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Council Bill Would Expand Residency Rights for Most Tracks DC 37 Upgrade

By DAVID SIMS



City Councilman Bill de Blasio May 20 introduced a bill that will ease residency requirements for all civilian city employees not covered by the law enacted in February for District Council 37 members.

Mr. de Blasio's bill requires workers to live in the five boroughs for two years, and then allows them to move to six nearby counties in the state.

"These workers deserve the right to make their own decisions about where they want to live based on what is best for them and their families," Mr. de Blasio said in a statement.

The Chief-Leader/Michel Friang

Mayor Objects to 2-Year Wait

A MATTER OF EQUITY: Communications Workers of America Local 1180 President Arthur Cheliotis tells a City Council hearing that all civilian employees should have the eased residency rights granted to members of District Council 37 earlier this year.

At a Civil Service and Labor Committee hearing on May 21, Labor Relations Commissioner James F. Hanley reiterated Mayor Bloomberg's objection to the two-year limit being imposed.

"The two-year service requirement

was not part of our collective-bargaining discussions with the unions," Mr. Hanley stated. "We support what we agreed to, and we live up to our agreements."

The Mayor's contract deals with DC 37 and other unions starting in mid- 2006 would have eased residency requirements without imposing any restrictions, and also included a clause allowing the Mayor to extend the break to other employees, including managers. He vetoed the DC 37 residency bill because of the two-year requirement, but the Council overrode him and enacted the bill.

"Our agreement is actually better than what this bill calls for," Mr. Hanley said. He noted that "if you removed the two-year requirement and inserted the clause," the Mayor's Office would support Intro. 992.

'Important to Provide Choices'

Union leaders covered by the bill expressed their support at the hearing, however. "This is the end step of what has been a time-consuming and complicated process," said Teamsters Local 237 President Gregory Floyd. "With the problem of affordable housing, it is important to provide choices to my members. This bill allows that to happen."

"The concept that it is permissible for most of our co-workers to come in from other places and earn a living but it is not permissible for people who choose other public service careers to live where they choose is unfair and unacceptable," said Communications Workers of



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America Local 1180 President Arthur Cheliotis. "We urge the committee and entire City Council to pass Intro. 992."

"It has to be corrected, or else the next time [unions] are across the table from the city, they won't feel safe," said Municipal Labor Committee Chair Harry Nespoli. "A deal is a deal."

Some union leaders still noticed problems with the legislation. Organization of Staff Analysts Chairman, Bob Croghan said that even if Intro. 992 was passed, "there's still a few employees covered by the original [residency] law, and that is just plain wrong."

'75% of Loaf Beats None'

Civil Service Bar Association President Frank McCaffrey admitted that the two-year requirement was "more or less something we're settling for," but added, "75 percent of a loaf is better than absolutely no loaf."

Managerial Employees Association Executive Director Linda Barnes said that even though unionized titles would be covered by the law, the managerial and confidential employees she advocates for would not be. "It's only fair that managers receive the same consideration," she said, noting that some employees might turn down promotions if it meant they had to move into the city.

Council Members at the hearing all noted their support for the bill. Civil Service Chair Miguel Martinez said that after the DC 37 residency restriction was lifted, "we haven't seen people leaving in large numbers."

"The choice of where you live is a fundamental right in this country," added Councilman Larry Seabrook of The Bronx. "I stand firmly and entrenched behind this bill."

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