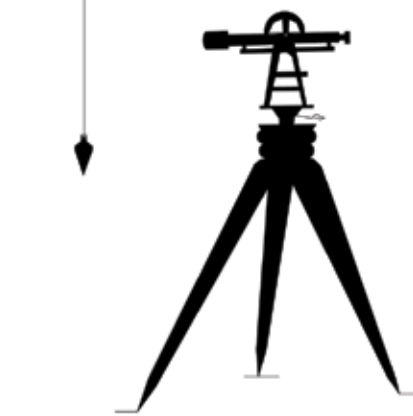


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Curtis Skinner On Politics

Live from New York, It's the City Council:

For the first time in the city's history, City Council hearings will be broadcast live both on TV and the web, according to NYC Media—an arm of the Mayor's office of Media and Entertainment. The meetings will be shown on the city's government television station, NYC gov, and online at council.nyc.gov starting the first of this month.

"Live coverage of City Council hearings is a step in the right direction towards increasing government transparency," said City Council Speaker Christine Quinn in a statement. "By bringing government directly to the people, we are encouraging greater participation by New Yorkers in city government.

This will make New York City the largest municipality to air the hearings live. The announcement comes a few months after the open government bill Intro 29A that required all city agencies to make publicly available all of their data in an accessible format was passed by the Council.

Blue Alert!

Earlier last week, New York Representative Michael Grimm's, (R—Staten Island and Brooklyn), national law enforcement bill unanimously passed the judiciary committee. The National Blue-Alert Act, as it is called, would establish a federal system for local and state law enforcement to communicate with related agencies about violent or fatal attacks against police officers.

The bill aims to increase response times in apprehending violent criminals and was considered a longshot early on. Before clearing this key hurdle, Congress' govtrack.us website gave the bill a 9 percent chance of passage. It was not updated before this paper went to print.

New York State Senator Marty Golden, (R—Bay Ridge), introduced a similar bill in the state's legislature.

"Based upon the success of the Amber Alert for missing children [...] the Blue Alert will provide the means to speed the apprehension of violent criminals who kill or seriously wound local, state or federal law enforcement officers," the bill reads in part. Currently, legislatures around the country are signing similar acts for their respective states.

The New York version hasn't moved from the Finance committee since being referred there in January of this year. But recent attacks against NYPD officers, like the nearly fatal stabbing of an officer in East Harlem, and the success of the national Blue Alert bill may have given the state's version the firepower it needs to pass. Mayoral Control Increasingly under Fire:

The Panel for Educational Policy recently passed the turnaround, (closure, reorganizing of staff and reopening), of 24 schools and 12 co-locations of facilities around the city late last month. And critics from City Hall to Albany have charged that "Mayoral control" of the city schools is a failed policy.

At the public meeting last month, Councilmember Juumane Williams (D—Flatbush) railed against the city's Department of Education, the PEP and the Mayor for steamrolling community opposition to school closures.

"I'm a public school baby," he said, echoed by applause from the hundreds of parents, teachers and students that packed the Prospect Heights Campus auditorium. "I went to Brooklyn public schools from pre-school to masters. [Michael Bloomberg] is Mayor Failure on education."

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Left to Right: John K. Avanzino
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