by Alexander Perkins
Wednesday, June 21, 2006 12:00 AM -

At its most recent meeting on June 13th, 2006 , the New York City Council introduced 20 new bills, including efforts to rid the city of illegal guns, cleanup graffiti, lower gasoline taxes, and protect the city's drinking water.

ANTI-GUN LEGISLATION

Mayor Michael Bloomberg has made illegal guns a focus of his second term in office. In April, Bloomberg hosted a summit on the topic for mayors from across the nation, and in recent weeks his administration has been working on new legislation as part of the effort.

"Creating local laws that make enforcement easier and prevention more effective is critical in the fight to keep illegal guns off our streets," said Mayor Bloomberg at a recent press conference.

At the mayor's request, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn and Councilmember Peter Vallone, Jr. introduced four new bills aimed at curbing gun violence in the city.

Intro 362 would require anyone convicted of criminal possession of a weapon to register with a local gun registry, the first of its kind in the country. The legislation would require offenders to report to the police department every six months for four years following a conviction. Failure to comply with the regulation would be a class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in prison.

Intro 363 would require gun dealers to perform physical inspections of their inventory twice each year, doubling the number of inspections required by current law. Supporters hope the bill will aid police officers in investigating gun theft crimes more effectively.

Intro 364 would limit the purchase of handguns in New York City to no more than four in one calendar year. According to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms statistics, multiple firearm purchases are a significant factor in illegal gun trafficking.

Intro 365 would outlaw the possession of firearms that have been painted in order to look like toy guns. In 1999, the City Council passed a law requiring all toy guns to be certain pastel or fluorescent colors so that children and police officers would be prevented from mistaking a toy gun for a real one. However, in recent years, some criminals began using gun coloration kits to make real guns look like toys. This bill would also ban the sale of gun coloration kits used to color guns in the fluorescent hues.

"Last year, over 300 New Yorkers, many of them children, were killed with illegal guns," said Speaker Quinn. "We won't stand by any longer."

The City Council will hold its first hearing on the proposed gun legislation on Thursday, June 29th at 10:00 a.m.

FIGHTING GRAFFITTI

In the 1970s, many of New York City's subways were riddled with graffiti, including elaborate murals that covered entire train cars
. Over the last few decades, the MTA has increased its anti-graffiti budget and implemented new strategies to combat street artists.

Today, however, the city is struggling to respond to resourceful vandals who have abandoned spray paint and are now using a corrosive acid that permanently defaces the windows of subway cars.

Etching acid (hydrogen fluoride) is traditionally used by artists for printmaking, but is also being used to tag plexiglas on subways. Council Member Peter Vallone, Jr. has introduced Intro 380 , which would require a license to purchase and possess etching acid.

The Metropolitan Transit Authority has also pledged $25 million to replace those windows that have already been defaced.

GAS TAXES

With gas prices in New York City well above $3 a gallon , lawmakers are looking for various

ways to reduce gas prices.

Currently, New Yorkers must to pay an 8.75 percent tax of the total sale at the gas pump. Intro 381, introduced by Councilmember David Weprin, seeks to enact "a cents per gallon" flat tax in lieu of the current tax.

"New Yorkers are already under siege by rising gas prices," said Council Member Weprin. "This is only made harsher by the city's unfair form of a percentage tax on the price of gas."

PRESERVING THE CITY'S WATERSHEDS

The New York City water supply provides over 1 billion gallons of clean drinking water to 8 million residents. To ensure its high quality, Councilmember James Gennaro introduced legislation aimed at protecting the Catskill/Delaware and Croton watersheds.

Intro 375 seeks to protect the surrounding land from encroaching developers by adding a "New York City Water Supply Protection Act" to the city's administrative code.

The second bill introduced, Intro 376 , seeks to establish a watershed protection plan to restore and maintain the water quality and integrity of Jamaica Bay. In recent years, Jamaica Bay wetlands have diminished significantly, losing vegetation and wetlands every day.

Â