



Press Release

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The Right to the City Alliance Calls on NY City Council to Listen to the Voices of the People and Oppose Term Limits Extension

*Organizations Fighting Gentrification in New York City go to City Hall to
Make their Voices Heard*

New York City—Members of grassroots community organizations that are part of the Right to the City Alliance gathered on the steps of City Hall to call on the New York City Council to oppose Bloomberg's efforts to extend term limits and to take this decision to the public for a vote.

The Right to the City alliance opposes the mayor's attempts to extend term limits. The group believes that Bloomberg is using the current economic crisis as a scare tactic to make sweeping, undemocratic changes to the structure of New York City government. In addition, members of the alliance feel that the Mayor is ignoring public opinion and looking only to elite businessmen and media tycoons and to advise him on drastic public policy change.

"If Bloomberg is our Mayor again, where is there room for change? If we continue with business as usual, it's the same ideas and methods that aren't working for most New Yorkers, especially LGBTQ youth. Things are getting worse for everyone, so we really need someone different in office who will truly represent the people. And Bloomberg definitely doesn't represent me, especially when he tries to buy his way out of democracy," said John Blasco a member of FIERCE.

While the bleak economic outlook does call for sweeping changes in New York City, the group believes these changes should be rooted in community decision-making and should empower those who are struggling to make ends meet, not billionaires. The group believes that those who live and work in New York City, especially low-income people and people of color, should have a right to shape how the city works and the decisions that are made there.

Agnes Rivera, a public housing resident and member of Community Voices Heard said, "Bloomberg hasn't done anything for low-income people and his policies have been displacing people. We need to put this decision back to the people to see what they want and what is best for them. Just because Bloomberg has a lot of money, he should not be able to do whatever he wants. It is time for change."

New York City voters have twice approved the term limits that are now in place. If the law remains unchanged, Bloomberg and nearly two-thirds of the City Council will be forced out of office in 2009. Bloomberg is seeking to change the term limits law to allow elected officials to serve three, four-year terms rather than two. The City Council has introduced legislation to extend term limits and Bloomberg has said he would sign this legislation if passed. The City Council is holding public hearings today and Friday about the legislation.

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Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum and council members Bill de Blasio and Letitia James, both Brooklyn Democrats, on Thursday filed a complaint with the Conflict of Interest Board. The claim stated that laws bar the council from voting on a bill that would result in their personal gain. Other organizations including the Working Families Party, New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) and Common Cause also oppose the term limits legislation.

Throughout his tenure as Mayor, Bloomberg has promoted development policies that have benefited the rich and threaten to displace the poor. From the Lower East Side to Harlem, to the South Bronx, Right to the City groups have been pushing back against the Mayor's economic development, housing and homelessness policies to ensure that the voices and priorities of the community are included in the City's public policies.

“As a grassroots organization made up of low-income people, we are here today because a billionaire Mayor is ignoring the wishes of working-class and poor people who have voted twice in favor of term limits. This is indicative of a growing trend throughout the United States where the wealthy and powerful are using their money and influence to ignore the wishes of the great majority of the people. This is supposed to be a government of, for and by the people, not one that ignores us to cater to the wealthiest one percent,” said George Bethos, leader of VOCAL NY-Users Union and NYCAHN

Right to the City (RTTC) NYC is an alliance of grassroots, membership-based, organizations in low-income, immigrant and other communities of color throughout New York City working to support grassroots-led social change. RttC NYC's mission is to build a united response to gentrification and the drastic economic, social and infrastructure changes being imposed on NYC communities, and offer a vision for the city that meets the needs of working class people.

RTTC NYC's member organizations include: CAAAV/Chinatown Tenants Union; Center for Community Planning and Development, Hunter College; Center for Social Inclusion; Community Development Project, Urban Justice Center; Community Voices Heard (CVH); Fabulous, Independent, Educated Radicals for Community Empowerment (FIERCE); Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FUREE); Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES); Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ); Make the Road New York (MRNY); Mothers on the Move (MOM); NYC AIDS Housing Network/VOCAL NY Users Union; Picture the Homeless; Pratt Center for Community Development; St. Nick's CDC/UNO; Tenants & Neighbors; WE ACT.