



THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

****PRESS RELEASE****

Contact: Vladimir Martinez (212) 788-7373; vmartinez@council.nyc.gov [CM Menchaca]
Stephanie Buhle (646) 647-4395; sbuhle@council.nyc.gov [CM Rosenthal]
Paul Leonard (212) 788-7259; pleonard@council.nyc.gov [CM Chin]

**EMBARGOED UNTIL:
Thursday, July 23, 2015**

**COUNCIL MEMBERS INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TO REGULATE TOURIST
HELICOPTER INDUSTRY**

Bills to be introduced on Thursday will limit noise pollution caused by the growing number of sightseeing flights over our neighborhoods and parks

CITY HALL – This afternoon, Council Member Carlos Menchaca, Council Member Helen Rosenthal, and Council Member Margaret Chin—along with several of their Council colleagues—will introduce legislation that will regulate the tourist helicopter industry in New York City to reduce noise and air pollution for New Yorkers who live and use public parks along the tourist helicopter routes. Council Members have partnered with groups, including Stop the Chop NYNJ, to highlight the quality of life and environmental issues presented by this largely unregulated sector of the tourist industry.

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

1. Prohibit the operation of Stage 1 and Stage 2 sightseeing helicopters—the loudest and most polluting helicopter types in use
2. Prohibit the operation of Stage 3 sightseeing helicopters, subject to approval by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation

The issues around tourist helicopter flights are well documented by both local groups and by national policy and advocacy organizations such as 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 helicopters are unnecessarily causing stress on residents in our area.

One focus of concern among residents affected by tourist helicopter flights is noise pollution around waterfront communities, most prominently in Brooklyn and Manhattan. For that reason, the legislation that is introduced today seeks to limit the type of aircraft used by helicopter operators to include only those that do not cause excessive noise pollution. Helicopter flights essential to public safety, including those operated by police, fire, and other emergency services, will be unaffected by the legislation.

“The role of government in ensuring the health and safety of our residents—and our environment—is not up for negotiation. With this legislation, we are making clear to New Yorkers that we’ve heard their concerns, we’ve done our homework, and we’re prepared to act responsibly on their behalf. The truth is

that helicopter traffic is producing noise pollution in our City, and is having negative impacts on the lives of thousands. I'm proud to stand with my Colleagues in government, and with advocates and community members to speak with one voice on this issue," **said Carlos Menchaca, prime sponsor of legislation.**

"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 back down the Hudson, and the noise pervades the park, the streets, and even people's homes. We are fed up, and we demand action," **said Council Member Helen Rosenthal, co-prime sponsor of legislation.**

"Our constituents demanded that we do something about the incessant number of tourist helicopter flights over our neighborhoods and parks, and with this legislation, we are taking action to address those concerns. These bills represent a huge step towards our common goal of clear skies free of the hundreds of helicopters that circle our homes, streets, and parks every fair weather day. I am proud to join my Council colleagues to fight against the noise pollution caused by sightseeing helicopters that have negatively affected the quality of the lives of our constituents for far too long," **said Council Member Margaret Chin, co-prime sponsor of legislation.**

"NYC offers tourists more experiences than anywhere else on earth Tourists would never permit nonstop low-flying sightseeing flights over their own homes, schools, businesses and parks. We are introducing this legislation to address a longstanding health-impacting, quality of life issue that affects New Yorkers just as much as it would affect our visitors," **said Claire Silberman, Stop the Chop NYNJ.**

"My office has received far too many complaints from people who are suffering from hearing loss, cardiovascular problems, and mental health issues as a result of helicopter noise in their neighborhood," **commented NYC Public Advocate Letitia James.** "Though they may be fun tourist attractions, sightseeing helicopters are disruptive to the daily routines of many New Yorkers and significantly impact quality of life. We need to regulate tourist helicopters and protect our communities, so that all New Yorkers can rest easy in their homes."

"New York is a tourism capital, and we celebrate that -- but 8.5 million New Yorkers live here, and deserve protection from noise and air pollution," **said Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer.** "Those of us representing Manhattan and Brooklyn have fought to limit the nuisance of this helicopter traffic for years, and I hope the legislation introduced today spurs progress for the residents who deserve cleaner air and quieter skies."

"Today, I am proud to stand with Councilmembers Menchaca, Chin and Rosenthal, along with my colleagues in government, to support the proposed legislation that would prohibit the noisiest and most disruptive tourist helicopters from operating out of the City-owned downtown heliport in Manhattan," **said Congressman Jerrold Nadler.** "For the last few years, I have advocated for a ban on these tourist helicopters from the downtown heliport in Manhattan due to the constant barrage of noise and its negative impact on residents' quality of life. The tourist helicopter industry is largely unregulated -- their flights are loud and constant, endangering tourists and disturbing the peace in neighborhoods from Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx, Staten Island and New Jersey. Such a disruptive interference in residents quality of life is simply unacceptable; it must be addressed by all levels of government and I am glad the Council is taking steps to help fix this public problem. "

"For too long, these helicopter flights have plagued residents of Brooklyn and Manhattan with unwanted and unnecessary noise. We must continue working together to address this issue and end this noise pollution," **said Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY).**

“For years, residents of Brooklyn Heights, DUMBO, Vinegar Hill and other waterfront neighborhoods in my district have put up with the incessant noise, disruption and pollution caused by helicopter tours. Tourism is a vital part of New York City’s economy but it shouldn’t come at the cost of the health and wellbeing of its residents. I am proud to support these bills in order to restore some measure of peace and quiet to the skies of New York Harbor,” **said Council Member Stephen Levin.**

"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."

"As chair of the Council’s Waterfronts Committee, I am committed to ensuring that our city’s waterfronts can be enjoyed by residents and tourists alike, but too many waterfront neighborhoods are negatively affected by excess noise and air pollution from sightseeing helicopters. In 1999 – the turn of the last century – Staten Island was promised that flights would no longer fly over neighborhoods but be diverted over the Verrazano Bridge and New York Harbor; this has not happened. As a result, it is clear to me that for the peace and quiet of my constituents, the downtown Manhattan Heliport must be closed and we must have greater regulation over this industry," **said Council Member Debi Rose.**

"Helicopter noise is a quality of life issue across my district and the city. The constant impact in neighborhoods is simply not worth it," **said State Senator Daniel Squadron.** "I've long pushed to eliminate tourist helicopters from the Downtown Manhattan Heliport, along with Congressmembers Nadler and Velazquez, Borough President Brewer, and Councilmembers Chin and Menchaca and my colleagues. I will continue to work with colleagues to stop the chop."

"In New York City, noise and pollution can often seem like necessary facts of life. But that doesn’t mean there shouldn’t be reasonable limits on the completely unnecessary racket and air pollution caused by a select few tourists taking helicopter rides. I thank Council Members Menchaca, Rosenthal and Chin, as well as their colleagues, for moving to ban the noisiest helicopters from our skies, and helping New Yorkers and our guests enjoy our beautiful waterfront in peace," **said State Senator Liz Krueger.**

“I represent the most heavily impacted communities of DUMBO and Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn Heights and Cobble Hill. Residents are stressed and sickened from the relentless whirr of helicopters flying overhead; and not only their quality of life but their health is at stake. Stress from noise pollution disrupts sleep and thought patterns, and repeated exposure is known to be unhealthy. The cost to my constituents is too high. I applaud the sponsors of this legislation for proposing a realistic and workable plan for regulating our skies,” **said Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon.**

"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 Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal (D/WF-Manhattan).** "While we are largely forced to accept all 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 with the de Blasio Administration and my colleagues to stop the chop and protect our communities from incessant helicopter noise"

“The heliport at Pier 6 is a large and increasing problem. It the most significant single source of noise in Manhattan Community Board 1. This reduces the value of the City's investment in Battery Park, Governor's Island and the East River Esplanade. With over 50,000 take offs and another 50,000 landings per year, safety is a major concern in our densely populated district with many tall skyscrapers. The

fumes compound the problem. This is unacceptable for those that live, work and visit downtown," **said Catherine Hughes, Chair, Manhattan Community Board 1.**

"People won't stop visiting New York City just because they can't take a helicopter ride. Helicopters cause more harm to our quality of life than any tourism revenue figures could justify. The City should be more responsive to those of us who live and work here every single day. After all, we vote here and make up the City's tax base," **said Craig R. Hammerman, District Manager, Brooklyn Community Board 6.**

"From Red Hook to Hamilton Heights, the constant helicopter noise is ruining the quality of life for millions of New Yorkers. It is also destroying more than a billion dollars' worth of public investments in city, state and federal parks and historic monuments like Governors Island, the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, the Historic Battery, Brooklyn Bridge Park and Hudson River Park. This bill will help protect some of the city's and the country's most valuable public resources," **said Connie Fishman, Executive Director, Governors Island Alliance**

"Every day, all day, those of us who live and work on the Upper West Side are bludgeoned with noise from tour helicopters. It is reported that 200 to 300 of these tour flights pass overhead each day. Their ceaseless, overbearing racket pervades the entire Upper West Side, and shatters the peace of our neighborhoods where we live and work. This is an assault by noise, and it must stop," **said Cheré Campbell, Upper West Side resident.**

"As a proud resident of Battery Park City and a combat veteran, I ask for your assistance and leadership in ending the scourge on our neighborhood that is relentless tourist helicopter noise. These helicopters are disruptive, unnecessary, dangerous, and destructive to both our environment and our quality of life. It's gotten worse and worse every month--especially in the last year. And now, it's become truly ridiculous. Last weekend, as our family attempted to enjoy a gorgeous summer day, dozens of these absurdly raucous tourist helicopters loudly buzzed past our building (and the entire neighborhood) at low altitude, non-stop. One after the other, hour after hour, they flew by in close to 30 second intervals. At one point, I counted five different aircraft overhead our community at the same time. This is completely unacceptable. Helicopter noise is a major quality of life issue for all Manhattan residents that the Mayor should work hard to remedy as soon as possible. It's about noise pollution, the environmental impact and a legitimate security concern given our proximity to Ground Zero. I served a combat tour with the US Army in Iraq. And I can tell you without question that the helicopter noise here in Battery Park City is significantly worse than it ever was in Baghdad. And as a combat veteran and 9-11 First Responder, I find it especially troubling that the overall welfare of our community is being compromised so a few tourism companies can make a buck. I stand with the leaders from Stop the Chop NYNJ and over two dozen elected officials in calling on the Mayor to stop this madness and stand with the families of our community. You must too. As leaders for our community, it is your duty to push relentlessly on this issue in defense of our families. We need the Mayor to lead on this issue as quickly and as aggressively as possible. Like countless other residents in this neighborhood, I stand ready to support you however I can," **said Paul Rieckhoff, Stop the Chop member.**

"I am a 20+ year resident of Battery Park City. Since 9/11 our waterfront parks have been despoiled by incessant helicopter buzzing overhead. Hundreds of flights a day, all day long, 365 days a year, the flights never end. There is never a moment of quiet in our parks. It is as if we permanently live on an Air Force base. All for a handful of joy-riding tourists engaged in disaster tourism. We are all indebted to Councilwoman Chin for standing up for her constituents and the environment over the moneyed interests who run these helicopter tours. Thank you," **said John Dellaportas, Stop the Chop member.**

“Eliminating tourist flights over Hudson River Park has enabled Park users and its neighbors to enjoy better air quality and reduced noise since 2010,” **said Gregory Boroff, Executive Director of Friends of Hudson River Park.** “While we understand the value of helipads in New York City, Friends of Hudson River Park is proud to support initiatives that protect our Parks and greenspaces from unnecessary air and noise pollution.”

“We moved New York Harbor School to Governors Island in 2010 because it represented the best possible place in the city for teaching and learning centered on and around New York Harbor. Our six, state-approved, marine-focused Career and Technical Education programs require our teachers and students to be out on the water whenever the weather permits. Unfortunately, the school is directly in the flight path of the tourist helicopters that take off and land in Lower Manhattan and the noise from the helicopters makes it virtually impossible for Harbor School students to hear their teachers much less concentrate on their work. A ban on these flights would significantly improve the learning environment at New York Harbor School and for the dozens of other schools that are finally reconnecting to their shared Harbor,” **said Murray Fisher, Founder, New York Harbor School.**

CONTACT: Vladimir Martinez (212) 788-7373; vmartinez@council.nyc.gov [CM Menchaca]
Stephanie Buhle (646) 647-4395; sbuhle@council.nyc.gov [CM Rosenthal]
Paul Leonard (212) 788-7259; pleonard@council.nyc.gov [CM Chin]

###