



Can Rosie Save NYCHA?

New York Governor Eliot Spitzer last month signed legislation that would increase the shelter allowance provided to public housing authorities serving families on public assistance. According to City Council Public Housing Subcommittee Chairperson Rosie Mendez, the new law covers about 6000 New York City Housing Authority residents.

“The recent shelter allowance gives NYCHA equal treatment with private landlords,” explains Mendez. “Prior to this law, NYCHA received only \$168 per family of four in a two bedroom apartment, while a private landlords got \$450 for the same.”

Will this law quadruple NYCHA’s income from these residents, who comprise 16% of the agency’s overall population?

“It’s going to be phased in,” Mendez says. “So they’ll get maybe \$12 million this year, \$30 million next year...”

But regardless of these infusions, Councilmember Mendez warns that NYCHA is still in bad straights.

“They had a large budget deficit last year, the Mayor and City Council got them \$120 million, that helped, but they’re going to have a deficit every year unless the federal government funds the agency dollar-for-dollar for what it spends. There are 21 thousand units for which the federal government does not give a penny. The state hasn’t given those units money since 1998. The City needs to make these units a permanent part of its budget. We can’t keep giving NYCHA less and expect them to do the same or more in the buildings that they manage.

What’s new with The Public Housing Equal Treatment Act of 2007, which was supposed to guarantee that HUD will include the “orphan” developments?

“What I’m being told is that it may pass in the next presidential administration,” says Rosie Mendez. “But even if it passes now, as long as NYCHA is not funded dollar-for-dollar for all its apartments, there’s still going to be a drain on the authority to manage its 179,000 housing units.”

NYCHA’s funds were cut by a Republican governor. We now have a Democrat in Albany...

“Governor Spitzer this year gave \$3.4 million. That’s a start, it’s not really a lot, but it’s a start.” Then she intimates, “\$3.4 million doesn’t get me surveillance cameras in Vladeck Housing... I need \$3.8 million to put cameras in all of Vladeck...”

Yori Yanover



Councilmember Rosie Mendez (at the Grand Street Settlement public meeting on illegal guns)

