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Council Enacts Residency Law Over Mayor's Veto Eases Restriction for DC 37

By DAVID SIMS



The Chief-Leader/Pat Arnow

A LONG ROAD TO LEAVE TOWN: City Council Speaker Christine Quinn says of the 31-month gap between Mayor Bloomberg's agreeing to ease residency requirements for District Council 37 members and the enactment of a modified bill over his veto, 'It wasn't really a delay as much as it was evolution and discussion.' Looking on is the bill's sponsor, Council Member Robert Jackson.

The City Council Feb. 11 voted to override Mayor Bloomberg's veto of a bill that eases residency requirements for District Council 37 members, with Speaker Christine Quinn saying that she was willing to consider requests from other unions to pass similar legislation covering their members.

The bill requires DC 37 members to live and work in the five boroughs for two years before gaining the right to move to six neighboring counties in the state. The union had originally signed a contract with the Mayor in 2006 that included a residency change without the two-year requirement, as did other civilian unions that are not covered by the Council's bill, two reasons the Mayor listed in his statement of disapproval for the veto.

Will Take Other Unions' Requests

Ms. Quinn, in announcing enactment of the new law over the Mayor's veto to reporters, hinted that other unions could get similar deals. "Any matter

that gets raised by a municipal labor union in the City of New York will be given consideration by the City Council," she said when asked if she would be listen to calls from other unions, such as Teamsters Local 237.

She also restated her objection to original City Council legislation that would have offered immediate easing of residency restrictions to all civilian employee unions covered by the pattern contracts signed beginning in 2006. "The way the original bill was written, it would have taken away a power that this Council now holds," she said. "Making residency changes is a matter that is presently a twostep process: you negotiate, and you legislate. It is a matter that cannot be put in place without legislation. I am never going to give away the Council's legislative powers on this or any other matter."

Ms. Quinn also rejected the Mayor's claim that the bill would undermine future contract negotiations with municipal unions. "It doesn't in any way affect the process that exists," she said, explaining that although it had taken the City Council well over two years to adjust and vote on the residency provision in the 2006 contract, procedure had been followed. "It wasn't really a delay as much as it was evolution and discussion," she said.

'Helped City Residents Compete'

Councilman Robert Jackson of Manhattan, who crafted Intro. 837 as a compromise to the earlier Council bill that immediately lifted residency constraints, said that he was pleased the bill had made it. "By overriding the Mayor's veto and requiring that DC 37 employees complete two years of service in New York City, we help the city residents compete for these jobs," he said. "This legislation will allow each individual DC 37 member to make the best decision for his or her own family."

DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts said in a statement that her members would welcome the unanimous override. "While we never expected a mass exodus from New York City, we have always been acutely aware of our members' concern over the shrinking stock of affordable housing," she said. "Several years ago it even came to my attention that several hundred of our members were homeless and living in shelters ... there are also a number of our members over 60 years of age who live with roommates in order to meet their monthly rent and

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stay in the city."

'A Major Step'

"While we have attempted to address many of these problems with a first-in-the-nation, city-assisted housing program and our unique Municipal Employees Legal Services program, the magnitude of the housing problems meant that something else needed to be done," she continued. "Today, the City Council has taken a major step in addressing a very important problem faced by the men and women who devote their lives to making sure this city runs smoothly."

Motor Vehicle Operators Local 983 President Mark Rosenthal said in a phone interview that it had been "a long fight". "We didn't endorse Freddy Ferrer for Mayor [in 2005], because he was one of the guys who put the [previous] residency bill into place," he said. "It's a major blue-collar issue, and we're glad it got passed...it's been eight years."

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