

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS

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DECEMBER 8, 2021
Start: 9:12 A.M.
Recess: 9:18 A.M.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING VIRTUAL ROOM 1

B E F O R E: CHAIR ERIC DINOWITZ

COUNCIL MEMBERS: ERIC DINOWITZ
DANIEL DROMM
ALICKA AMPRY-SAMUEL
ALAN MAISEL
PAUL VALLONE

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

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3 SGT. BIONDO: At this time, will all
4 Sergeants start recordings, please?

5 SGT. LUGO: PC recording done.

6 SGT. BIONDO: Recording to the cloud has
7 begun, and good morning and welcome to today's remote
8 New York City Council's vote for the Committee on
9 Veterans. At this time, would all panelists please
10 turn on their videos for verification purposes, and
11 to minimize disruptions, please place all electronic
12 devices to vibrate or silent mode. Thank you for
13 your cooperation. Chair Dinowitz, we are ready to
14 begin.

15 CHAIR ERIC DINOWITZ: Thank you. Good
16 morning and welcome to this hearing of the City
17 Council's Committee on Veterans. Today, the
18 committee will vote on Purposed Introduction 479-A,
19 sponsored by Council Member Dromm which would require
20 the Department of Veteran Services, or DVS, to offer
21 discharge status upgrade assistance and extend city
22 veteran benefits to service members who were
23 discharged due to their sexual orientation, gender
24 identity, or expression or for veterans who identify
25 as LGTBQ, untreated trauma including that resulting

2 from sexual assault which occurred during military
3 service. The committee will also vote on legislation
4 that I sponsored, Proposed Introduction 2354-B which
5 would amend the definition of the term veteran in the
6 city charter to additionally include persons who
7 serve or have served in the active military service
8 regardless of discharge status or time served. This
9 legislation aims to make city benefits and services
10 available to those service members who may have been
11 adversely discharged as a result of unrecognized or
12 untreated physical or mental condition related to the
13 military service. This Bill would also expand the
14 veteran's advisory board from 11 to 13 members, two
15 of whom must be immediate family members, spouses, or
16 domestic partners, survivors, or caregivers of
17 veterans. A veteran's character of discharge can
18 have a profound effect on their entire life after
19 military service. Service members who leave the
20 military with anything other than an honorable
21 discharge, commonly referred to as a bad paper
22 discharge, are often ineligible for many veteran's
23 benefits and services, and may struggle looking for
24 work as dishonorable discharges often suggest to
25 employers the history of crime or unreliability.

2 Upgrading an unjust discharge may lead to greater
3 eligible for federal, state, and local benefits.
4 More opportunities to obtain better employment and
5 housing and even simple vindication. It is our duty
6 as a city to help our veterans where and when they
7 did it, especially when they are disadvantaged
8 because of unfair or discriminatory policies or
9 because of untreated trauma which resulted from
10 military service. Thank you very much to the
11 advocates and impacted individuals who brought
12 attention to these issues and helped shape
13 legislation. At this time, I'd like to turn my
14 colleague, Council Member Dromm to make a statement
15 on his Bill, Intro 479-A.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DANIEL DROMM: Thank you
17 very much. Last month in San Diego, the United
18 States Navy ship, USNS Harvey Milk was christened and
19 launched. LGBTQ plus rights pioneer Harvey Milk, who
20 was, by the way, a New Yorker before moving to San
21 Francisco, served in the Navy during the Korean War
22 and held the rank of Lieutenant Junior Grade, at the
23 time he was forced to accept an other than honorable
24 discharge rather than a court martial for his sexual
25 orientation. Like Milk, so many lesbian, gay,

2 bisexual, and transgender Americans have given so
3 much for this country. Our country responded to
4 their sacrifice in the most disgraceful way. For
5 decades, the military discharged and barred from
6 future service these heroes simply for being who they
7 were. The collateral damage went well beyond the
8 loss of a job. Lives were upended, families were
9 torn apart, victims of witch hunts, driven to suicide
10 and worse. Having anything less than an honorable
11 discharge on their record, prevented many veterans
12 from accessing benefits that could have helped them
13 advance their education and achieve financial
14 stability. Intro 479-A aims to bring a measure of
15 justice to New Yorkers who are LGBTQ Plus veterans.
16 Our city must ensure that no city services are denied
17 to these veterans. My legislation will thus require
18 the New York City Department of Veteran Services to
19 issue certificates of eligibility to guarantee that
20 unjustly discharge of LGBTQ Plus service members can
21 access all city services that they should be able to
22 access. Despite the end of don't ask, don't tell in
23 2011, many LGBTQ Plus New Yorkers do not realize they
24 can and should rectify their service records. My
25 legislation will require the department of veteran

2 services to provide discharge upgrade assistance to
3 those negatively impacted. Critically, the
4 department will be required to widely publicize both
5 this legal help and their certificate of eligibility.
6 I want to thank Speaker Johnson and of course, Chair
7 Dinowitz for recognizing the importance of this issue
8 and for helping to move Intro 479-A forward. Most
9 important, to all the New Yorkers who served this
10 country and then had to fight to have their service
11 and indeed, full surgeonship recognized, I dedicate
12 this legislation. Thank you very much, Chair
13 Dinowitz.

14 CHAIR ERIC DINOWITZ: Thank you, Council
15 Member. I will turn it over to Committee Counsel to
16 take attendance, take roll call.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I believe we have, I
18 took down that we have with us CM Vallone, we also
19 have Council Member Ampry-Samuel. We also have
20 Council Member Maisel, and we have Chair Dinowitz. I
21 think we're good on that. I think now we can take
22 the vote, Chair.

23 CHAIR DINOWITZ: Thank you. Am I calling
24 each member?

1 COMMITTEE ON VETERANS

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN:

3 Committee Clerk, William Martin. I'll conduct the
4 vote now.

5 CHAIR ERIC DINOWITZ: Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: William
7 Martin, Committee Clerk, roll call vote, Committee on
8 Veterans. Items are coupled. Chair Dinowitz.

9 CHAIR ERIC DINOWITZ: I vote yes.

10 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
11 you. Maisel.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ALAN MAISEL: Yes.

13 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
14 you. Vallone.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER PAUL VALLONE: Yes.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
17 you. Ampry-Samuel.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ALICKA AMPRY-SAMUEL: I
19 just wanted to say quickly thank you so much Chair
20 Dinowitz for your leadership. Thank you, Council
21 Member Dromm for such a meaningful Bill. You all
22 know that I have watched, not just the Bills, but
23 just working with military spouses and families for
24 many years, and this is truly meaningful work and I

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2 thank you so much for your leadership, and so with
3 that, I vote I.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
5 you. One moment. Okay, by a vote of four in the
6 affirmative, zero in the negative, and no
7 abstentions, both items have been adopted by the
8 committee.

9 CHAIR ERIC DINOWITZ: Okay, thank you
10 very much and thank you and with that, we can close
11 this committee meeting. Thank you.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date January 27, 2022