

# New York City Council Watch

2008 Human Rights Report Card  
December 10, 2008

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★  
The 2008 Human Rights Report  
Card aims to provide reliable  
and accessible information on  
the performance of City Council  
representatives in protecting  
and advancing the basic human  
rights of New Yorkers

Complete results can be found  
at the centerfold within  
★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## **About HRP**

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The Human Rights Project (HRP) at the Urban Justice Center works to hold the New York City government accountable to universally accepted human rights laws and standards. Our methods include education and training, organizing, human rights documentation, and policy advocacy. HRP is one of a growing number of organizations in the United States working to apply globally accepted human rights standards to domestic social policy.

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The 51 members of the New York City Council are elected to protect the interests of all New Yorkers. As the primary law-making body of the City, and with the power to approve the City's budget, the City Council makes decisions that affect the lives of New Yorkers on a daily basis.

Like every governmental body, the City Council has a duty to protect the basic human rights of its constituents. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

Health, food, housing, education, work, freedom of expression, and freedom from discrimination are some of the human rights that are not always protected or advanced by the decisions City Council makes—and when they are, many New Yorkers do not hear about the good work of the Council in order to take advantage of the stronger protections available.

**The Human Rights Report Card aims to provide reliable and accessible information on the performance of City Council representatives in protecting and advancing the basic human rights of New Yorkers in 2008.**

## Human Rights R Us

The bread and butter issues that New Yorkers deal with everyday are all human rights concerns, and the New York City government has a duty to respect, protect and advance these rights as a matter of policy.

A range of human rights are recognized by the Constitution of the United States, and various independent state constitutions. New York State's Constitution, for example, recognizes the right to education, as well as a government obligation to provide aid, care and support to the needy.

Whether recognized or not under domestic law, all people are entitled to basic human rights by virtue of their humanity. These basic rights were codified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) sixty years ago, an effort spearheaded by a famous New Yorker: Eleanor Roosevelt. Human rights have been further developed in a number of universally accepted treaties and laws, some of which the United States has ratified.

As we commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), it is our expectation that New York City will remain the trailblazer it has historically been in defending human rights. The Human Rights Project compiled this report card in the hopes of furthering this goal. **Complete results can be found at the centerfold within.**

## Methodology

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Council Members were assessed using the four criteria detailed below:

### 1. Votes on Key Legislation

The Human Rights Project consulted advocates with expertise in housing, health, education, workers rights, environmental justice, criminal justice, juvenile justice, at-risk youth, domestic violence, women's rights, immigrant rights, LGBTQ rights, and racial justice in order to identify key legislation that was passed, or introduced and is pending a vote at City Council in 2008. Council Members' votes on key legislation were assessed on whether or not they advanced human rights.

Legislation was determined to advance or violate human rights by measuring its mandate against universally accepted standards drawn from human rights law. For example, a Council Member's vote for a bill that will expand access to information about available health services is a positive indicator of his or her support towards advancing the right to health. The human rights standards used for each issue area can be found on our website at [www.hrpujc.org/reportcard2008.html](http://www.hrpujc.org/reportcard2008.html).

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>%</i>
1) Votes on Key Legislation	70%
2) Sponsorship on Intros	15%
3) Advocate Opinion	10%
4) Questionnaire	5%

In this year's report card, we did not count excused absences in assessing a Council Member's record. Abstentions were awarded half the points of a vote.

### 2. Sponsorship on Legislation Pending a Vote (Introductions or Intros)

The overwhelming majority of bills voted on in 2008 passed with the unanimous support of all Council Members present. However, this does not indicate that Council Members are uniform in all their positions. Some very important bills that are introduced in City Council languish for years without coming up for a vote, often because they do not have the strong backing of the Speaker or the Mayor. However, bills can be accelerated through the legislative process if a significant number of Council Members sponsor and push the bill. In order to obtain a more complete measure of a Council Member's support for specific issues, we have included their sponsorship on pending legislation by allotting extra points to sponsors of a bill.

### 3. Advocate Opinion

Advocates with expertise in different issue areas were consulted in order to identify important pieces of legislation and intros in 2008, as well as which Council Members have been the most supportive or detrimental to progress on the issues that the advocate organization works on. Council Members were assigned points based on these consultations.

### 4. Human Rights Questionnaire

A human rights questionnaire was sent to every Council Member, and Council Members were allotted points based on their responses. A sample of the questionnaire is available at [www.hrpujc.org/reportcard2008.html](http://www.hrpujc.org/reportcard2008.html). Council Members also received letters about the report card, as well as follow-up calls.

## Overview of the City Council's 2008 Human Rights Record

The City Council had a mixed human rights record in 2008. While it scored some relatively commendable points for passing legislation that **advanced the equal enjoyment of rights for vulnerable groups** including youth, women, immigrants, LGBTQ New Yorkers, people of color, and the elderly (**an average of 76%**), it scored much lower when its record on **advancing democracy was assessed—an average of only 35%**—and lower still on its record for **protecting the rights of workers**, a dismal 7%.

The defining issue of the year was **term limits**, and **twenty-nine Council Members scored an F** for their vote in favor of extending the maximum number of terms that elected officials can run for office from two to three (each term is four years). New Yorkers had previously voted to keep a two-term limit in two different public referenda. The term limits bill, which was introduced at the request of Mayor Bloomberg, was passed in just **two weeks**, and despite major public opposition. By deciding the matter legislatively, 29 Council Members chose to circumvent a public referendum as had previously been the case.

Other bills that generated more than one negative vote are: the Green Carts bill (Int. 665-A); the tenant protection against discrimination based on lawful source of income bill (Int. 061-A); and the electronic equipment recycling bill (Int. 728). These bills are also included in our 2008 report card assessment. Please see our website for a complete list of bills voted on in 2008 including other bills that generated some disagreement.

This year, Council Members were assessed on the following issue areas: **democracy, advancing equality, environmental justice, health, housing, and workers' rights**. We excluded issue areas that did not have related legislation passed in 2008, or that are largely legislated at the state or federal levels. Issues that are notably absent from this report card include **education, criminal justice, juvenile justice, and child welfare**. Please see our website for more information on these issues.

**The Human Rights Project would like to congratulate the highest scoring Council Members for their legislative work in advancing human rights.**

### Top Ten Council Members

- 1<sup>st</sup> **Letitia James** (*Brooklyn, District 35*) 
- 2<sup>nd</sup> **Charles Barron** (*Brooklyn, District 42*) 
- 3<sup>rd</sup> **Tony Avella** (*Queens, District 19*) 
- 4<sup>th</sup> **Melissa Mark-Viverito** (*Manhattan, District 8*)
- 5<sup>th</sup> **Rosie Mendez** (*Manhattan, District 2*)
- 6<sup>th</sup> **Hiram Monserrate** (*Queens, District 21*)
- 7<sup>th</sup> **Jessica Lappin** (*Manhattan, District 5*)
- 8<sup>th</sup> **John Liu** (*Queens, District 20*)
- 9<sup>th</sup> **David Weprin** (*Queens, District 23*)
- 10<sup>th</sup> **Gale Brewer** (*Manhattan, District 6*) and **Vincent Gentile** (*Brooklyn, District 43*)

## New York City Council Watch: 2008 Human Rights Report Card

	DEMOCRACY	Term Limits	Voter Registration	ADVANCING EQUALITY	Elder Abuse	Equal Pay	Immigration Services	Community Impact	Human Rights in Govt.	Runaway Youth	School Safety Act	ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE	Electronic Waste	Asthma-Free Act	HEALTH	Child Health-Plus	Green Carts	Clinic Access	Services for HIV	HOUSING	125 <sup>th</sup> Rezoning	Tenant Protection	Tenant Harassment	Foreclosure Counsel	Fair Housing	Rent Stabilization	WORKERS RIGHTS	Willets Point	Vendor Licenses	Paid Family Leave	AVERAGED TOTAL (of all six categories)	RANK
Addabbo (32)	84	✓	s	70	✓	✓						70	✓		70	✓	✓			47	X	✓	✓				0	X			56.8	12
Arroyo (17)	0	X		70	✓	✓						70	✓		84	✓	✓	s	s	47	X	✓	✓				7	X	s		46.3	33
Avella (19)	80	✓		73	✓	✓					s	80	✓		42	✓	X		s	85	✓	✓	✓			p	70	✓			71.6	3
Baez (14)	0	X		70	✓	✓						70	✓		70	e	✓			47	X	✓	✓				na	e			51.5	24
Barron (42)	80	✓		85	✓	✓		s			s	70	✓		77	✓	✓		s	80	✓	✓	✓				88	✓	p		80	2
Brewer (6)	70	✓		75	✓	✓		s		s		84	✓	s	70	✓	✓			47	X	✓	✓				7	X		s	58.8	10
Como** (30)	70	✓		70	✓							na			na					na							0	X			46.6	32
Comrie (27)	0	X		75	✓	✓		s	s			70	✓		77	✓	✓	s		47	X	✓	✓				0	X			44.8	35
de Blasio (39)	70	✓		81	✓	✓		s				70	✓		77	✓	✓	s		47	X	✓	✓				0	X			57.5	11
Dickens (9)	0	X		75	✓	✓			s		s	70	✓		70	✓	✓			42	X	✓	✓				0	X			42.8	38
Dilan (37)	0	X		73	✓	✓					s	68	✓		70	✓	✓			23	X	X	✓				0	X			39	40
Eugene (40)	70	✓		73	✓	✓					s	70	✓		70	✓	✓			47	X	✓	✓				0	X			55	14
Felder (44)	3	X		74	✓	✓					s	3	X		71	✓	✓			24	X	X	✓				1	X			29.3	45
Fidler (46)	14	X	s	85	✓	✓				p	s	70	✓		77	✓	✓	s		47	X	✓	✓				0	X			48.8	29
Foster (16)	0	X		78	✓	✓		s	p		s	84	✓	s	77	✓	e	s		35	X	✓	e				na	e		s	54.8	15
Garodnick (4)	70	✓		73	✓	✓					s	70	✓		42	✓	X	s		57	X	✓	✓				0	X			52	23
Gennaro (24)	70	✓		70	✓	✓						70	✓		42	✓	X			47	X	✓	✓				0	X			49.8	27
Gentile (43)	84	✓	s	73	✓	✓		s				70	✓		70	✓	✓			56	X	✓	✓	s		s	0	X			58.8	10
Gerson (1)	14	X	s	81	e	✓	s	s		s	s	84	✓	s	84	✓	✓		s	57	X	✓	✓	p		s	-5	X			52.5	20
Gioia (26)	70	✓		70	✓	✓						70	✓		70	✓	✓			47	X	✓	✓				0	X			54.5	17
Gonzalez (38)	3	X		80	e	✓					s	75	✓		89	✓	✓	s	s	52	X	✓	✓				10	X	s		51.5	24
Ignizio (51)	70	✓		70	✓	✓						0	X		70	✓	✓			23	X	X	✓				na	e			46.6	32
Jackson (7)	2	X		92	✓	✓		s	s		p	88	✓	s	86	✓	✓	s	s	49	X	✓	✓				4	X			53.5	18

James (35)	94	√	s	94	√	√	s	s	s	s	94	√	s	84	√	√	s	s	71	X	√	√	s	p	s	49	A	s	p	81	1
Katz (29)	0	X		70	√	√					70	√		35	√	X			47	X	√	√				0	X			37	43
Koppell (11)	14	X	s	75	√	√	s			s	84	√	s	84	√	√	s	s	56	X	√	√	s	s		0	X			52.2	22
Lappin (5)	73	√		75	√	√					75	√		82	√	√	s		52	X	√	√				10	X		s	61.2	7
Liu (20)	94	√	s	91	√	√	s	s	s	s	84	√	s	49	√	X	s	s	47	X	√	√				0	X			60.8	8
Mark-Viverito (8)	70	√		90	√	√		s	s	s	84	√	s	84	√	√	s	s	64	X	√	√		s	s	17	X	s		68.2	4
Martinez (10)	0	X		85	√	√			s	s	70	√		49	√	X	s	s	47	X	√	√				7	X	s		43	37
McMahon (49)	70	√		70	√	√					84	√	s	70	√	√			47	X	√	√				0	X			56.8	12
Mealy (41)	15	X	p	78	√	√			s	s	70	√		70	√	e			40	X	√	e		s	na	e	s		54.6	16	
Mendez (2)	70	√		75	√	√			s	s	95	√	p	77	√	√			66	X	√	√		s	s	7	X	s		65	5
Monserate (21)	84	√	s	78	√	√		s	s	s	84	√	s	49	√	X	s	s	75	X	√	√		s		10	X			63.3	6
Nelson (48)	0	X		70	√	√					70	√		77	√	√	s		28	e	√	√	s			0	X			40.8	39
Oddo (50)	70	√		70	√	√					0	X		70	√	√			23	X	X	√				0	X			38.8	41
Palma (18)	70	√		73	√	√		s			84	√	s	na	e	e	s	p	40	X	√	e		s		0	X			53.4	19
Quinn (3)	0	X		68	√	√					70	√		78	√	√	p		55	X	√	√				-2	X			44.8	35
Recchia (47)	0	X		75	√	√		s		s	84	√	s	70	√	e			35	X	√	e				0	X			44	36
Reyna (34)	0	X		73	√	√		s			84	√	s	77	e	√	s		52	X	√	√		s		14	X	s	s	50	26
Rivera (15)	0	X		70	√	√					70	√		70	√	√			47	X	√	√				na	e			51.4	25
Sanders (31)	14	X	s	81	√	√		s	s	s	70	√		77	√	√	s		52	X	√	√	s			0	X			49	28
Seabrook (12)	14	X	s	73	√	√		s			70	√		84	√	e	s	s	35	X	√	e				7	X	s		47.2	30
Sears (25)	0	X		70	√	√					70	√		77	√	√	s		47	X	√	√				0	X			44	36
Stewart (45)	14	X	s	76	√	√	p			s	84	√	s	77	√	√	s		56	X	√	√	s		s	7	X	s		52.3	21
Vacca (13)	0	X		70	√	√					70	√		35	√	X			23	X	X	√				0	X			33	44
Vallone (22)	0	X		65	√	√					70	√		70	√	√			23	X	X	√				0	X			38	42
Vann (36)	0	X		84	√	√		p	s	s	70	√		70	√	√			47	X	√	√				0	X			45.2	34
Weprin (23)	84	√	s	73	√	√			s		70	√		84	√	√	s	s	52	X	√	√	s			0	X			60.5	9
White (28)	0	X		85	√	√	s	s	s	s	70	√		77	√	√	s		47	X	√	√				na	e			55.8	13
Yassky (33)	0	X		75	√	√				s	84	√	s	77	√	√	s		47	X	√	√				0	X			47.2	31

**Legend**

√ = Vote for Human Rights	e = Excused Absence	na = Not Applicable*	A = Abstention
X = Vote against Human Rights	s = Sponsor	p = Lead Sponsor	

\*Council Member not present for any votes on the issue. \*\*Council Member Como was elected to office in June 2008.  
 \*\*\* Boroughs are color coded: Bronx (orange), Brooklyn (yellow), Manhattan (light green), Queens (green), & Staten Island (blue).  
 \*\*\*\*Numeric score for each category was calculated by: averaging the votes of all legislation in that category (weighted at 70%) + average of sponsorship on legislation pending a vote (15%) + advocate opinion (10%) + questionnaire responses (5%). The latter two criteria are not shown in the table above. Legislation pending a vote is italicized. The averaged total score is reached by adding the numeric score for each category and dividing by 6 except for Council Members Baez, Como, Foster, Ignizio, Mealy, Palma, Rivera, and White, where not all six categories applied.

## Summary of Legislation including Resolutions and Intros

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**Advancing Democracy:** The defining legislative moment of City Council in 2008 came with the vote to change the term limits law; and 29 Council Members failed democracy by voting in favor of extending term limits. In addition to the term limits bill, a bill introduced before City Council on voter registration was used to measure Council Members' support for democratic principles:

»**Term Limits. Int. 845 (Passed: 10/23/08. Intro: 10/07/08)** ☹: Int. 845 changes the number of consecutive terms that New York City's elected officials can serve as mayor, public advocate, comptroller, borough president and council member from two to three full terms. The bill set the interests of the Mayor and several term-limited Council Members in opposition to the wishes of the New York City public who had expressed their desire for a two-term limit previously by passing two public referenda on the subject. By circumventing a public vote on the issue, the bill violates the human rights principle that the basis of government authority is the will of the people.

»**Voter Registration for Youth. Int. 690 (Intro: 1/30/08)** ☺: Int. 690 would require the New York City Department of Education to provide postage paid voter registration forms to students within thirty days of their eighteenth birthday. Previously the department was only required to provide voter registration forms to students receiving diplomas. The bill promotes increased access to the political process.

**Advancing Equality:** New York City has one of the most comprehensive civil rights laws in the nation, protecting against discrimination based on: race, age, national origin, alienage or citizenship status, gender (including gender identity and sexual harassment), sexual orientation, disability, marital status, partnership status, arrest or conviction record, and status as a victim of domestic violence. In housing, the law also provides protections against discrimination based on any lawful source of income. The elimination of all forms of discrimination is a key step to ensuring equal enjoyment of rights by all groups. The following bills were used to measure Council Members' support in advancing equal enjoyment of human rights:

»**Elder Abuse Prevention. Int. 737 (Passed: 9/04/08. Intro: 3/12/08)** ☺: Int. 737 requires senior centers contracting with the City to undergo trainings, establish resource networks, run formal education campaigns, and post helpful information regarding domestic abuse of the elderly. The elderly are particularly vulnerable to abuse, and this law would promote their rights to health, and to be free from degrading treatment and violence.

»**Equal Pay. Res. 896-A (Passed: 6/12/08. Intro: 6/05/07)** ☺: Res. 896-A calls for state passage of the New York Fair Pay Act, which would decrease pay disparities based on sex and national origin. Over the past decade, several draft laws have passed the State Assembly but none have made it out of committee for a vote in the Senate. The resolution draws attention to the need to include language providing for equal pay for comparative work in addition to identically titled occupations. This resolution calls for equal treatment in employment based on sex and national origin.

»**Transparency in Immigration Services. Int. 720 (Intro: 2/27/08)** ☺: Int. 720 would require immigration service providers to post bilingual signs notifying customers where they are not licensed attorneys or accredited by the Board of Immigration Appeals to give legal advice. The signs would also include information on the client's right to cancel any contract with the provider, as well as information on where to anonymously complain against the provider. This law promotes equal access to information for immigrants who are particularly disadvantaged by language barriers.

»**Community Impact Reports. Int. 801 (Intro: 6/29/08)** ☺: Int. 801 would require that any city agency or affiliate complete a thorough assessment of the impacts of any city-subsidized economic development project on the surrounding community, prior to granting its approval. The assessment would include: the number of businesses and employees who would be displaced; the demographic characteristics of those negatively affected tracking race, economic-status, gender, and age; the number and types of jobs to be produced with a breakdown of the range of remuneration offered; and the number of positions that would be filled by individuals from the surrounding community. This bill would promote equal treatment in development projects.



»**Human Rights in Government Operations. Int. 731 (Intro: 3/12/08)** ☺: Int. 731 would require the City to ensure that policies that have a disproportionate negative impact based on gender, race, sexual orientation, and other protected classes are corrected to guarantee the full enjoyment of human rights by all New Yorkers. City agencies would be required to conduct a human rights analysis to proactively identify and propose solutions to policies and practices that have the unintentional consequence of discriminating in the areas of employment practices, allocation of funding and human resources, and public service delivery. The bill would require city agencies to consult with people directly affected by discriminatory policies in assessing and developing solutions to them. By addressing the disparate negative impact of policies on historically vulnerable groups, the bill would advance equality.

»**Runaway Youth Statute Amendment. Res. 1227 (Intro: 1/30/08)** ☺: Res. 1227 calls on both the state and federal government to amend their homeless youth statutes by, among other modifications: raising the age limit for youth who can access services from 21 to 24 years; recognizing LGBTQ youth and clarifying shelter and transitional housing gender regulations in order to facilitate services to the sizeable LGBTQ community; eliminating the 18-year age cap for acceptance to transitional living programs and other measures to increase the breadth of services available to homeless youth. The resolution calls for promotion of basic equality rights of youth particularly LGBTQ youth of color who are disproportionately represented in New York City's homeless population.

»**School Safety Act. Int. 816 (Intro: 8/14/08)** ☺: Int. 816 would expand the jurisdiction of the Civilian Complaint Review Board to include complaints against abusive police behavior in schools by School Safety Agents. The bill would require the Department of Education and Police Department to report to the City Council quarterly on school safety matters. The bill would identify and remedy increased police involvement in non-criminal, non-violent incidents affecting the quality of education of youth, and the disproportionate impact of school safety policies on students of color.

**Environmental Justice:** Environmental Justice links social injustice to environmental problems. The City Council generally has a better record on broader environmental legislation than it does on environmental justice concerns, which tend to have a disproportionate negative effect on low-income communities and communities of color. The following bills were used to assess Council Members' record on environmental justice:

»**Recycling Electronics. Int. 728 (Passed: 3/26/08. Intro: 3/12/08)** ☺: Int. 728 would require the collection for recycling, reuse and safe handling of electronic equipment in the City. Many landfills are located in communities of color, and workers are at risk of poisoning from the chemicals that leak from electronics. Electronic equipment can also pollute ground water. The bill would effectively promote a healthier environment for all, and in particular communities of color.

»**Asthma-Free Housing Act 2008. Int. 750 (Intro: 4/16/08)** ☺: Int. 750 would require owners of any multi-family homes to inquire yearly as to whether any resident has been diagnosed with asthma, chronic pulmonary obstructive disease, or lung cancer. Owners would be required to inspect for indoor allergen hazards in units where a susceptible person resides and provide notice of the owner's obligations to residents under this Act. The bill would classify indoor allergens as a violation of the housing code, and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene would be required to report on the cost of implementation, violations, and asthma rate. Asthma rates are particularly high in low-income communities of color, and this bill would promote a healthier living environment.

**Health:** The City Council's record on advancing the right to health was generally positive in 2008. In addition to passing good legislation promoting health, the Council released a number of reports identifying health gaps in the City, and initiated campaigns to promote access to health care and healthy food. A major blemish on this record was the absence of meaningful oversight by the Council in monitoring a pattern of neglect and abuse at the Kings County Hospital, which unfortunately resulted in the death of Esmine Green in June 2008. Ms. Green died on the psychiatric emergency-room floor at Kings County Hospital where she had been ignored by staff for over an hour after she

collapsed. The hospital had been sued a year prior for negligence and abuse, yet a Committee hearing was never held on the issue. The following bills were used to measure Council Members' support in advancing the human right to health for all New Yorkers:

»**Child Health-Plus Information. Int. 293 (Passed: 1/30/08. Intro: 4/26/06)** ☺: Int. 293 requires the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to provide informational pamphlets on public health insurance program options to all registered or licensed day care facilities. The bill mandates day care facilities to make the pamphlets available to all individuals who appear in person to register a child at the day care center, and onsite throughout the year. The bill promotes access to healthcare and health-related information.

»**Green Carts. Int. 665-A (Passed: 2/27/08. Intro: 12/19/07)** ☺: Int. 665-A authorizes an additional one thousand street vendor permits over two years for stands or vehicles selling fresh fruits and vegetables in neighborhoods where consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables is low. While there were some questions on whether there was a low supply of fresh fruits and vegetables in the target neighborhoods, the bill nevertheless promotes access to healthy food and proper nutrition, an important determinant of health.

»**Clinic Access. Int. 826 (Intro: 9/24/08. Hearings held: 11/18/08)** ☺: Int. 826 would prohibit any person from obstructing access to reproductive health care facilities, and would make such conduct subject to criminal and civil penalties. This bill would protect women's rights to reproductive health.

»**Services for HIV/AIDS Patients. Int. 691 (Intro: 1/30/08)** ☺: Int. 691 would expand services offered to all people infected with HIV, including those who are asymptomatic. Previously services were only available to people with clinical or symptomatic HIV. This bill would promote increased access to appropriate health services.

**Housing:** The lack of adequate housing in the City is one of the biggest issues facing New Yorkers. The Council has passed some good tenant protection laws, however they have also supported development projects that will forcibly displace residents from their homes and communities, including through the use of eminent domain. The City Council has final say on land use issues. The following bills were used to measure Council Members' support in advancing human right to adequate housing:

»**125<sup>th</sup> Street Rezoning. Res. 1408 & 1409 (Passed: 4/30/08. Intro: 4/16/08)** ☺: Res. 1408 and 1409 approved a rezoning project known as the River to River plan. The River to River plan is designed to encourage the development of retail and commercial establishments, arts space, and affordable housing on 125<sup>th</sup> Street, Harlem's main street. The number of affordable housing units offered by the plan does not meet the needs of the community. The plan generated extensive community opposition as residents and local businesses feared being priced out of housing; a fear that has already begun to materialize.

»**Tenant Income Discrimination. Int. 61-A (Passed: 3/26/08. Intro: 2/15/06)** ☺: Int. 61-A would make it illegal for landlords to refuse to offer available units to current or potential tenants because of any legal source of income including holders of section 8 vouchers. The bill protects the rights of low-income tenants to affordable housing.

»**Tenant Harassment. Int. 627 (Passed: 2/27/08. Intro: 10/17/07)** ☺: Int. 627 prohibits landlords from harassing tenants and acting in such a way as to pressure them to surrender or waive any rights in relation to their occupancy. The bill also provides legal remedies to tenants who are harassed by landlords. The bill protects the rights of tenants to legal security of tenure in housing.

»**Counsel for Foreclosing. Int. 682 (Intro: 1/30/08)** ☺: Int. 682 would provide legal counsel to renters or occupant owners who are subject to eviction or foreclosure proceedings including in rental dwellings, co-ops, condominiums, in certain one or two family homes, and/or if a minor is living with the family. The bill would protect the right to legal security of tenure in housing.

»**Fair Housing. Int. 685 (Intro: 1/30/08)** ☺: Int. 685 would promote measures to fight segregation in residential housing on the neighborhood, borough, city and regional levels, and would attempt to counteract the current impact of past discrimination and segregation. The bill would promote equal access to housing.

»**Rent Stabilization Online. Int. 698 (Intro: 2/13/08)** ☺: Int. 698 would require the New York City Department of Buildings to provide online access to the rent control or rent stabilization status of an apartment or building. Each borough superintendent would be required to keep a record of all applications regarding construction, alteration and removal of buildings, and all city and state departments would coordinate to share and publish such information. The bill would promote the right to affordable housing.

**Labor:** 2008 saw the approval by City Council of the Willets Point Development Plan; a plan that generated a lot of debate with respect to its proposed displacement of small business owners and workers in the auto industry. Council Members have been assessed based on that vote, as well their support on some bills that would improve conditions at the work place.

»**Willets Point Development Plan. Res. 1687, 1688, 1689, 1690, 1691, 1692) (Passed: 11/13/08. Intro: 11/13/08)** ☺: Res. 1687-1692 approved rezoning plans for redevelopment of Willets Point, a 62-acre expanse that has been home to auto-related businesses near Shea Stadium over the past few decades. The plan was approved by a majority of Council Members despite initial opposition echoing community concerns about the inadequate provision of affordable housing in the new plan, and the forcible displacement of approximately 1700 workers in about 250 small tenant businesses using eminent domain. Primarily as a result of the active involvement of Council Member Hiram Monserrate<sup>1</sup>, the approved plan offers 35% of its new units as affordable housing, and \$3 million for the displaced businesses. The City has also agreed to negotiate a deal to aid the displaced workers and tenant businesses. While the final plan is much better than what was initially proposed, the process did not meet human rights standards for forcible displacement by neglecting to engage in genuine consultation with the Willets Point tenant businesses and workers; neglecting to provide them with adequate notice of the proposed evictions; and failing to ensure legal aid and remedies.

»**Vendor Licenses. Int. 324 (Intro: 5/10/06. Hearing: 11/14/08)** ☺: Int. 324 would increase the maximum number of full-term permits issued to general and food cart vendors to 25,000 and allow for a yearly increase once that maximum number has been reached. The current cap on permits issued by the City forces thousands of vendors to work without a license. Increasing the number of permits issued would improve access to work opportunities for New Yorkers particularly immigrants, who comprise the majority of street vendors, and enable them to provide an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families.

»**Paid Family Leave. Int. 805 (Intro: 7/23/08)** ☺: Int. 805 would require private employers to provide paid leave to any employee who takes leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act, totaling twelve work weeks during any 12-month period. Employers may use accrued sick leave and/or paid disability leave for the purposes of providing paid family leave. The bill would improve work conditions for New Yorkers and enable more workers—particularly women who have historically born the disproportionate burden for care work—to balance family needs with employment.

<sup>1</sup> We would have preferred to give Council Member Monserrate more credit for his important work in negotiating a better deal for the tenant businesses and workers of Willets Point, and on affordable housing, but we have not yet developed reliable criteria to assess Council Members across the board for their work on improving legislation.