



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Advocating for Faster, More Efficient Graffiti Removal in New York City

THOMAS K. DUANE September 2, 2009

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New Council Legislation Will Allow Faster, More Efficient Graffiti Clean Up in the City

*Speaker Quinn Leads Community in Graffiti Removal in Chelsea*

New York, NY - Speaker Christine C. Quinn today led a group of community members in restoring a vandalized building in Chelsea, where graffiti has long plagued the façade.

Speaker Quinn also announced new Council legislation that will facilitate the removal of problematic graffiti throughout the city. Council Member Gale A. Brewer, the primary sponsor of the bill, and Public Safety Committee Chair Peter Vallone, Jr. and the Mayor's Community Affairs Unit Commissioner Nazli Parvizi joined Speaker Quinn in today's announcement and cleanup, which took place at 245 10th Ave in Chelsea.

The new legislation, an amendment to the current "Graffiti Free" bill, further enables Graffiti Free NYC to remove graffiti from buildings. Currently, in order for residential and commercial buildings to receive free graffiti removal services from Graffiti Free NYC, the building owner must submit a waiver giving permission and allowing the Graffiti Free NYC crew permission to clean the building. With the Council's legislation, instead, a building owner will submit a form to the city only if they wish to keep graffiti on their building or they rather it take it down themselves.

Once a building is identified for graffiti removal, the city will notify the building owner of the planned removal. The building owner will then have thirty five days to opt out of the removal and submit a form to the city requesting the graffiti remain on the building or they will remove themselves.

Like many other community members, the owners of the building expressed great support for this legislation. The owners were previously unaware of the City's free graffiti removal program, and because removing the graffiti themselves would have been costly, they chose not to move forward with the project even though they did not want the graffiti on their building.

Dozens of additional community members have pledged to help with tracking graffiti. The Speaker's office will continue to work with these residents in ensuring clean streets and buildings throughout New York City.

"Today we cleaned a piece of graffiti that has defaced this corner of Chelsea for years. With the help of Graffiti Free NYC and members of the community, we are able to bring beauty back to this block in my neighborhood," said Speaker Christine C. Quinn. "With the new "Graffiti Free" bill, we are now giving more power to the community to keep their neighborhoods beautiful."

"By working closely with local elected officials, community groups, businesses and homeowners, the Mayor's Community Affairs Unit and our partner agencies have been able to identify and remove graffiti from thousands of sites throughout the five boroughs," said Mayor's Community Affairs Unit Commissioner Nazli Parvizi. "This new legislation will help to ensure that the neighborhoods of New York City remain beautiful and vibrant."

"Taggers and defacers start with a big advantage: graffiti is quick and easy to get up, and time consuming and expensive to remove. And despite our best efforts year after year, I recognize that we need a new approach," said Council Member Gale A. Brewer. "Our new and better approach is a simple idea with far-reaching implications: the City would actively engage property owners in gaining authorization to quickly remove graffiti on an as-needed basis."

"This amendment makes my original graffiti bill even easier to enforce and will allow for a greater number of graffiti-free spaces in our city," said Council Member Peter F. Vallone Jr. who authored the original "Graffiti Free" bill.

Launched in 1999, Graffiti-Free NYC has cleaned graffiti from over 27,000 sites - 1,900 of these lie within the Greenwich Village, Chelsea, Hells Kitchen area. So far in 2009, 414 sites have been cleaned in this area. Graffiti-Free NYC encourages everyone to submit their requests by calling 311 or online at [www.nyc.gov/graffitifreenyc](http://www.nyc.gov/graffitifreenyc).

"I strongly support this legislation which improves the ability of our communities to take control over unwanted graffiti," said Senator Thomas Duane. "The Graffiti Free NYC program enhances the quality of life for all New Yorkers. Passage of this bill will improve our ability to reduce the blight of graffiti in neighborhoods across New York City."

"I applaud Speaker Quinn and Graffiti Free NYC on this important step to empower our communities and beautify our city," said Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer. "As New Yorkers, we know how important it is to preserve the unique character of our local neighborhoods. This forward thinking legislation will ensure that our government works for the people of New York and keeps our streets graffiti free."

The Graffiti Free bill, sponsored by Council Member Gale Brewer, was passed by the Council on December 21, 2005. The Public Safety Committee, chaired by Member Peter Vallone, Jr., will hold a public hearing on the amendment to the "Graffiti Free" bill on September 10th.

*SOURCE: Office of New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn*