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****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

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Dromm, Van Bramer, Ferreras, Peralta and Union Officials
from DC 37, Local 768 Demand Funding be Restored to Keep
Pest Control Workers Necessary to Combat Rat Infestation in Queens

Jackson Heights, NY, Friday, September 24, 2010 -- On Friday, New York City Council Members and other elected and union officials demanded that funding be restored to keep the workers necessary to combat the explosion of rat infestations in the Jackson Heights and Woodside communities. The union representing city pest control workers has seen nearly two-thirds of their work force cut by the Mayor and fear the problem will get worse.

"Mayor Bloomberg's decision to cut pest control workers is penny wise but pound foolish," said New York City Council Member Daniel Dromm (D-Jackson Heights). "In the long run it will cost us more if rats take over our community. We are already over infested which is why we decided to call attention to this problem. Now more than ever we need these rat exterminators."

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene which employs these workers, responds to rodent complaints throughout the City and conducts abatement, control and enforcement activities targeting areas with severe infestations.

However, the cuts undermine their ability to stay on top of the issue and conditions conducive to rodents, insects and other pest life have emerged throughout the community. Already, the city has seen an 8 percent increase in rat sightings this year.

"Rats endanger the health and welfare of our residents," said New York City Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer (D-Sunnyside). "Pest control workers are crucial if we are to win the war against rodents. We can't afford fewer exterminations which will only bring more rats in our neighborhoods."

"Pest control defines a civilized society. Cutting back on these valuable city workers will diminish the quality of life for all New Yorkers," said New York City Council Member Julissa Ferreras. "We cannot allow the front line in the war on pests to be ripped apart in the interest of saving a small amount of money."

"The Mayor's decision to ignore the growing rodent and pest problem in New York is penny wise and pound foolish," Senator Jose Peralta, sponsor of the bill and Chair of the Consumer Protection Committee said. He continued, "While I understand that

the City is facing very difficult economic times, the price of ignoring pest control far outweighs the price of combating the problem. The thousands of New Yorkers who are spending thousands of dollars and countless frustrating hours trying to rid their homes and businesses of pests will continue to suffer as the infestations will surely spread."

"Why did the NYC Department of Health slash the number of Pest Control Aides by 63 from 84 when we are being overrun by rats? They're everywhere -- in vacant garbage strewn lots, apartment building basements, subway stations and city parks," said President of Local 768, of the Health Service Employees union, Fitz Reid. "It's no secret that rat infestations breed diseases, including asthma."

The City said the layoffs were needed to save \$1.5 million, but those workers brought in \$6 million in fines and fees.

"You do the math," Reid continued. "Rats endanger our health, lower property values and our quality of life. Pest Control Aides make New York a cleaner, healthier and safer environment. The City needs to rehire all of the laid-off workers and hire even greater numbers of Pest Control Aides now."

DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts also demanded the City rehire pest control aides to fight rats.

"The fact that the City laid off 70 percent of its pest control aides in order to save \$1.5 million when the City Pest Control Aides (CPCA) generated \$6.3 million makes no sense," said Roberts. The fact that these layoffs occurred in spite of a growing rat infestation is outrageous. If that isn't enough, the City took some of the \$1 million dollars concerned City Council members put back in the budget so the CPCA's could be rehired, and diverted it to deal with bedbug infestation that has taken everyone by surprise."

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