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***COUNCIL MEMBER LINCOLN RESTLER INTRODUCES LEGISLATION TO
BAN NON-ESSENTIAL HELICOPTER FLIGHTS IN NEW YORK CITY***

***LEGISLATION WOULD REDUCE NOISE POLLUTION AND CLIMATE IMPACT FROM
HELICOPTERS***

Brooklyn, NY -- Today, Council Member Lincoln Restler, along with Council Members Farias, Brewer, Hanif, Avilés, Hudson, Gutiérrez, Marte, and Rivera, introduces key legislation to prohibit non-essential helicopters from operating at heliports owned or operated by New York City, such as ones used for short distance travel and tourism.

“Helicopters disrupt our communities,” said **Council Member Lincoln Restler**. “New Yorkers should not be forced to suffer from noise pollution so a few people can get to the Hamptons or JFK as quickly as possible. More importantly, our City cannot continue contributing to the climate crisis by giving heliport access to companies transporting rich New Yorkers when they could use methods of transportation with a far lower carbon footprint.”

Every month there are approximately 4,000 non-essential flights from City owned heliports. In an average month, Zip, Liberty Helicopters, and HeliNY alone are responsible for more than 1,800 tourist flights from the Downtown Heliport. Companies like Blade operate hundreds of flights daily out of NYC. The nearly 4,000 monthly flights account for a monthly average of more than 50,000 gallons of fuel. One helicopter idling on the heliport [has the same impact](#) as more than 40 cars idling. Helicopter noise is not just severely unpleasant and harmful to the environment - studies suggest it can impact health and cognitive development.¹ There have been a total of 58,657 helicopter noise complaints since 2010 across the City.

There are three active heliports in Manhattan. This legislation would ban non-essential flights from the Wall Street and East 34th Street heliports, which are owned by the NYC Economic Development Corporation. The third heliport, located at West 30th Street, is owned by the Hudson River Park Trust and is subject to State regulations.

The bill’s introduction follows the passage this month of state legislation (S7493A/A8473A) championed by State Senator Brad Hoylman that would create a private right of action for citizens to sue helicopter companies whose flights are unreasonably disruptive. The state bill is currently awaiting the governor’s signature, and the city council legislation would fully ban all non-essential flights. Helicopters used by the NYPD, news outlets, and hospitals would not be impacted by this legislation - though greater oversight in these areas is under active review.

¹ See [this](#) and [this](#) study.



The legislation is being co-sponsored by Council Members Amanda Farias, Gale Brewer, Shahana Hanif, Alexa Avilés, Crystal Hudson, Jen Gutiérrez, Christopher Marte, and Rivera.

“While noise complaints have always been a part of New York City life, the precipitous rise in resident complaints about the often low-flying helicopters have tripled in the past year. The noise pollution caused by these helicopters is a significant health and quality-of-life concern for New Yorkers and we must do something to preserve resident comfort. Thank you to my colleague. Council Member Restler, for advocating for the ban of non-essential helicopter flights across our skies,” **said Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso.**

“We need broad support to enact the federal, state, and local changes needed to eliminate non-essential helicopter traffic, and I look forward to passing legislation with Council Members Lincoln Restler and Chris Marte to bring relief to so many New Yorkers suffering from helicopter-related noise and pollution, particularly in Manhattan. There have already been 9,700 helicopter-related noise complaints made to 311 this year, as of June 1, and 7400 of those came from Manhattan,” **said Council Member Gale A. Brewer (D-06).**

“The hundreds of non-essential helicopter flights that take place every single day over New York City every day present significant environmental harm. These incessant, gas-guzzling trips are not just a nuisance – they are a public health risk. Excessive, unrelenting exposure to noise, from our streets to helicopters overhead, impacts our public, mental and physical health,” **said Council Member Carlina Rivera.** “I am proud to join Council Member Restler in sponsoring this legislation to regulate city-operated heliports, a critical step in ending the noise pollution in our skies.”

“Over the past few years, the proliferation of non-essential helicopter flights have become a daily menace to communities across Brooklyn. Millionaires and the NYPD have clogged our skies and created hazardous noise at the expense of our neighborhoods,” **said Council Member Shahana Hanif.** “Our airspace is not for sale to the highest bidder and should only be available to essential needs of our City. I’m proud to sign on to Council Member Restler’s legislation so our City can take action.”

Organizations like Stop the Chop in New York and New Jersey have worked tirelessly to ban nonessential helicopter usage and regulate our airspace.

“Stop the Chop NY/NJ is a grassroots nonprofit coalition organization with a mission to ban nonessential (tourist and commuter/charter helicopters) from NY’s metropolitan airspace and to close the local heliports to this nonessential helicopter traffic. We thank NYC Council Member Lincoln Restler, and his cosponsors Council Members Farias, Brewer, Hand, Aviles, Hudson, Gutierrez, and Marte, for the introduction of this strong bill, for the opportunity to present at their press conference.



The proliferation of nonessential helicopters flying low in our already congested airspace is a real environmental threat. To improve our air quality and address climate change, NY elected officials have advocated for reducing vehicular traffic, adopting congestion pricing and car-free streets, creating restrictions/caps on for-hire vehicles, improving public transportation, and expanding bike lanes. This new City Council helicopter bill is the next common-sense step toward reducing air pollution and carbon emissions over NYC as fossil-fuel guzzling helicopters (some even still use leaded gas) are one of the least environmentally-friendly modes of transportation.

Furthermore, the stress-inducing, excessive noise pollution created by helicopters harms all those below their paths; this includes the commuter helicopters to the airports and Hamptons as well as the sightseeing/photography tours that hover and circle over our precious neighborhoods, parks and landmarks. Noise pollution is a proven health hazard negatively impacting the cardiovascular and endocrine systems, and reducing cognitive abilities - especially children. That the privileged, wealthy few and a small polluting industry can create such harm just to shave commuting time or simply to take social media photos at the expense of the majority (including numerous environmental justice communities) is the opposite of what we should aspire to in an equitable, democratic system.

Given that NYC has experienced at least 30 helicopter crashes since 1980, some fatal (including the 2019 deadly crash and fire on a midtown high rise rooftop and the 2018 drowning death of five tourists in the East River after their helicopter crash landed), there is good reason to fear for New Yorkers' safety due to the current excess of helicopter traffic over the country's most populous city. Additionally, there is also the real security concern about helicopters' potential use in terrorist attacks (unfortunately, we know from experience, that NYC is a favored target of terrorists).

For these reasons, the status quo is simply unacceptable. It is time we end the Wild West airspace created by the helicopter menace over the NYC metro area. We thank our elected officials for their leadership in fighting for safer, cleaner and more peaceful skies above NYC and we urge Mayor Adams to sign this bill into law."

"Helicopter flights pose a clear threat to our environment, public health, and quality of life," said Lara Birnback, Executive President of The Brooklyn Heights Association. "Brooklyn's waterfront communities have been plagued for years by these noisy and completely unnecessary intrusions into our public spaces, our homes, and our peace of mind. Now the problem has spread to virtually the entire borough, with low-flying and noisy copters ferrying a select few to the airport and the Hamptons. These flights travel directly over cultural treasures like the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and thousands of homes in Flatbush, Crown Heights, and other parts of Central Brooklyn. Noise and air pollution from these tourist and commuter helicopters are now a daily and totally unnecessary burden for hundreds of



Lincoln Restler

COUNCIL MEMBER DISTRICT 33

thousands of New Yorkers. The Brooklyn Heights Association lauds Council Member Restler's bill to ban non-essential flights from the Wall Street and East 34th Street Heliports, and we call on the State to shut down the heliport at W 30th in the Hudson River Park. Action on this problem is long-overdue.”

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