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2 CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING

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4 THE GRADUATE CENTER, PROSHANSKY AUDITORIUM

5 365 Fifth Avenue

6 New York, New York 10016

7

8 APRIL 6, 2010

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11 CHAIR: DR. MATTHEW GOLDSTEIN

12 MEMBERS:

13 JOHN H. BANKS, VICE CHAIR

14 ANTHONY PEREZ CASSINO

15 BETTY Y. CHEN

16 DAVID CHEN

17 HOPE COHEN

18 ANTHONY W. CROWELL

19 STEPHEN FIALA

20 ANGELA MARIANA FREYRE

21 ERNEST HART

22 REV. JOSEPH M. McSHANE, S.J.

23 KENNETH M. MOLTNER

24 CARLO A. SCISSURA

25 BISHOP MITCHELL G. TAYLOR

1                   CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Good  
2                   evening. I'm Matthew Goldstein, the  
3                   Chair of the New York Charter  
4                   Revision Commission, and I am pleased  
5                   to welcome you to the Proshansky  
6                   Auditorium and our Graduate School  
7                   and University Center. This is where  
8                   we house all of our Ph.D. programs,  
9                   of which there are about 31, and  
10                  fellow faculty primarily in the arts,  
11                  humanities and social sciences and  
12                  mathematics reside here, and the  
13                  others are dispersed among our  
14                  campuses, so welcome. We're very  
15                  pleased that the Graduate School is  
16                  hosting us this evening.

17                  I'd like to call our meeting to  
18                  order. This is the first of five  
19                  public hearings we will hold this  
20                  month, one in each borough, with many  
21                  more opportunities for public  
22                  engagement over the months ahead.

23                  As I initially said in our  
24                  organizational meeting, public input  
25                  and participation is critical to this

1 Commission's work, and nothing is  
2 more important to us than ensuring  
3 that New Yorkers feel that they are  
4 part of this process.

5 To help spread the word about  
6 these hearings, we've taken a number  
7 of steps in addition to a recurring  
8 posting of our public notice in the  
9 City Record throughout the month of  
10 April. We have posted the hearings  
11 scheduled on the Commission's Web  
12 site on NYC.gov, which includes  
13 translations in Mandarin, Korean  
14 Spanish and Russian. We have sent out  
15 blast E-mails with the hearing  
16 schedules to over 45,000 citizens  
17 directly on NYC.gov's master  
18 listserv, as well as 1,500 citizens  
19 on the listserv from the 2005 Charter  
20 Commission. We also sent the notice  
21 to every major media outlet, over 200  
22 ethnic and community news outlets in  
23 appropriate languages, community  
24 boards and community groups, civic  
25 groups, elected officials, and many

1 others across the City.

2 As promised, the Commission is  
3 embracing new forms of media. So to  
4 that end I am pleased to announce  
5 that the Commission is now live on  
6 Facebook and Twitter. Follow can  
7 find us on Facebook at NYC Charter  
8 Revision Commission and on Twitter at  
9 "CityCharterNYC," one word. In fact,  
10 several Commission members and staff  
11 have already become followers, and  
12 the Commission's first Tweet is  
13 taking place right now. I would also  
14 like everyone to know that as  
15 promised at our first organizational  
16 meeting, the Commission's Web site at  
17 NYC.gov/charter will post copies of  
18 all transcripts from public meetings  
19 and hearings as soon as they become  
20 available. We will also post a video  
21 presentation of each meeting, and we  
22 will work together with Web casting  
23 future meetings and all hearings. And  
24 this is just the beginning. The  
25 Commission will continue to ensure

1           its outreach is as broad and deep as  
2           possible through its many phases.

3                   I want to reiterate that the  
4           Commission will be holding four more  
5           hearings after tonight, one in each  
6           borough. The schedule for this round  
7           is as follows. Monday, April 12, at  
8           Hostos Community College in the Bronx  
9           at 6:00 P.M. The following date,  
10          Tuesday, April 13, at McKee High  
11          School in Staten Island, also at 6:00  
12          P.M. Monday, April 19, at La Guardia  
13          Community College in Queens at 6:00  
14          P.M., and lastly, on Tuesday, April  
15          20 at St. Francis College, in  
16          Brooklyn, at 6:00 P.M.

17                   Members of the public can begin  
18          to sign up to speak starting at 5:30  
19          P.M. and throughout the hearing. We  
20          will ensure that everyone who shows  
21          up to speak, no matter what time they  
22          arrive during the hearing, gets an  
23          opportunity to speak. Of course, we'd  
24          like you to come here early, so try  
25          to do that.

1           For more information on  
2           directions and start times please  
3           visit the Commission's Web site  
4           again, [nyc.gov/charter](http://nyc.gov/charter).

5           I strongly encourage people to  
6           attend these hearings whether they  
7           wish to testify or just observe, and  
8           I would also ask that everyone here  
9           encourage New Yorkers in their  
10          communities to come out to these  
11          hearings.

12          I would like to just go across  
13          the table and ask our Commissioners  
14          to just identify themselves so all of  
15          you can see them. I'm sure it's  
16          difficult to read the placards, so if  
17          you start all the way on the left.

18          MS. COHEN: Hi. I'm Hope Cohen.

19          MR. SCISSURA: Hi, I'm Carlos  
20          Scissura.

21          MR. MOLTNER: Good evening, Ken  
22          Moltner.

23          MS. CHEN: Hello, I'm Betty  
24          Chen.

25          MS. PATTERSON: Kathryn

1 Patterson.

2 MR. FIALA: Good evening, Steve  
3 Fiala.

4 MS. FREYRE: I'm Angela Mariana  
5 Freyre.

6 MR. BANKS: I'm John Banks.

7 MR. CROWELL: Anthony Crowell.

8 MR. HART: Ernie Hart.

9 MR. CASSINO: Tony Perez  
10 Cassino.

11 REV. McSHANE: And Joe McShane.

12 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Thank you  
13 all. Understandably, it is difficult  
14 to coordinate the schedules of 16  
15 extraordinarily busy people, so on  
16 occasion there may be someone who  
17 will be unable to join us, but our  
18 goal is to maximize attendance as we  
19 very much value everybody's input.

20 Now, I would like to take the  
21 opportunity to introduce some members  
22 of the Commission's staff. First and  
23 foremost, I'm pleased to introduce  
24 you to our first new Executive  
25 Director, Lorna Goodman. Lorna, do

1           you want to just be recognized?

2                   Lorna is an exceptional  
3           professional and has an exceptionally  
4           distinguished career in municipal law  
5           and management, bringing a worthwhile  
6           wonderful set of skills to the  
7           Charter Revision process. She most  
8           recently served as Nassau County  
9           Attorney for the past eight years.  
10          She was the first woman to hold that  
11          post and managed a large law  
12          department that handled every aspect  
13          of law.

14                   She served for 25 years prior  
15          at the New York City Law Department,  
16          where she was Senior Executive under  
17          a number of Corporation Counsels and  
18          founded and lead the Departments's  
19          Affirmative Litigation Division.

20                   Welcome aboard, Lorna.

21                   MS. GOODMAN: Thank you.

22                   CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: I look  
23          forward to working with you as every  
24          other member of the Commission does  
25          as well.

1           As I announced last week, Rick  
2           Schaffer, CUNY's General Counsel and  
3           Senior Vice Chancellor for Legal  
4           Affairs, will serve as General  
5           Counsel to the Commission. He too has  
6           an extensive background in both  
7           private practice at a major law firm  
8           as well as public service, having  
9           worked for both the City and CUNY for  
10          many years.

11          Dr. Joseph Viteritti will serve  
12          as the Commission's Research  
13          Coordinator. He is the Blanche Blank  
14          Professor of Public Policy and Chair  
15          for the Department of Urban Affairs &  
16          Planning at Hunter College. He has  
17          considerable public service  
18          experience, including service as an  
19          advisor to the Charter Commission  
20          that wrote the present New York City  
21          Charter, and to the Districting  
22          Commission that drew the current  
23          District boundaries for the City  
24          Council. He is a prolific author and  
25          exceptional faculty member and a deep

1 thinker. He has great experience in  
2 education, policy, state and local  
3 governance and public law, including  
4 several publications related to local  
5 commissions.

6 Jeff Friedlander, First  
7 Assistant Corporation Counsel, will  
8 serve as a special advisor to the  
9 Commission.

10 Welcome, Jeff, and we're very  
11 privileged. We know you're very busy  
12 and you'll try to give us as much  
13 time as you can.

14 There is perhaps no one in the  
15 entire City with the breadth of  
16 experience dealing with the City  
17 Charter as Jeff Friedlander. In his  
18 40 years at the Law Department he has  
19 served under six mayors and served as  
20 counsel to the Board of Estimate.

21 Many of you who were here at  
22 our first meeting remember meeting  
23 Lisa Grumet, Senior Counsel at the  
24 New York City Law Department, will  
25 serve as a liaison between the

1 Commission and the Law Department,  
2 working closely with Jeff, Rick and  
3 Lorna. As you will recall, Lisa made  
4 that extraordinary presentation and  
5 it's wonderful to see you. You just  
6 have to get those fonts a little  
7 larger. I mean, although I have good  
8 eyesight, I couldn't see as well as I  
9 would like.

10 The Commission's Director,  
11 Administrative Director, is going to  
12 be Lisa Opal Jones.

13 I don't know if Lisa is here.  
14 Is she here with us?

15 MS. JONES: Yes.

16 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: There you  
17 are, Lisa. It's wonderful you're  
18 part of this.

19 Lisa, who is a fellow City  
20 College graduate, brings over 21  
21 years of public sector experience.  
22 She will be responsible for ensuring  
23 the smooth transition of the  
24 Commission's office and Commission  
25 meetings and hearings.

1           We also have two great  
2           professionals who are experts in  
3           media relations and communications,  
4           Matt Gorton and Jay Hershenson. If  
5           they could be recognized. Matt, where  
6           are you? I saw you earlier. He's  
7           waving in the back. And Jay I think  
8           is here.

9           They will work in the interim  
10          basis to handle media relations and  
11          communications for the Commission,  
12          and we will have more to say about  
13          communications later this week. I  
14          believe some of you already know them  
15          and have been in touch with you, so  
16          welcome to both of them.

17          So before we get started -- oh  
18          and we also have a parliamentarian.  
19          If we have very, very deep  
20          discussions here among us, and we  
21          need to have someone who can parse  
22          all this, and none better than the  
23          gentleman who is going to serve as  
24          our parliamentarian, and thank you  
25          for agreeing to do that.

1           Before we get started with  
2           hearing from the public, do any  
3           Commission members have any comments  
4           or questions that they would like to  
5           bring to the floor?

6           Okay. So I understand there  
7           are several elected officials here  
8           with us this evening who have signed  
9           up to speak, so as a courtesy, I will  
10          allow them to testify first. And then  
11          when we'll move on aggressively to  
12          the public.

13          Are there any public officials  
14          here? I thought I saw Bill DeBlasio.  
15          Bill. And Scott Stringer I think is  
16          there.

17          MR. DeBLASIO: Thank you,  
18          Mr. Chairman. Thank you for a chance  
19          to be here. I want to thank you and  
20          all the Commission members for taking  
21          on this important work. I know it's  
22          going to be time consuming, but it's  
23          crucially important to the future of  
24          the City and thank you for the ideas  
25          you put forth at the last meeting of

1           having a kind of inclusive and open  
2           process, and I think we need in such  
3           an important body of work.

4                     I would like to just say a few  
5           brief things tonight. I think it's a  
6           good idea, I imagine you would agree,  
7           and I'll come back to you in the  
8           coming days with a detailed letter  
9           offering a series of suggestions.  
10          But just to say at the outset I think  
11          the public would like so deeply to  
12          see a process that really exemplifies  
13          the best of New York City with ideas  
14          brought out from the grass roots,  
15          from people all over the City.  
16          Reflections on how life is lived in  
17          this city, what's working, what's  
18          not, how our government can do  
19          better, and how it can respond to  
20          people's needs.

21                    We have an extraordinary  
22          opportunity, I think, at this moment  
23          in our history to use the new media  
24          to reach people in a much deeper way  
25          than ever before, and I believe you

1 started in the right direction. In  
2 fact, I want to encourage you to go  
3 as far as possible to accept  
4 testimony online, to use Facebook and  
5 Twitter, to let pass all of your  
6 hearings in every way we can to bring  
7 this Commission into the homes and  
8 workplaces of every New Yorker.

9 I would certainly say that I  
10 think more hearings is a better idea.  
11 I think you set out a good schedule.  
12 I would urge you to make it even  
13 better with more hearings. I think  
14 there's definitely a need for  
15 additional hearings in this borough,  
16 but in every borough to go deeper  
17 into all parts of the boroughs and  
18 get different perspectives.

19 I think there is an  
20 extraordinary energy at this moment  
21 in history of participation.

22 I think a lot of it was  
23 exemplified in 2008 nationally. I  
24 think you can feel it here in the  
25 City. Land use issues, school

1 issues, all sorts of media issues  
2 bring out literally in local hearings  
3 and for hundreds of New York City's  
4 deeply concerned about our  
5 communities to let there views be  
6 heard. That's a wonderful thing, and  
7 I think I've seen over the years  
8 progress where more and more people  
9 feel as if they want to participate.  
10 That's a tremendous moment for this  
11 process to be permitted in.

12 How do we maximize that need  
13 and willingness to participate? And  
14 then how do we create a government  
15 that actually reflects that going  
16 forth?

17 I'm going to be consistently  
18 coming to you with ideas on how to do  
19 that, but I think that is the  
20 tremendous opportunity that this  
21 Commission has.

22 Now, specifically, I'd like to  
23 just point out a few areas that I  
24 think, substantively I think have to  
25 be focused on, and this will not come

1 as a shock to you. I think the  
2 public is yearning to resolve the  
3 term limits issue once and for all,  
4 and to do it themselves via a vote.  
5 So I hope that whatever does happen  
6 via this Commission, that that is Job  
7 One. The public has decided. We  
8 have to let the people decide that  
9 issue once and for all.

10 And then further, I think we  
11 know some of the areas in the City  
12 government where there is deep  
13 concern. I think I say this as  
14 someone who has been deeply involved  
15 in the local level in the land use  
16 process. There are some parts of the  
17 land use process that work well,  
18 there are some that don't work so  
19 well, but clearly communities yearn  
20 for meaningful input and yearn to  
21 have a serious impact on the shape of  
22 their futures and specifically  
23 maximizing community benefit in the  
24 land use process.

25 I hope one of the things this

1 Commission will look at carefully is  
2 how we not only increase community  
3 voices but increase in such a fashion  
4 that leads to practical outcomes for  
5 communities in the land use process.

6 I understand the legal dynamics  
7 surrounding the Department of  
8 Education and the State's role in the  
9 governance in the Department of  
10 Education. But I also know that  
11 public, that parent participation,  
12 community participation in education  
13 is a huge area that needs to be  
14 addressed. I hope there are some  
15 ways this Commission can speak to  
16 that as well.

17 I want to commend my colleague,  
18 Borough President Stringer. He has  
19 raised the issue of the Buildings  
20 Department. I think that's another  
21 area that clearly needs to be looked  
22 at for a forum. And then something I  
23 talked about a lot, the Civilian  
24 Complaint Review Board. I don't  
25 think it's lived up to its original

1 vision. I think it needs to be a  
2 more vibrant, independent, and  
3 meaningful agency. I think there's a  
4 lot of ways to achieve that, but the  
5 best way might be through the Charter  
6 Revision process.

7 Finally, I think there are a  
8 number of agencies that would benefit  
9 from more independence, and  
10 particularly through the independent  
11 budgeting process. I would include  
12 certainly the Civilian Complaint  
13 Review Board and Conflict of Interest  
14 Board. I believe that the Public  
15 Advocate's office and Comptroller's  
16 office are also examples of that,  
17 that would benefit from independent  
18 budgeting and create more autonomy in  
19 the ability to do their watchdog  
20 roles in a better fashion.

21 Further, I hope we can look at  
22 a greater checks and balances in our  
23 City government. We have a system in  
24 this city which was developed  
25 20-plus years ago. A very strong

1           mayoral system. There are a lot of  
2           reasons for a strong mayoral system,  
3           but I think somewhere a greater  
4           system of checks and balances is  
5           called for.

6                     As a former Council member, I  
7           certainly think that's an area where  
8           the Council's authority can be  
9           expanded. I certainly think the role  
10          of the Public Advocate can be  
11          clarified and strengthened. So  
12          again, I will come to you with a  
13          number of specific suggestions on how  
14          to do some of these things. But the  
15          most important thing I'll say tonight  
16          is this Commission can do something  
17          that I think a few government  
18          Commissions have done well in the  
19          past. I think this can be a  
20          breakthrough moment and engage the  
21          people in the City much more deeply  
22          than ever before.

23                     You have tools that were not  
24          available to your predecessor  
25          Commissions. You have a willingness

1           and a leadership to do this in the  
2           right manner, and my office will  
3           certainly support you in every way to  
4           make sure that's a reality. Thank you  
5           very much.

6                    CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: I would  
7           like to call up Borough President  
8           Scott Stringer.

9                    MR. STRINGER: Good evening,  
10          Chairman Goldstein and distinguished  
11          members of the Charter Revision  
12          Commission. I know many of you over a  
13          long period of time, and I think your  
14          selection has great merit and can  
15          really engage this city.

16                   As some of you may know, for  
17          the past month I have argued that the  
18          developing Charter members of this  
19          year's election on November 2, 2010,  
20          would be a costly mistake.

21                   In recent days I have been  
22          critical of the public notice  
23          provided for this hearing. The notice  
24          period, six days, was far too short;  
25          and the effort to call public's

1 attention to this hearing has been  
2 much too quiet.

3 Tonight, by any standard of  
4 activism, this is a pretty lame crowd  
5 considering what's at stake, and I  
6 think we have to do a better job. I  
7 have voiced these concerns because I  
8 believe that New York City is well  
9 overdue for the broad civic debate  
10 about City government that only a  
11 Charter Revision Commission can lead.  
12 You hold the power, after a 21-year  
13 break, to once again engage New  
14 Yorkers in rethinking our municipal  
15 constitution, and it is time to have  
16 that discussion.

17 And tonight you face a choice.  
18 Down one path is a broad conversation  
19 about the shortcomings of New York  
20 City's government and the structural  
21 forms that will help us meet the new  
22 challenges we face in the years  
23 ahead.

24 Down that path, this Commission  
25 can determine whether the creation of

1 a new City Department of Food and  
2 Markets holds the promise of making  
3 New Yorkers healthier, energizing our  
4 economy, and improving our  
5 environment.

6 You can decide in a new Office  
7 of Inspection, as Bill DeBlasio  
8 talked about, in decades of  
9 corruption in this function in the  
10 Department of Buildings, and making  
11 New York City a safer place for  
12 residents and visitors alike.

13 You can explore whether an  
14 independent authority other than the  
15 Department of Education, such as the  
16 City Planning Department or  
17 Comptroller, would help us avoid the  
18 terrible school overcrowding crisis  
19 that is threatening to tear our  
20 neighborhoods apart all around the  
21 City.

22 You can study the long-term  
23 value to New York City of  
24 transforming community boards into  
25 true community planning boards with

1 the resources, the expertise, and the  
2 mandate to inject the neighborhood  
3 voice into discussions of our City's  
4 future.

5 You can also consider whether a  
6 new Independent Planning Office,  
7 mirroring the Independent Budget  
8 Office, would tamp down the politics  
9 in our development decisions and  
10 enhance this vital function in City  
11 government.

12 And that's one path. And then  
13 again there is another path: The  
14 path of narrow agendas, limited  
15 public discussion, and backroom  
16 political calculations that has  
17 become the standard for Charter  
18 Revision Commissions over the past  
19 two decades. That is the path of  
20 meeting low expectations.

21 And I respectfully say to the  
22 Commission Members here tonight that  
23 this is the path you will travel if  
24 you continue to hold hearings like  
25 this one and continue to insist on

1           developing proposals for the 2010  
2           ballot.

3                     Mayor Bloomberg's announcement  
4           of this Commission gave reason to  
5           hope that this time things would be  
6           different. He has appointed an  
7           exceptional Chair and distinguished  
8           Commission Members. He has said all  
9           the right things about reviewing the  
10          entire Charter and proposing changes  
11          that will improve the lives of New  
12          Yorkers.

13                    Based on the activity of the  
14          past month, however, some things have  
15          suggested that only proposals that  
16          serve to check off a political box  
17          could emerge from the Commission.

18                    Term limit proposals certainly  
19          fit that description and a second  
20          frequently mentioned proposal,  
21          nonpartisan elections, was already  
22          decisively rejected at the polls by 7  
23          out of 10 New Yorkers in 2003. But  
24          that's a narrow view and I'd like to  
25          set that aside in the time I have

1 left.

2 A more serious concern voiced  
3 by many is that if this Commission's  
4 proposals are placed on the 2011  
5 ballot to accommodate the broader  
6 review I recommended, the result will  
7 be fewer New Yorkers voting on these  
8 proposals. People are rightly worried  
9 about low voter turnout in so-called  
10 off-year elections.

11 I want to give you some facts  
12 to consider, if you would just bear  
13 with me for another minute or two.  
14 Back in 2002 and 2003 Charter  
15 amendments appeared on the ballot in  
16 successive years. Those two  
17 elections closely matched the  
18 elections we are heading into now.

19 In 2002, Democrat Carl McCall  
20 challenged incumbent George Pataki in  
21 the governor's race, and in 2003  
22 state Supreme Court races topped the  
23 ballot. Not usually the biggest draw  
24 for voters. So it may surprise you  
25 to learn that a Charter amendment in

1 the 2003 off-year election received  
2 more total votes than the Charter  
3 amendment that accompanied the high  
4 turnout of the gubernatorial race  
5 that was on the ballot 2002. 494,000  
6 total votes cast for the nonpartisan  
7 election proposals in 2003 as opposed  
8 to 470,000 total votes cast for the  
9 mayoral succession proposal in 2002.

10 You may be thinking that these  
11 vote totals were driven by how  
12 compelling the respective Charter  
13 amendments were to New York City  
14 voters. And that's exactly the  
15 point. The one thing this data shows  
16 with certainty is that the election  
17 cycle on its own does not determine  
18 levels of voter interest. Voter  
19 turnout depends, as it always does,  
20 upon the degree to which the public  
21 has been engaged.

22 Please do not let the false  
23 conventional wisdom about election  
24 cycles rob this Commission of the  
25 time it needs to do its job properly.

1 No one knows what needs to be  
2 improved in City government better  
3 than the people it's supposed to  
4 serve. The Commission stands a far  
5 better chance from learning from New  
6 Yorkers about where it should focus  
7 its attention if it conducts its work  
8 over a period of 17 months instead of  
9 five.

10 I know you've been charged with  
11 a great responsibility, and this  
12 Commission has an opportunity to  
13 point a way for a brighter future for  
14 New York City. I urge you to face up  
15 to that responsibility, as I know you  
16 will, with an understanding that you  
17 can actually do more if you just take  
18 the long view.

19 The best Charter Revision  
20 Commission that we've studied is the  
21 1989 Schwarz Commission under Ed  
22 Koch, where for a very long time,  
23 with hundreds of testimonies and  
24 multiple hearings, that Commission  
25 changed the governance of New York.

1           We're now asking you, 20 years, 21  
2           years later, to do the same. But if  
3           we're going to talk about process  
4           let's do it the way it should be done  
5           so that even 20 years from now this  
6           Commission, with great distinguished  
7           members, can look back and say we  
8           really elevated the debate of the  
9           discussion and the governance of New  
10          York City.

11                    Thank you very much. And I  
12          look forward to working with you in  
13          the 17 months ahead of us. Thank  
14          you.

15                    CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Thank you  
16          very much. I will now ask members of  
17          the public who have signed up to  
18          speak to become ready to...

19                    Since there are many speakers  
20          that have expressed interest in being  
21          heard tonight, I ask each of you to  
22          assiduously stay within three  
23          minutes. You will be keyed when a  
24          minute is left so that you can gauge  
25          your time for the rest of your

1 testimony.

2 I would like to start with  
3 Patricia Dolan from the Queens Civic  
4 Congress. And there are microphones  
5 along the sides. There's no need to  
6 come all the way up front if it's  
7 hard to do that.

8 MS. DOLAN: Thank you. Good  
9 evening. I'm Patricia Dolan. I'm the  
10 President of the Queens Civic  
11 Congress.

12 The Congress is an umbrella  
13 group of more than a hundred and five  
14 civic groups in Queens representing  
15 residents in neighborhoods across the  
16 borough. The Congress is the only  
17 borough-wide civic watchdog coalition  
18 in the entire City of New York.

19 The Congress and its member  
20 organizations are keenly aware of the  
21 structure of City government and how  
22 it affects the communities we live  
23 in.

24 As the Commission begins its  
25 deliberations, we wish to share with

1           you some of our thoughts.

2                   Queens Civic Congress does not  
3           believe that a Charter revision is  
4           necessary at this time. That said, we  
5           do urge this Commission as it  
6           undertakes a review of the City's  
7           governance to do no harm. That is the  
8           most important of all your missions.  
9           Do no harm.

10                   We expect the Commission to  
11           adopt a number of changes to the  
12           Charter. Possibly this year and  
13           perhaps next year. We urge the  
14           Commission to present each important  
15           issue separately to the voters.

16                   Build on the strength of the  
17           City's neighborhoods. That means  
18           insulating the community boards from  
19           the whims of City Hall bean counters.

20                   Over the past few years, OMB  
21           has chipped away the boards' funding  
22           until this year when City Hall has  
23           planned to cut sufficiently to  
24           paralyze the boards.

25                   The Commission should mandate

1 baseline budgeting for the community  
2 boards. From long experience, we  
3 know that Borough Hall often knows  
4 better than City Hall what our local  
5 communities and residents need. Our  
6 Borough Halls are shadows of their  
7 former selves.

8 Since the 1989 Charter  
9 Revision, successive mayors have  
10 stripped the Borough Presidents of  
11 power and funding. The Queens Borough  
12 President, for example, is unable to  
13 carry out her statutory  
14 responsibilities to map the Borough  
15 of Queens. With barely one-third of  
16 the staff at Borough Hall of just  
17 eight years ago, there's no money in  
18 the budget for a fully qualified  
19 Borough Engineer. The Borough  
20 Presidents must be provided with  
21 adequate funding to do their jobs.

22 The Commission should mandate  
23 baseline budgeting for the Borough  
24 Presidents' operations. The Queens  
25 Civic Congress's greatest concern is

1 the reported enthusiasm in some  
2 quarters for abbreviating the public  
3 land use review process. Local civic  
4 groups, individual residents, and  
5 other stakeholders bear the burdens  
6 of major projects in their  
7 communities. Any attempt to limit  
8 public review and legislative  
9 oversight of land use actions will  
10 meet fierce resistance in the  
11 boroughs in the City of New York.

12 We caution you. Many of our  
13 colleagues in Queens and the other  
14 boroughs have little faith that this  
15 Commission will be able to undertake  
16 a fair, open and comprehensive study  
17 of the City's governance. We fear  
18 this Commission, like other boards  
19 and commissions established by this  
20 administration, will produce results  
21 that will be pleasing only to City  
22 Hall. We hope that we are wrong. And  
23 we wish you well in the task ahead of  
24 you. Thank you.

25 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Thank you

1 very much.

2 May I ask all of the speakers,  
3 including you, Miss Dolan, if you  
4 have a copy of your testimony to  
5 leave it so that we can have the  
6 exact wording. Thank you very much.  
7 We've appreciate that.

8 Our next speaker is Henry  
9 Stern.

10 MR. STERN: Thank you very  
11 much, Mr. Chairman, members of the  
12 Commission. I want to start by saying  
13 I think this is a very impressive  
14 Commission assembled, and it has an  
15 excellent professional staff and a  
16 commitment to openness. And I can't  
17 imagine a Commission starting out  
18 with any more promising portents that  
19 you have. However, as soon as you  
20 have the substance, difficulties  
21 arise.

22 The first problem is that you  
23 should have been appointed a year ago  
24 as promised and that your debate on  
25 term limits comes after the people's

1 will on term limits was overruled by  
2 the City Council, which was obviously  
3 self-interested in remaining in  
4 office. That's not your fault, and  
5 you can't be blamed for the decisions  
6 or omissions of others.

7 The reason for term limits is  
8 very interesting. The City Charter  
9 has specific provisions designed to  
10 protect the different units from each  
11 other. The legislative and the  
12 executive, they can each act in their  
13 spheres, but for example, the City  
14 Council cannot reduce the salaries of  
15 executive officials to a dollar.

16 The Mayor can't do certain  
17 things to the legislature. And the  
18 legislature is forbidden to act with  
19 regard to their own terms. For  
20 example, a Charter amendment to  
21 extend the terms of council members  
22 from four years to six, even if  
23 passed by the Council, would be  
24 inoperative because it's a direct  
25 violation of the Charter. They can't

1 specifically amend their own terms.

2 Now, when the law of forces and  
3 the law of fortune got the referendum  
4 in amending the Charter in 1993,  
5 which was reaffirmed in 1996, they  
6 forgot to include their term  
7 limitations in the category of  
8 Charter amendments, which could not  
9 be upset by the City Council. So,  
10 therefore, the Council, Mayor, were  
11 able to drive right through this  
12 loophole and extend by making term  
13 limits longer, increasing their  
14 eligibility, and since the great  
15 majority were reelected, increase  
16 their tenure.

17 Well, they had their lawyers,  
18 but still it's not a healthy  
19 situation where the majority of the  
20 public has voted for something and  
21 it's been overruled by a handful of  
22 self-interested elected officials.  
23 And I think that was reflected in the  
24 voting in November of 2009.

25 Now, so you've got to keep the

1 agency, the various agencies or units  
2 of government, from destroying each  
3 other in their inevitable competition  
4 for power. The Charter should be  
5 sort of a fair arbiter.

6 I support Pat Dolan's efforts  
7 to preserve community input into the  
8 planning process. I've been working  
9 with community boards for 40-odd  
10 years. I think by and large they're  
11 good. I think the local school  
12 boards are charitable. They're  
13 elected. Community boards have been  
14 excellent in large part because they  
15 were appointed by Borough President  
16 and Council members.

17 Okay. Extensions would take  
18 much too much time; there are many  
19 speakers waiting. I just want to  
20 conclude by saying there are some  
21 things you'll really have problems  
22 with. Proportional representation and  
23 nonpartisan elections and ballot  
24 access, which is very important for  
25 this part of State law.

1           You have a great deal to do.  
2           I'd love the opportunity to discuss  
3           some of these matters in greater  
4           detail with your staff. But I will  
5           conclude by saying you have a  
6           remarkable opportunity if you're able  
7           to exercise independent judgment in  
8           making the City government better.  
9           And I will suggest you follow a  
10          principle of zero-based budgeting  
11          when looking at the Charter, look at  
12          each section, paragraph, say, "Does  
13          this have to be in the City Charter  
14          or should it be a local law?" Because  
15          I think our Charter is far too long  
16          and unwieldy. And like the State  
17          Constitution, it goes on forever.  
18          And I would think a healthy trimming  
19          of the City Charter would be good  
20          when we can get to the substance.  
21          Thank you. I'm cutting off  
22          because of the time. And I think you  
23          really are all extremely promising.  
24          And I'm so glad to have this  
25          occasion. And I think this is a nice

1 crowd. I don't think you failed to  
2 proper -- in any event, I'm not  
3 running for political office.

4 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Thank  
5 you, Mr. Stern.

6 Lisa, you're doing --

7 MS. JONES: Yes, I told him one  
8 more minute.

9 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: If you  
10 could make yourself heard that would  
11 be great.

12 Our next speaker is Frank  
13 Morano.

14 MR. MORANO: Thank you. I want  
15 to thank the distinguished members of  
16 the Commission for laying out such an  
17 aggressive public hearing schedule.  
18 And as a Staten Islander, I want to  
19 thank Steve Fiala for doing us so  
20 proud on the Commission as well.

21 There are a number of  
22 substantive proposals that I would  
23 love for the Commission to consider  
24 with respect to the City Charter, but  
25 because of the limited amount of time

1 I'm going to submit the vast majority  
2 of those in writing.

3 Just with respect to a number  
4 of procedural issues. I could not  
5 disagree more with the vast majority  
6 with what the Borough President Scott  
7 Stringer said.

8 I think that for him to draw a  
9 parallel between this year and next  
10 year and 2002 and 2003 is not only  
11 misleading, it's just -- it's  
12 factually inaccurate.

13 In 2003, the year that he cited  
14 as that Charter question, the  
15 question on nonpartisan elections,  
16 had a greater turnout than the  
17 question in '02 about mayoral  
18 succession.

19 There were elections in all 51  
20 council districts. Every part of the  
21 city there was an election. And the  
22 hotly contested, competitive election  
23 in Staten Island for District  
24 Attorney, which as you might guess,  
25 was the borough that had the greatest

1 participation in the Charter -- in  
2 the ballot proposal voting that year.

3 There will be an anemic turnout  
4 in 2011. I would encourage the  
5 Commission to put as many proposals,  
6 particularly in the areas that the  
7 public has reviewed and studied for  
8 literally years, like term limits and  
9 nonpartisan elections, on the ballot  
10 this year. And if you want to take  
11 some of what the Borough President  
12 and the Public Advocate said, take to  
13 heart and continue to study what some  
14 might call the wonk issues, less  
15 sexier issues, related to budget and  
16 procurement. Then put the questions  
17 on the ballot this year and I would  
18 suggest you ask the Mayor for an  
19 opportunity to continue to serve next  
20 year, put additional questions on  
21 next year. But as I said, I'm going  
22 to be submitting lengthy testimony in  
23 writing.

24 One area that I would love to  
25 see the Commission take a good look

1 at is bringing back proportional  
2 representation to the New York City  
3 Council. Commissioner Stern  
4 referenced proportional  
5 representation earlier.

6 Proportional representation,  
7 which we had the City from 1937 to  
8 1949, I think in many respects was  
9 the Golden Age of nonpartisan good  
10 government in this city. It was  
11 pushed through Charter Revision  
12 Commission -- not a two-year  
13 Commission but a one-year  
14 Commission -- by Mayor Fiorello La  
15 Guardia who used it, and I believe  
16 rightly so, for the antidote for the  
17 cesspool of corruption that the Board  
18 of Aldermen had become. And I think  
19 if you look at the slush fund  
20 scandal, the self-serving political  
21 nature of giving themselves third  
22 terms, this City Council almost makes  
23 you long for the days of the Board of  
24 Alderman.

25 I think if there was ever a

1 time to review going back to  
2 proportional representation now is  
3 it. For three fundamental reasons.  
4 One, the vast majority of elections  
5 in this city leave out literally  
6 millions of voters. In 48 council  
7 districts in this city, they are  
8 ostensibly one-party districts. In  
9 most districts that's Democrat and  
10 one district that happens to be  
11 Republican. But they're one-party  
12 districts, and that means if you're  
13 not a member of that majority party  
14 you don't get to participate. If  
15 you're a Republican or a blank or an  
16 Independent that's it. You're out of  
17 the only stage of the process --

18 MS. JONES: Time.

19 MR. MORANO: -- even though  
20 you're still a taxpayer you're still  
21 paying taxes --

22 MS. JONES: Sir, you have 20  
23 seconds.

24 MR. MORANO: -- have those  
25 elections go forward.

1           The other thing is it does away  
2           with that horrible wasted vote  
3           stigma.

4           Carlo Scissura, when you ran  
5           for City Council I saw your mother  
6           charming people as she -- as they  
7           were walking out of church like  
8           crazy. And person after person told  
9           her, "I would love to vote for Carlo,  
10          but I don't want to split the  
11          Democratic vote and elect a  
12          Republican."

13          Had we had proportional  
14          representation, more of those voters  
15          at the time would not have qualms  
16          about voting for you as your --

17          MS. JONES: Thank you. Thank  
18          you, sir.

19          CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Thank you  
20          very much, Mr. Morano. Thank you,  
21          Lisa.

22          Our next speaker is Roger Herz.

23          MR. HERZ: I'm just here  
24          listening, thank you.

25          CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: You're

1 just here listening.

2 MR. HERZ: Thank you.

3 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Let's  
4 move on to Chantell Whyte. Is  
5 Chantell here?

6 MS. WHYTE: No.

7 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: You  
8 don't want to speak. Okay.

9 Carl Paladino. I don't know if  
10 that's accurate.

11 Lenora Fulani. Welcome.

12 MS. FULANI. Good evening,  
13 everyone. Good evening, Chairman  
14 Goldstein and members of the  
15 Commission. My name is Lenora  
16 Fulani, and although this Commission  
17 is newly appointed, I've spoken  
18 before prior commissions about  
19 structure and design of New York  
20 City's political process.

21 In 2003, I advocated strongly,  
22 together with Mayor Bloomberg, for a  
23 shift to nonpartisan elections.

24 At the time, there was a  
25 general outcry that the Commission

1           was moving too fast to consider such  
2           a significant restructuring. And  
3           we've begun to hear that refrain  
4           again from some political partisans  
5           who no doubt intend to oppose  
6           nonpartisan reform as they did in  
7           2003. That's their right. Nobody  
8           questions that.

9                     But speaking now as an  
10           Independent and as a leader of the  
11           Independence Party, New York City's  
12           nonpartisan political party, the  
13           serious question is not whether we  
14           are moving slowly enough. It's  
15           rather we're moving quickly enough.  
16           Quickly enough to keep up with our  
17           young people who don't identify with  
18           parties and don't like partisanship.  
19           If we don't move quickly we will pay  
20           a price.

21                     The results of the 2003  
22           elections on nonpartisans are  
23           well-known. The measure failed 70 to  
24           30 percent. This has become a  
25           talking point for opponents, a

1 rallying cry: The voters have  
2 spoken, they said, case closed. But  
3 we can never close the case on  
4 democracy after a single round. If  
5 we had, black people would still be  
6 3/5 of a person and women would not  
7 have won the right to vote.

8 Since the Commission last  
9 addressed nonpartisan elections in  
10 '03, a lot has changed in New York  
11 City and in the country. Enthusiasm  
12 for the establishment parties is  
13 declining, while enthusiasm for  
14 political independence as the  
15 antidote to partisan gridlock and  
16 dysfunction is growing all over the  
17 place.

18 The votes cast on the major  
19 party lines in the last citywide  
20 election either declined in the case  
21 of the Republican party or flat lined  
22 in the case of the Democratic party.  
23 But the trend is in the other  
24 direction when it comes to  
25 independence. The 150,000 votes cast

1 on the Independence line on the last  
2 election was double what it was in  
3 2005 and three times that in '01.

4 This all comes down to a very  
5 simple question of democracy. There  
6 are currently -- I can't see --

7 MS. JONES: You have one more  
8 minute.

9 MS. FULANI: -- 897,180  
10 registered voters in New York City  
11 who are neither Democrats or  
12 Republicans. The vast majority,  
13 751,442 of them, are not aligned with  
14 any political party. Among these  
15 non-aligned voters, 25 percent of  
16 them are under the age of 30, 20  
17 percent are African-American, 24  
18 Latino, and 11 percent are Asian-  
19 American.

20 As the City has become a  
21 majority minority, it's the case the  
22 minority community is increasingly  
23 independent, we need to change our  
24 electoral system to include them and  
25 empower them.

1           In closing, I want to ask the  
2           Commission to listen to those new and  
3           independent voices. And I ask you to  
4           acknowledge the 18-year-old black  
5           youth in Harlem who registered  
6           Independent but cannot vote in the  
7           decision-making round of most  
8           elections. The Latino mom in the  
9           Bronx whose kids are in public school  
10          but whose vote does not count in  
11          September. The Chinese student in  
12          Queens whose family came here to find  
13          democracy only to be turned away from  
14          the polls on primary day because he  
15          is registered as an Independent.

16                 I urge the Commission to listen  
17                 to these voices. I urge the  
18                 Commission to recognize the need for  
19                 change. I urge the Commission to  
20                 bring nonpartisan elections forth to  
21                 the ballot. Thank you.

22                         CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Do you  
23                         have a copy of your remarks?

24                         MS. FULANI: Yes.

25                         CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Oh, you

1 do. Thank you.

2 The next speaker is Harvey  
3 Kresky.

4 MS. JONES: Harry.

5 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: I'm  
6 sorry, Harry Kresky. Welcome,  
7 Mr. Kresky.

8 MR. KRESKY. Hi. My name is  
9 Harry Kresky, of counsel to the New  
10 York City Independence Party and  
11 IndependentVoting.org. I served on  
12 Mayor Bloomberg's 2002 Charter  
13 Commission.

14 This is not the first time a  
15 Charter Revision Commission has  
16 before it a structural fault line in  
17 how our City's government is elected  
18 and how it functions. The 1989  
19 Commission, which rewrote the City's  
20 Charter, was established in response  
21 to a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that  
22 found the structure of the City's  
23 government unconstitutional.  
24 Specifically, the Court ruled that  
25 the powerful Board of Estimate, which

1           consisted of three officials elected  
2           citywide, and each Borough President,  
3           violated the principle of one person  
4           one vote. The Court reasoned that  
5           this system of elections created a  
6           structural inequality in that the  
7           vote of a resident in the smallest  
8           borough, Staten Island, counted more  
9           than that of a resident of the  
10          largest borough, Brooklyn, as  
11          residents in each elected one member  
12          of the board.

13                 This Commission, which is  
14           charged with considering all aspects  
15           of the governmental structure created  
16           by the 1989 Commission, must now be  
17           true to its mandate and live up to  
18           the standards set by its predecessor,  
19           address its other structural  
20           inequality in how that government,  
21           the one created by the 1989  
22           Commission, is elected. That  
23           inequality has to do with the  
24           exclusion of close to 1.4 million  
25           voters who participated in the

1 primary election in which almost all  
2 of your elected officials are chosen.

3 New York City functions in  
4 essence as a one-party town. Current  
5 enrollment figures are approximately  
6 3,000,000 Democrats, 500,000  
7 Republicans, 105,000 members of the  
8 Independence Party, 20,000 members of  
9 the Conservative Party, 13,000  
10 members of the Working Families  
11 Party, and over 750,000 non-aligned  
12 voters.

13 For each municipal office with  
14 the exception of the Mayor and a  
15 handful of City Council seats, the  
16 winner of the Democratic Party  
17 primary takes office as the general  
18 election is not competitive.

19 MS. JONES: Sir, you have one  
20 minute left.

21 MR KRESKY: Thank you.

22 However, of the 3,000,000  
23 enrolled Democrats eligible to vote  
24 in these primaries, only 13 percent  
25 of them voted in the 2009 primaries

1           for City Council. That's 9.5 percent  
2           of the overall electorate. And in the  
3           hotly contested primaries for  
4           Comptroller and Public Advocate, the  
5           percentage was 12 percent of  
6           Democrats and 9 percent of the  
7           electorate. Moreover, primary voters,  
8           "primes," as they're called, tend to  
9           be clubhouse and union activists who  
10          most closely identify with the Party  
11          organizations.

12                 Put simply, our city is ruled  
13          by a small subset of voters who  
14          select public officials who hold  
15          power over the rest of us. How can  
16          this inequality be addressed? How  
17          can the fact this disenfranchisement  
18          of 1.4 million voters be redressed?

19                 I don't know how many of you  
20          have saw Bob Schieffer's editorial  
21          statement on Face the Nation on March  
22          28. He thought that the solution to  
23          this structural --

24                 MS. JONES: Sir, time is up.

25                 MR. KRESKY: Ten more seconds.

1 Was to eliminate party primaries and  
2 move towards a system that allows all  
3 voters to participate on an equal  
4 footing.

5 In 2008 the Supreme Court  
6 upheld a "top two" system adopted by  
7 the voters in the State of  
8 Washington. Under "top two" after an  
9 initial round in which everyone votes  
10 and the top two voters won the  
11 general election.

12 Progressive change, and this is  
13 what we hope to offer to the voters.  
14 In 2003, seven years ago, progressive  
15 change does not come easy, in 2003  
16 proponents of "top two" could not  
17 muster the votes it needed to enact  
18 it. In New York City the battle  
19 against the party machines has been  
20 long and difficult. However, in 2009  
21 we elected our first Independent  
22 mayor. In 2010 we had taken a step  
23 towards nonpartisan governance.

24 I urge the Commission to take  
25 up the issue of nonpartisan municipal

1 elections. Thank you.

2 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Thank  
3 you, Mr. Kresky. Would you leave a  
4 copy of your testimony with the  
5 Reporter, thank you.

6 Our next speaker is Donald  
7 Long. Is Mr. Long here?

8 MR. LONG: Here.

9 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Okay,  
10 Mr. Long, you're on.

11 (Due to inaudibility, Mr.  
12 Long's testimony has been abridged.)

13 MR. LONG: Charter (inaudible).

14 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Speak  
15 directly into the mike, Mr. Long,  
16 you'll be heard.

17 MR. LONG: Can you hear me now?

18 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: That's  
19 better.

20 MR. LONG: I'm here because I'm  
21 concerned about the most recent  
22 election. And I'm Donald Long and  
23 I'm associated with the Veterans  
24 Quality of Life Access for 11 years  
25 now.

1           I believe that the Commission  
2           should examine that because there are  
3           3.8 million voters and see what can  
4           be done to make that never happen  
5           again. A person sworn in to be the  
6           Mayor of the City with 585,000 votes  
7           out of 3.8 million, what's the reason  
8           that contributed to that small vote  
9           count? It needs to be fixed. Low  
10          counts should be greater than what  
11          was received. And maybe the vote  
12          count for other candidates that are  
13          running for office should be greater  
14          than the amount that's received. We  
15          need to do something to make sure  
16          that democracy is fairly transferable  
17          to the people so the people do not  
18          come and vote for Mayor less than a  
19          million votes for Mayor. But to win,  
20          to get a vote count of 585,000 votes  
21          out of 3.8 million is -- something's  
22          wrong there. So I hope the Charter  
23          will consider looking at that part to  
24          put a Mayor in office and nothing  
25          less than that. Thank you. Have a

1 good evening.

2 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Thank  
3 you, Mr. Long.

4 Our next speaker is Diego  
5 Quinones.

6 MR. QUINONES: Good evening,  
7 members of the Commission, and thank  
8 you for the opportunity to speak.

9 I'm here as organizer with  
10 Community Voices Heard along with  
11 some members to talk about the  
12 question of community boards, and I  
13 guess I'll just start by saying in  
14 our analysis of our work looking at  
15 community boards, we've seen that  
16 it's New York City's role of  
17 government and its structure of power  
18 are constantly a work in progress.  
19 And we definitely see this as an  
20 opportunity to continue to build more  
21 Democratic institutions, especially  
22 at the local level.

23 We know that, you know, the  
24 Mayor, the Comptroller, and the Board  
25 of Estimate pretty much rein supreme

1 in New York, and the City Council is  
2 like a one citywide community board.  
3 And there was a move to create little  
4 city halls in each neighborhood, and  
5 we want to see that continued to be  
6 expanded in our conversations with  
7 membership.

8 We've come up with a document,  
9 sort of as a template, to highlight  
10 some of the problems that exist  
11 within community boards, our ideal  
12 vision of what they could be, and  
13 some proposed solutions. So tonight  
14 I just start by, you know, throwing  
15 the issue of community boards out  
16 there. I would like to see these  
17 institutions strengthened to maybe  
18 some roles for elections to take  
19 place rather than appointments, term  
20 limits, questions of accountability  
21 and spending and, you know, decisions  
22 that come out of land use having real  
23 teeth as opposed to this sort of  
24 advisory, friendly recommendation  
25 that they play with the rest of the

1 City.

2 So tonight I'm just here to  
3 submit this template of document and  
4 hope in the future we can prepare a  
5 better organized presence with some  
6 more members to speak on this really  
7 important matter. I thank you for  
8 this opportunity.

9 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Thank  
10 you, Mr. Quinones. We are pleased to  
11 have your written testimony.

12 Our next speaker is it Angelo  
13 Vega?

14 (Due to inaudibility, Mr.  
15 Vega's testimony has been abridged.)

16 MR. VEGA: Good evening,  
17 Commissioners. This is going to be  
18 brief. Term limits, people have voted  
19 and for regarding the people that  
20 were affected overruled them. Do you  
21 see anything wrong with that picture?  
22 No? Okay.

23 Also land use, I've seen in  
24 papers and how governments have taken  
25 all the land and just put whatever

1           they want on it.

2                    You have a lot of homeless  
3           people in the City. I'm sure you  
4           people have never come in contact  
5           with anybody that's been homeless,  
6           but the City is spending three to  
7           four thousand dollars a month on  
8           homeless people. Let's do the math on  
9           this. You can get an apartment for  
10          eight hundred to a thousand, maybe  
11          even fifteen hundred. So that's on  
12          that.

13                   Also on land use, you have  
14          wealthy corporations as well as  
15          regular corporations, and even the  
16          City itself holding land because of  
17          tax, tax defaults, holding and  
18          holding and holding for years and  
19          years and years, collecting just  
20          brush and rats. You could be using  
21          that and to empower, to rebuild that  
22          building. Some of it's really old.  
23          Maybe some of these buildings, those  
24          bricks are going to last a lot longer  
25          than I'm going to be here. You could

1           have rebuilt those. You can rebuild  
2           those buildings, put people in, put  
3           people in them. Affordable wage, get  
4           an affordable wage-type thing going,  
5           and have some homeless people in  
6           there too. So that's what I've got to  
7           say to you.

8                    CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Thank  
9           you, Mr. Vega.

10                   Our next speaker is Ed  
11           Klimerman. Is Mr. Klimerman here?

12                   We'll go now to Assemblyman Jim  
13           Brennan.

14                   Janelle Farris.

15                   Watch the steps, Miss Farris.

16                   MS. FARRIS: I promise. Little  
17           nervous.

18                   Hello. Are you all awake still?  
19           This is the first day, so you have to  
20           practice.

21                   I want to thank you for this  
22           opportunity, and I am here from the  
23           Charter Revision -- not the Charter  
24           Revision Commission. I'm here to  
25           speak to you from the Pratt Center

1 for Community Development.

2 In view of your very capable  
3 time-keeper, I'm going to skip to the  
4 good bits and hand in my testimony.

5 We greatly appreciate the  
6 eagerness with which you've begun  
7 your work and are really applauding  
8 your efforts to let folks know that  
9 the hearing is -- has begun. And our  
10 only concern with the brief public  
11 notice set for this hearing and  
12 notice of these hearings and ask that  
13 you rise to the standard that you  
14 yourselves have set to encourage  
15 public participation as was spoken at  
16 the beginning of today's hearing.

17 We look forward to being able  
18 to participate with you and the  
19 public in the communities we  
20 represent.

21 The Center itself works and has  
22 worked for years -- 45 of them in  
23 fact -- to provide technical services  
24 from architecture, planning,  
25 preservation, energy efficiency to

1           empower low income and moderate  
2           income communities. And so we are  
3           very well-studied and versed on the  
4           ways in which the community is able  
5           to participate in creating and  
6           claiming their own communities. And  
7           so we ask that this Commission spend  
8           particular attention to land use  
9           process as it does its work, and we  
10          have four major issues which you'll  
11          be able to read about in the  
12          testimony, but I'll speak of briefly  
13          here.

14                 We ask that the Commission look  
15          to create a more concrete  
16          comprehensive planning process, look  
17          at zoning changes that are not only  
18          the tools that the City has to  
19          advance its competitiveness, quality  
20          of life and long-term sustainability  
21          of neighborhoods, but that the City  
22          better integrate zoning with budgets  
23          and services and the tools that avail  
24          communities to be --

25                 MS. JONES: One minute left.

1           MS. FARRIS: Okay. I'll speed  
2           up even further then. And to work  
3           with the Planning Commission to  
4           assess how zoning changes impact the  
5           City's long-term goals.

6           We ask for more meaningful  
7           participation of communities. The  
8           197(a) plan that was given life in  
9           the Charter itself needs to have a  
10          stronger voice and presence, and the  
11          ULURP process needs to be made  
12          stronger. The Fair Share process  
13          that was a worthy effort in 1989  
14          needs to have the loopholes closed  
15          and to be made a stronger document.  
16          Commitments to communities that are  
17          made through benefits, agreements  
18          that are outside of the ULURP process  
19          need to be made transparent and to be  
20          incorporated into the process and to  
21          be given teeth so that when we  
22          promise something to communities we  
23          actually carry it through.

24          MS. JONES: Your time is --

25          MR. FARRIS: And now, since

1           it's my time, I like to thank you and  
2           applaud you on the beginning of your  
3           efforts and to ask that we have an  
4           opportunity to work with you and  
5           yourself and the communities that we  
6           represent to ensure a stronger  
7           process. Thank you.

8                    CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Thank  
9           you, Ms. Farris. And we appreciate  
10          your testimony.

11                   Our next speaker is Earline  
12          Fisher.

13                   MS. FISHER: Good evening. Can  
14          you hear me?

15                   CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: We can,  
16          thank you.

17                   MS. FISHER: Thank you. My  
18          name is Earline Fisher. I'm a member  
19          of CVH, which is Community Voices  
20          Heard. I'm also a union carpenter,  
21          14 years. Thank you for allowing us  
22          to speak and to this issue of the  
23          City Charter Revision.

24                   My only statement tonight will  
25          be to allow the City to be a city to

1 be governed by the people as in  
2 the -- in a true democracy. Allow  
3 communities to be heard through the  
4 community boards and allow community  
5 boards to help govern New York City.  
6 Thank you.

7 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Thank  
8 you, Miss Fisher. You can leave your  
9 testimony here. We'd appreciate you  
10 leaving it.

11 Our next speaker is Laura  
12 Caruso.

13 MS. CARUSO: Good evening. My  
14 name is Laura Caruso. I'm the Policy  
15 Director for Local 32BJ. I'm giving  
16 this testimony on behalf of Kevin  
17 Doyle, our Executive Vice President.  
18 With 70,000 members in New York, 32BJ  
19 is the largest private sector union  
20 the City. As doormen and supers,  
21 office cleaners, school cleaners, and  
22 security officers, our members play  
23 an integral role in keeping New York  
24 City running. And as parents,  
25 tenants, voters and homeowners in all

1 five boroughs, 32BJ members  
2 understand the importance of this  
3 Charter Revision Commission.

4 Members of the Commission, as  
5 you consider proposals to amend the  
6 Charter, New Yorkers' priorities for  
7 good jobs and participatory  
8 government must remain central to  
9 your work. Taking advantage of every  
10 avenue the City has to create good  
11 jobs for working families is smart  
12 government, and protecting and  
13 integrating New Yorkers'  
14 participation in our City's future is  
15 critical to keeping a vibrant and  
16 active democracy.

17 So we have a number of  
18 proposals I'm going to put forward to  
19 you, and I will submit my testimony  
20 and give an abridged version. So to  
21 this end I'm going to ask the  
22 Commission to review the powers of  
23 land use and zoning, procurement, and  
24 economic development to create good  
25 jobs and more sustainable thriving

1 communities.

2 So regarding community  
3 involvement, over the past year land  
4 use and development policies have  
5 been repeatedly questioned and  
6 criticized from real estate  
7 developers to community groups. Few  
8 feel the haphazard process of  
9 community involvement in rezoning and  
10 redevelopment processes has provided  
11 large scale and consistent benefit to  
12 New Yorkers. Too often land use  
13 decisions are made without sufficient  
14 input from the affected communities.  
15 And to better ensure communities are  
16 involved in the redevelopment and  
17 re-envisioning of their  
18 neighborhoods, we support changes to  
19 the Charter that codify community  
20 involvement by requiring the Council  
21 to initiate, not just approve, land  
22 use actions.

23 Good jobs, our City government  
24 should never be in the business of  
25 subsidizing jobs that keep families

1           in poverty. Socially and  
2           economically this is not good  
3           government.

4           MS. JONES: You have a minute  
5           left.

6           MS. CARUSO: Thank you. I am  
7           not going to finish this in a minute,  
8           so I'll get right to the  
9           recommendations that we have.

10          We ask the Commission to update  
11          the procedural guidelines regarding  
12          land use, specifically the uniform  
13          Land Use Review Procedure, otherwise  
14          known as ULURP, so that it requires a  
15          mandatory wage standard of any entity  
16          requesting land use transactions  
17          involving City land to pay the higher  
18          of the living or prevailing wage.

19          Regarding procurement, quickly,  
20          the Commission can also help ensure  
21          the City is helping create good jobs  
22          through its \$6 billion procurement  
23          process and the power of the  
24          Procurement Policy Board to set  
25          criteria for the administration of

1 contracts. By including a grading  
2 system that incentivize's employers  
3 seeking to contract with the City, to  
4 pay the higher of the prevailing or  
5 living wage. The City can encourage  
6 responsible procurement practices.

7 Regarding elections, in one  
8 sentence I can say 32BJ opposes any  
9 changes to the Charter that would  
10 allow for nonpartisan elections --

11 MS. JONES: Your time.

12 MS. CARUSO: And regarding  
13 citywide offices, just one more quick  
14 point, we just appeal to the  
15 Commission that eliminating or  
16 diminishing any power of any borough  
17 or citywide office would  
18 unnecessarily undermine the full  
19 articulation of community policy  
20 priorities. So thank you for your  
21 time, and I will submit the written  
22 testimony.

23 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Thank  
24 you, Miss Caruso.

25 I'd like to go back on my list

1           and acknowledge Assemblyman Jim  
2           Brennan.  If you'd like to testify,  
3           Assemblyman, the microphone is yours.

4                   MR. BRENNAN:  Thank you very  
5           much.  I appreciate being here.  I'm  
6           sorry, I do not have any written  
7           testimony.  I've been running around  
8           for the past few days and have not  
9           had a chance to write anything up,  
10          but I'll try to be as succinct as  
11          possible.

12                   I chaired the City's committee  
13          in the State Assembly, which has  
14          jurisdiction over the Municipal Home  
15          Rule Law, which is your governing  
16          statute for mayoral Charter  
17          Commissions, and have some  
18          legislation to alter the composition  
19          of the Commission that's retroactive,  
20          which if it became law you would have  
21          to be reconstituted, and also change  
22          some of the process -- another piece  
23          of legislation that changes some of  
24          the processes whereby the Commission  
25          would function.  And you have a two-

1 year life, that's what the statute  
2 provides.

3 I want to thank all of you for  
4 being involved and volunteering your  
5 time. I know this will be a  
6 fascinating opportunity for you.

7 I would like to remonstrate  
8 with you a bit, if you don't mind,  
9 and let you know that setting forth a  
10 public engagement process from  
11 tonight through April 20 throughout  
12 the other Boroughs of the City to ask  
13 the public what they think of the  
14 City government is inadequate. I  
15 just -- I really think that you need  
16 to kind of rethink what you're doing  
17 in relation to whether or not you are  
18 genuinely and authentically engaging  
19 the public in a real life serious  
20 discussion of what this City  
21 government is about. And so I would  
22 like to ask you not to stop tonight  
23 but to give some time to the public,  
24 three or four months or longer, if  
25 necessary, to actually bring them in

1 to do a set of public hearings that  
2 would focus on issue areas like  
3 contracts and procurement, land use  
4 budgets, powers of the different  
5 offices, et cetera, et cetera. You  
6 can go around the Boroughs and do  
7 those. That, that model is what the  
8 1989 Charter Commission did. That was  
9 a part of a three-year process to  
10 take a look at the City government.  
11 The 1987-88 Ravitch Commission, and  
12 then the Schwarz Commission from  
13 1989, set forth 50, at least 50  
14 public hearings and took three years  
15 to take a look at the City  
16 government. Obviously, it was a  
17 different time period and the finding  
18 by the United States Supreme Court  
19 that the Board of Estimate, you know,  
20 violated one person one vote and the  
21 decision to redistribute the powers  
22 of the Board of Estimate in the City  
23 government entailed a major thought  
24 process. But the Charter Commission  
25 of that period did successfully

1           engage the public in a real life  
2           meaningful dialogue about where the  
3           City government ought to go. And  
4           my -- once again, I would suggest to  
5           you that it is a very shallow  
6           engagement of the public to have five  
7           public hearings in a two-week period  
8           and then stop and then put together  
9           whatever proposals you might come  
10          forth with and then have a set of  
11          public hearings later in the spring  
12          as to what you've already come up  
13          with. I don't think two months to  
14          come up with a bunch of proposals is  
15          legitimate.

16                 MS. JONES:  Sir, time.

17                 MR. BRENNAN:  I'll be finished  
18                 in a second.

19                 I don't think you should put  
20                 any proposals on the ballot for  
21                 November.  I think you should wait  
22                 until 2011 and give the public a  
23                 serious opportunity to, to provide  
24                 information to you. The fact that  
25                 this hall is not full I think is a

1           problem, and I think you ought to  
2           rethink your process with respect to  
3           what you're doing. And so I leave you  
4           with that thought and hope that you  
5           will consider that and thank you for  
6           your time and look forward to -- I  
7           might even come and tell you the same  
8           thing, you know, down the road. But  
9           once again, I don't think this is the  
10          correct approach. And I urge you to  
11          reconsider. Thank you.

12                    CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN:

13          Appreciate your testimony.

14                    Let's move on to Bill McCarthy.

15          Bill McCarthy?

16                    MR. McCARTHY: Mr. Chairman,  
17          esteemed members of the Committee, my  
18          name is Bill McCarthy. I live on  
19          Staten Island. I am a member of the  
20          Independence Party, and my claim to  
21          fame is that I've lived in this city  
22          pretty close to 70 years and I  
23          probably know a lot of the problems.  
24          Unlike some of the elected officials  
25          that have come up here, I'm not going

1 to yell at you. I'm going to tell  
2 you that I'm very encouraged by you.  
3 I can see by the looks on most of  
4 your faces that you're intelligent.  
5 Most of you are still awake, which is  
6 very, very good. And I also have to  
7 tell you that I'm not sure I  
8 understand why when I guess  
9 95 percent of the people though in  
10 this arena are citizens, the public  
11 officials get priority in speaking.  
12 That does not seem like a good deal  
13 for the Commission, and it gives me  
14 an example of where your mind is at.  
15 That troubles me.

16 I am embarrassed to be a New  
17 Yorker right now. Actually, I'm  
18 embarrassed to be an American. My  
19 Congress and your Congress is not  
20 voting the way the American people  
21 want them to vote. New York  
22 politicians, New York State  
23 politicians, are so ridiculous it's  
24 not even worth talking about. It's  
25 embarrassing. I think the City

1 politicians are probably a more  
2 honest group. Maybe they're just not  
3 in the spotlight as much.

4 My problem with you each is  
5 that you've probably all been  
6 appointed to this Commission by a  
7 politician, and the history over the  
8 years for government authorities and  
9 commissions that cross our government  
10 are corporations, is that the  
11 appointees vote the way their  
12 appointor dictates.

13 If that's going to be the case  
14 with you gentlemen, you can probably  
15 go home tonight and save yourself a  
16 lot of trouble. However, I'm  
17 optimistic. I think that you're all  
18 intelligent. I think you can use  
19 common sense. What I would implore  
20 you to do is be individuals. Use  
21 your -- listen to the public. They  
22 will tell you what they think --

23 MS. JONES: Sir if --

24 MR. McCARTHY: Politicians.

25 We have some 300,000 city

1 employees. I don't know how many  
2 hundreds of politicians. If any of  
3 them could have fixed our problems  
4 they would have done it by now. By  
5 appointing New York City employees to  
6 members of the staff I probably think  
7 you'll lose an opportunity to get  
8 sunlight into the operation.

9 So I'll end now and just ask  
10 you please, be individuals, vote  
11 your conscience, and listen to the  
12 people.

13 The politicians have been  
14 talking for years. You can ask them  
15 what they want anytime. Thank you  
16 very much.

17 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Thank  
18 you, Mr. McCarthy.

19 Next speaker is Michael  
20 "Zumblalino." Michael "Zumblalino,"  
21 did I pronounce that right?

22 MR. ZUMBLUSKAS: Zumbluskas.

23 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: That's  
24 close enough.

25 MR. ZUMBLUSKAS: I'm used to my

1 name being slaughtered, so it doesn't  
2 matter.

3 My name is Mike Zumbluskas.  
4 I'm with the State Independence  
5 Party. I'm on the Executive  
6 Committee. I just wanted to state a  
7 couple things.

8 One, I think nonpartisan  
9 elections are definitely necessary,  
10 and not only do we need to do  
11 nonpartisan elections, we need to do  
12 proportional representation, and we  
13 need to do instant run-off voting.

14 One of the things that will do  
15 it will also say we only have one  
16 election. We're in a budget crisis.  
17 So if we have, you know, instant  
18 run-off voting we can hold the  
19 election in November and save all  
20 that primary money. Some of the  
21 parties won't like it because they  
22 hold party offices during that, but  
23 they can switch it to the state  
24 elections on those dates when they're  
25 running for their state committees

1           and county committees and everything  
2           else. But the City needs to save  
3           money. The State needs to save  
4           money. The Federal government needs  
5           to save money. And if we institute  
6           the instant run-off proportional  
7           representation, however, to do  
8           proportional representation, say,  
9           Manhattan for example, we have 10  
10          City Council people. You would run  
11          in all of Manhattan.

12                 We've got to stop building  
13          these speed building of politicians.  
14          They're worried about their own  
15          locality.

16                 A lot of our City problems are  
17          City problems. County problems. And  
18          if we have everybody basically  
19          looking at their whole -- the whole  
20          District would be Manhattan, Staten  
21          Island, Brooklyn, I think more things  
22          would get done, people will start  
23          looking beyond just their communities  
24          and to address the bigger problems of  
25          New York.

1           The other thing is if you do  
2           not hold the -- basically put this on  
3           the ballot in a presidential,  
4           mayoral, or gubernatorial race, it's  
5           a waste of time. Sorry to say even  
6           though we live in a representative  
7           democracy, most people do not come  
8           out to vote except in those big  
9           elections --

10           MS. JONES: Sir, you have a  
11           minute left.

12           MR. ZUMBLUSKAS: Excuse me?

13           MS. JONES: You have a minute  
14           left.

15           MR. ZUMBLUSKAS: Okay, thank  
16           you. So if you hold it next year  
17           basically, you're wasting your time,  
18           because only the partisan people are  
19           going to come out to vote. So if you  
20           put on nonpartisan elections it's  
21           going down in flames just like in  
22           2003, when you had, I think it was, a  
23           15 percent turnout in 2003. That's a  
24           joke.

25           So if you don't hold it in a

1 major election year then you're  
2 wasting your time for actual change  
3 because the party, you know, the  
4 establishment, whether it's the  
5 unions, the party elite, they're  
6 going to shoot down most of your  
7 changes. Don't waste your time. Hold  
8 it this year during the gubernatorial  
9 election, because otherwise, you  
10 know, like I said, it will go down,  
11 because the establishment can get the  
12 people out. Thank you.

13 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Thank you  
14 very much.

15 Matt, are there any other?  
16 Thank you.

17 I understand that Carl Paladino  
18 is here.

19 Thank you, good to see you.

20 MR. PALADINO: Thank you. I've  
21 prepared a statement. I'm Carl  
22 Paladino from Buffalo, New York. I'm  
23 grateful for the opportunity to speak  
24 tonight. I too served on a couple of  
25 Charter Revision Commissions and I

1 know the responsibility.

2 If I could just say, do not  
3 delay in taking action. We need  
4 change. Public policy decisions made  
5 by New York City, our State's largest  
6 city, affect every part of the State.

7 I come here to support the  
8 reinstitution of term limits for all  
9 city offices. I also support term  
10 limits for all State elected  
11 officials. However, I suggest  
12 eight-year term limits, not twelve.  
13 After twelve years our elected  
14 officials become too comfortable and  
15 too entrenched. They build political  
16 machines and massive special interest  
17 war chests. They stop listening to  
18 their people, and as we see recently,  
19 they become corrupt. Term limits  
20 guarantee new people, new leadership,  
21 new thinking, and new ideas. The  
22 arrogant ruling class that has driven  
23 our state into the ground fear term  
24 limits like cockroaches fear  
25 sunshine.

1           Additionally, I would recommend  
2           stripping the Commission of any City  
3           or State official convicted of  
4           corruption. Taxpayers should not be  
5           asked to subsidize crooks.

6           In a very simple -- well, in a  
7           dialogue I had this morning, I talked  
8           about the culture that we're living  
9           with in, in Albany today. That  
10          culture is out of control. That  
11          culture is out of touch with the  
12          people. We've allowed it to move in  
13          that direction for years and years  
14          and years without the people  
15          speaking. And as a result, we have a  
16          government that does some pretty wild  
17          things. On the backs, not necessarily  
18          in interested in serving the people,  
19          but interested in serving themselves.

20          MS. JONES: Sir, you have a  
21          minute left.

22          MR. PALADINO: We -- thank you.

23          We have in Albany today a  
24          disaster. It's a shambles. It's not  
25          working. It's not responsive to the

1 people.

2 We could talk about individual  
3 issues. We could talk about some of  
4 the core values and all that, but  
5 really what it comes down to is who  
6 are they representing? What are they  
7 doing? When they passed an ethics  
8 law -- they passed an ethics law  
9 recently, and that ethics law was  
10 meant to apply to each legislator, to  
11 ask each legislator: What outside  
12 income are you earning? And tell us  
13 not only how much but tell us how you  
14 earned it. In other words, did you  
15 use your public office to earn that  
16 outside income? A perfectly  
17 legitimate request by the taxpayer.  
18 And they passed a law.

19 MS. JONES: Your time.

20 MR. PALADINO: They exempted  
21 from the law Sheldon Silver and Jack  
22 Sampson. They exempted all lawyers  
23 from the law. This is what you get  
24 when you don't have term limits. When  
25 you don't have fresh ideas. Thank

1           you.

2                   CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: George  
3           Spitz. Mr. Spitz.

4                   MR. SPITZ: Yes. Thank you. I  
5           had a fractured hip recently. It's  
6           not a congenital thing.

7                   CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Just take  
8           your time.

9                   MR. SPITZ: Okay.

10                   CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Be  
11          careful.

12                   MR. SPITZ: Honorable Members,  
13          if you're going to have more than one  
14          hearing you'll see me at more than  
15          one hearing as per the past, and I  
16          want to always use my time to come up  
17          with different ideas. And one of my  
18          ideas were adopted -- actually one of  
19          the Charter Commissions -- I think  
20          the Video Voter Guide. Right,  
21          Mr. Crowell?

22                   MR. CROWELL: It was adopted as  
23          a practice. Yes.

24                   MR. SPITZ: What?

25                   MR. CROWELL: Yes, the City

1           adopted it as a practice, yes.

2           MR. SPITZ: Yeah. Well, in  
3           another hearing I'm going to suggest  
4           making the Video Voter Guide  
5           interactive. Take it another step  
6           further. I have many suggestions for  
7           improving the government. And one of  
8           them is restore -- term limits are  
9           not a panacea. People vote for term  
10          limits and say it because they're so  
11          upset. What they should consider,  
12          proportional representation as a way  
13          of getting a better City Council.  
14          And I have drafted, I have a copy of  
15          how -- a system of proportional  
16          representation. The one used in  
17          Finland is the best. It calls for  
18          districts, local districts, and it  
19          doesn't do away with the parties,  
20          which is what the parties screamed  
21          about before, but it offers an  
22          opportunity to give representation  
23          for different types of people, like  
24          engineers, accountants, scientists.  
25          And these are not representative --

1 people with technical skills can run  
2 for office under a proportional  
3 representation system, and they have  
4 a chance of winning under a  
5 proportional representation system.

6 The proportional representation  
7 system we had adopted in 1937 was  
8 better than the old Board of  
9 Aldermen. Tammany had every seat but  
10 one in the old Board of Aldermen.

11 In '36 the people did just  
12 what -- circulated a petition but the  
13 Charter Commission could put a  
14 petition on the ballot calling for  
15 proportional representation.

16 Unfortunately, they adopted a system  
17 that allowed at the time Communists  
18 to get elected.

19 Now, that in itself did not  
20 matter until 1945, when the Cold War  
21 started. As a consequence, the  
22 people were very resentful, and in a  
23 referendum in '47 they did away with  
24 the Charter, with proportional  
25 representation.

1           Now, another important thing is  
2           in 193 -- even under the Board of  
3           Aldermen they had no lulus. Do away  
4           with lulus and restore two-year  
5           terms. Two-year terms are better than  
6           four-year terms, can have -- the  
7           legislators are closer to the people.

8           Now, the State legislature  
9           extended for the 1945 election from  
10          two years to four-year terms. The  
11          Citizens Union at that time supported  
12          it because they hoped it would  
13          protect proportional representation.

14          MS. JONES: Sir --

15          MR. SPITZ: But they went to  
16          four-year terms.

17          The people do not want  
18          four-year terms because the State  
19          legislature then put through a  
20          constitutional amendment, or tried to  
21          get it on the ballot, calling for  
22          four-year terms, and the people,  
23          because they had to do it for  
24          assemblymen and state senators, they  
25          couldn't go to four-year terms

1 without a constitutional amendment,  
2 and the people voted it down. The  
3 people do not want four-year terms,  
4 and you've got to consider that.

5 Well, thank you. I've taken up  
6 enough time. Here's copies. And I'm  
7 going to E-mail further testimony.  
8 And I'll see you at most of all the  
9 meetings.

10 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Thank  
11 you, Mr. Spitz.

12 Our next speaker is Ron McNeal.

13 MR. McNEAL: First of all, my  
14 name is Ron McNeal and I'm from  
15 Harlem, and I got invited by the  
16 Independence Board, and I'm a  
17 registered Democrat. But I think I  
18 can speak for everybody in the room  
19 when I say that I think you failed  
20 with the government. I think you  
21 pretty much failed with the  
22 government with the big bailouts and  
23 being inconsiderate of the people.  
24 And retire all the partisanship in  
25 Washington from the Republicans

1           trying to block the Democrats' bill.  
2           "I say, 'Oh, if I got this bill will  
3           it be good political points for me?  
4           Or how will I look towards  
5           re-election?'"

6           I mean, you pretty much all  
7           failed about it. And I was on -- I  
8           went to CNN. I saw Rev. Al Sharpton  
9           when he said that when you keep  
10          blocking out bills we are blocking  
11          out opportunities for the people.

12          So like, like I said before,  
13          government should be more considerate  
14          towards the people and about time we  
15          had a government that's for the  
16          people and by the people. That's all  
17          I have to say. Thank you.

18          CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Thank you  
19          very much, Mr. McNeal.

20          That exhausts the listing of  
21          people that have signed up to speak  
22          this evening.

23          I wondered if there are any  
24          members of the Commission that would  
25          like to ask a question or to make a

1 statement?

2 Anthony, did you have anything  
3 you wanted to add?

4 MR. CROWELL: No. In response to  
5 Assemblyman Brennan's comments, the  
6 Commission announced at the last  
7 meeting, we had an extensive  
8 schedule, obviously, four more  
9 hearings this month, as in May, and  
10 again reconvene for more hearings in  
11 June and July.

12 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: We are  
13 committed to being as open and as  
14 attentive to getting as much  
15 testimony as we can.

16 That was a pledge from our  
17 initial meeting, so what Mr. Crowell  
18 just said, and we're just going to  
19 affirm that again, we haven't put out  
20 all of the times, but certainly it's  
21 going to be a very extensive effort  
22 to reach deep into the bedrock of  
23 views across this great city. Thank  
24 you for that.

25 Any other members of the

1 Commission want to -- yes, Mr. Fiala.

2 MR. FIALA: Mr. Chairman, I just  
3 want to follow up on our first  
4 meeting. A resolution that we voted  
5 on was to delegate you to the  
6 selection of staff, and I didn't want  
7 this meeting to end without  
8 commending you for the selection in  
9 what I think is an assortment of very  
10 competent and capable individuals  
11 with a long history of government  
12 experience. And the Commission will  
13 be well-served by their  
14 participation. And the City also  
15 will be well-served because they do  
16 bring a wealth of expertise that no  
17 doubt will enhance our work, and I  
18 commend you for their selection.

19 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Thank  
20 you, Mr. Fiala.

21 I want to say on behalf of the  
22 Commission how deeply appreciative we  
23 are for you to come out this evening.  
24 Obviously we've listened very closely  
25 to what you had to say, and the ideas

1 are going to continue to grow and  
2 continue to take form over the next  
3 several months. So I very much  
4 appreciate your participation.

5 Oh, I'm sorry. Hope.

6 MS. COHEN: Yes, I did want to  
7 add something on the issue of  
8 outreach.

9 I think the Chairman has laid  
10 out a quite an aggressive outreach  
11 effort.

12 On the other hand, I think it's  
13 also true that this hearing in  
14 particular really didn't have  
15 adequate notice, and I think that's  
16 by virtue of the fact that we wanted  
17 to get started, and we needed to get  
18 started, and it happens to be a  
19 difficult time of year.

20 I'm glad we got started, but I  
21 think that we also have to consider  
22 that it was not adequately noticed,  
23 and we really need to reach out for  
24 the next four hearings that are  
25 coming up in this round.

1           I think it's also important I  
2           think I really took away from  
3           Assembly Member Brennan's remarks was  
4           to make clear to the people of the  
5           City of New York just what the  
6           potential extent of the Commission's  
7           work could be, what the opportunities  
8           are here.

9           I think that mainly so far the  
10          public discussions have been about  
11          term limits, and certainly we do need  
12          to make that part of our business.  
13          But as we heard, I think in spades,  
14          this evening there is a huge range of  
15          potential material for us to be  
16          considering, and I don't think the  
17          people of the City of New York  
18          necessarily know if that's the case,  
19          what the potential is. And I've got  
20          to tell you that just in preparing  
21          for these meetings as I've gone back  
22          through and, you know, sort of  
23          reading the Charter from cover to  
24          cover, there was just stuff that  
25          strikes me as remarkable what's in

1           there.

2                   Taking up on what Henry Stern  
3           said, why is it in there?

4                   I think there's an opportunity  
5           for us to be more proactive in  
6           educating the public about what we  
7           should be doing and what they want  
8           out of the Charter and what needs to  
9           be in the Charter and what doesn't  
10          need to be in the Charter and  
11          different ways we can change the  
12          Charter and other things that govern  
13          good governance.

14                   I think we should consider that  
15          and see what we can do with that.

16                   (Continued on the next page.)

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1 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Thank  
2 you, Hope. I appreciate those  
3 comments.

4 Any other comments from the  
5 Commission Members?

6 Hearing none, I'd like to have  
7 a motion to adjourn this meeting.

8 MR. BANKS: Move.

9 CHANCELLOR GOLDSTEIN: Second.

10 Thank you, ladies and  
11 gentlemen, for coming.

12 (Time noted, 7:02 p.m.)

13

14 I, NORAH COLTON, CM, a Notary  
15 Public for and within the State of  
16 New York, do hereby certify that the  
17 above is a correct transcription of  
18 my stenographic notes.

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22 NORAH COLTON, CM

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