the issue or if he or she simply did not see a problem.

The bill would align New York City with other major U.S. cities that already provide detailed descriptions of 311 complaints including Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Minneapolis, and Boston.

Status Updates by Email or Text Message

While residents can use their 311 complaint number to track their complaint online or over the phone, the burden is on the resident to follow up. Council Member Rosenthal's bill would allow residents to opt in to real-time updates about their 311 complaint by email or text message. The updates would include a complete description of the action taken, whether the service request was resolved, and if not, an explanation and a contact number for further information.

Notice of City Inspector Visits

Tenants who file 311 complaints are currently not informed when a city inspector will arrive at their building. This leaves tenants with a difficult choice: stay home from work or school and wait an unknown number of days for the inspector to arrive or risk missing the inspector's visit. If the inspector arrives when the tenant is not home, the inspector cannot access the building.

Council Member Rosenthal's bill would notify residents of the date and time to expect a visit by a city inspector in response to their 311 complaint. The change would dramatically narrow the window that a complainant should expect to stay home from work or school to give the inspector access to his or her building.

This bill would notify the complainant of inspections by city agencies, including the Fire Department (FDNY), the Department of Buildings (DOB), the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), and the Office of Special Enforcement (OSE). The City's Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT) would implement the changes to 311.

"When New York City launched 311 in 2003, it consolidated over 40 help lines, made it easier for New Yorkers to access City services, and increased the accountability of City agencies. My bill would keep residents informed of actions the City is taking in response to their 311 complaint, and it would be of particular use to tenants facing issues like mold, heat, hot water, noise, air quality, and unsafe conditions -- all of which usually require a violation issued by a city inspector to get fixed. These changes will minimize calls to 311 for status updates and help City government serve residents more effectively," said **Council Member Helen Rosenthal**.

"Updates from 3-1-1, including a heads-up on when an inspector will arrive, will tremendously enhance 3-1-1's usefulness to New Yorkers," said **Manhattan Borough**

President Gale A. Brewer. “The 3-1-1 system was a revolution in connecting people with government to fix problems and address complaints, but we’re not done. We should always be leveraging modern technology and management systems to make government more transparent, responsive, and effective.”

"New Yorker who make the effort to reach out to 311 should not have the additional burden of checking in with 311 on their complaints. This bill will help tens of thousands of New York City residents, and we applaud this effort," said **Harvey Epstein, Director of the Urban Justice Center Community Development Project.**

"While 311 is a great tool to quickly alert the City to existing problems, determining the status of a complaint is unnecessarily cumbersome. The proposed 311 legislation by Council Member Rosenthal brings greater transparency to the 311 system and allows residents to follow the progress of their complaint in real time." said **Sarah Desmond, Executive Director of Housing Conservation Coordinators.**

"This bill would go a long way toward ensuring that tenants know when to expect inspectors after filing complaints with the City by calling 311. Tenants will then be better able to make sure they are at home and can provide access to inspectors, which in turn will allow the City to address housing-related problems and conditions more efficiently. In addition, the bill would ensure that more tenants receive information about the status of their complaints – information that is often of great importance or urgency to the tenants but which all too many tenants at present do not have," said **Shafaq Islam, Project Director of the Goddard Riverside Law Project.**

"NYC 311 is one of NYC's greatest resources. This bill would add one more transparency feature. We are very excited about proactive services, and we look forward to this bill getting us one step closer to real-time proactive 311 notifications," said **Noel Hidalgo, BetaNYC's Executive Director.**

"A 21st century government must keep pace with people's lives by taking full advantage of technology to improve service delivery. Common Cause/NY supports CM Rosenthal's efforts to make government more responsive, and urges the Council to pass this valuable legislation," said **Susan Lerner, Executive Director of Common Cause/NY.**

"Council Member Rosenthal’s proposed legislation to provide residents with detailed updates concerning their 311 complaints would help streamline the system and provide more transparency regarding the status of complaints. Oftentimes, tenants are faced with the challenge of finding this information online or by phone, which is not easily obtainable. This legislation would increase the efficiency of the 311 system for everyone involved," said **Marti Weithman, Supervising Attorney, MFY Legal Services.**

"This important bill will fix the most frustrating aspect of the 311 system by requiring the City to account for outcomes of complaints. This reform is long overdue and we urge its prompt enactment," said **Michael McKee, Treasurer of the Tenants Political Action Committee.**

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