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**TECH CHAIR VACCA TO INTRODUCE OPEN DATA
LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE**

7 new bills will seek to improve existing Open Data Law

September 16, 2015 – New York City Council Committee on Technology Chair James Vacca, along with Council Members Gentile, Cabrera, Torres, Kallos, and Palma, plan to introduce a package of bills designed to improve the existing Open Data Law on Thursday, September 17th. The Open Data Law, passed in 2012, requires the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT) to work with City agencies to post public data online in a centrally accessible location - the Open Data portal - by 2018. DoITT has made considerable efforts to ensure compliance and has succeeded in populating the portal with new data as it becomes available. However, several issues have arisen that require a legislative remedy, ranging from technical standards to overall compliance.

“In total, this package of 7 bills will dramatically strengthen the Open Data Law,” **said Council Member Vacca**. “Each piece of legislation will improve users’ experience, and ultimately, will make a larger amount of data more accessible to all.” Vacca is the lead sponsor of two bills: one that would require an Open Data compliance audit to be conducted by the Department of Investigation (DOI), and another that would ensure the timeliness of agencies’ dataset updates. “It has been an enormous undertaking for DoITT to ensure that agencies are complying with the Open Data Law,” said Vacca. “It is important that we provide both DoITT and the agencies with tools to aid them in compliance, and I believe my bill to bring DOI into that process will help that process. I’ve also found that information on certain agencies’ websites, such as the Department of Buildings, are not always completely in sync with the portal’s datasets, and another bill in this package I have sponsored would close this lapse.”

Additionally, 5 other bills will be introduced, covering additional inadequacies in the existing law. Chair Vacca hopes to hold a hearing on this legislative package, as well as an examination of the Open Data Law and accompanying Open Data Plan, in the near future.

“In our increasingly complex and technological society, expanding access to public data is a critical part of strengthening democracy. The creation and preservation of archives of public data on permits, licenses, and performance evaluations is an important step in building transparency. Since the majority of government data is public data by law, it just makes sense to make this data open and available for the

public to use to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of a wide variety of products, services and programs,” **said Council Member Fernando Cabrera.**

“While the Open Data Portal aims for transparency by providing a section for public requests of specific datasets, too often these requests are ignored. A majority of requests have not received an official response which discourages public participation. My bill would require the establishment of response timelines to ensure that every public request for datasets is answered in a timely fashion and it will clear the backlog of requests. Requiring responses in a specific time period will ensure accountability, transparency, and trust in the Open Data Portal,” **said Council Member Ritchie Torres of the Bronx.**

“Standardizing address and geospatial information for datasets on the Open Data Portal will provide a solution to the frustrating issue of mapping data with no set format,” **said Council Member Ben Kallos, a software developer.** “The bill is an important change to improve the accuracy and usability of the Open Data Portal. Thank you to Committee on Technology Chair James Vacca and my colleagues for introducing this set of seven bills in order to strengthen the Open Data Law.”

“Freedom of Information Laws (FOIL) have created a vital pathway for the public to gain access to city government data, creating greater efficiency and transparency within our municipal agencies,” **said Council Member Annabel Palma.** “In an effort to further improve the process by which city information is shared, I am sponsoring a bill that will ensure that all data is accessible, accurate, and delivered to the public in a timely manner. As part of this bill, any time data as part of a FOIL response is released, agency open data coordinators will be notified and will review all FOIL requests, determining whether information can be added to the Open Data portal. As this portal is the nexus point between the city and its residents, this bill will be crucial to bridging the gaps in information provided to the public.”

Council Member Vincent Gentile will also introduce a bill to require a “data dictionary” to explain technical language within data sets.

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