

## New York City Council Stated Meeting Report

by Administrator  
Thursday, January 30, 2003 12:00 AM

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Every two weeks the New York City Council meets for its Stated Meeting, when the 51 members of the council introduce and pass legislation. As a regular feature, Searchlight covers these meetings and posts a summary of what happened and what bills were passed. The articles are posted by 5 p.m. on the day of the meeting.

### **Stated Meeting** January 29, 2003 **Quote Of The Day:**

"The Department of Employment is currently reviewing a summer youth employment program that represents a 91 percent cut from last years program. They are planning on fewer than 6,000 summer jobs in the city this summer." - Brooklyn Councilmember Lewis Fidler, chair of Youth Services Committee on budget cuts.

### **Meeting Summary:**

Council Speaker Gifford Miller opened the meeting saying it was a day for "good government legislation."

The council voted unanimously to broaden the city's whistleblower laws ( [Intro 63-A](#) ) to include all city employees who report gross mismanagement or abuse of authority; require all city agencies to post government reports online within 10 days ( [Intro 119A](#) ); and revise city regulations on sidewalk cafes ( [Intro 294](#) ). The measure on sidewalk cafes, the council said, would reduce the waiting time in obtaining a permit from more than 200 days to 110 days and make it easier for the Department of Consumer Affairs to take action against restaurants that break the law. "If you violate the law in any way, the city will shut you down," said Queens Councilmember Melinda Katz.

The council also passed a bill requiring the schools chancellor to provide quarterly reports to the council on school construction projects, a measure the mayor's administration said was not necessary. Only one council member - Madeline Provenzano - abstained from the vote.

Two other bills amended the city's campaign finance laws, which offer matching funds for candidates running for city office. The first bill ( [Intro 171A](#) ) clarifies regulations for accepting campaign donations (It passed by a vote of 46 in favor and 3 abstentions.) The second (

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### [Intro 313A](#)

) lets candidates use donations after an election to pay back their debts. One politician who would benefit is former Mayor David Dinkins, who would be able to clear up \$200,000 in old campaign debts under the measure. It passed with 45 "yes" votes and 3 "no" votes.

Republican members, who voted against the measure, said that the campaign finance program should face the same cuts as every other city agency. "I'm just wondering how many of my constituents who find themselves personally or professionally in some sort of debt can call up friends in government and have their debt legislated away," said Minority Leader James Oddo.

A bill that would allow GED and English language classes to count toward work requirements for welfare recipients ( [Intro 93](#) ) was laid over by Speaker Miller. Brooklyn Councilmember Bill DeBlasio, who helped draft the bill, said the speaker has promised a vote on the measure sometime in February.

The council also officially received Mayor Michael Bloomberg's veto of a bill ( [Intro 257A](#) ) that would restrict the use of cell phones in theaters and concert halls. The mayor said the bill would be "virtually impossible to enforce." East Harlem Councilmember Phil Reed said the bill is meant to increase awareness of the issue. "Ringing cell phones and loud, one-sided conversations offer only headaches," said Reed, who expects the council to override the veto.

During the meeting, members also took time out to blast the mayor's and governor's budget proposals. "We have a \$3 billion deficit, and we can't keep increasing parking fines and the fees for birth certificates," said Brooklyn Councilmember Charles Barron. "It's time to do something courageous in Albany."

The next Stated Meeting is scheduled for February 12.