

Bloomberg Says Homeless Policies Fall Short

By June Kellum
Epoch Times Staff

Jul 11, 2009

Last Updated
Jul 11, 2009



Joel Berg, Executive Director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger, flanked by Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum (R) and Comptroller William C. Thompson Jr.(L) spoke out against Mayor Bloomberg's homeless policies on Thursday. (Hune Kellum)

NEW YORK—Mayor Bloomberg said that New York's homeless find shelters "a lot more attractive" than permanent living situations, according to the New York Times. Bloomberg was speaking at a Working Families Party Mayoral Forum on July 2.

Both Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum and Comptroller William C. Thompson Jr. say that Bloomberg's comment indicates how "out of touch" he is with the city.

Joel Berg, executive director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger called Bloomberg's policies "ridiculous." In a press release from Gotbaum's office, Berg says, "Given how absurd the Mayor's personal assumptions about homelessness

are, it is no wonder that his Administration is following absurd, counter-productive policies regarding homelessness."

In May, public and official outcry temporarily stopped the Bloomberg Administration from enforcing a state law requiring homeless to pay rent for shelter housing, according to a press release from Gotbaum's office.

The Bloomberg Administration concedes that it has failed to reduce the numbers of homeless in New York. This summer, shelters are facing record numbers of applicants, according to a press release issued by the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS). The release also says, "the City is well equipped to handle the demand for temporary, emergency shelter for all those in need."

Of greater concern to many New York homeless, are the lack of Section 8 housing vouchers. Section 8 vouchers help poor families pay rent. But according to the New York City Housing Association (NYCHA) website, "As of May 15, 2007 NYCHA will only accept Section 8 applications from emergency applicants, until further notice." Many of New York's working poor are denied vouchers.

Sophia Bryant a disabled nurse, reported that she and her three daughters spent 22 months in a shelter. She said, "Nobody wants to be in a shelter...[being homeless] has a stigma" which is hard to overcome.

Bryant is now in a permanent housing situation but at risk of eviction because the city has stopped sending her rent checks.

Bryant also works with Picture the Homeless, an organization founded by homeless people to address social issues and media representation of the homeless. Picture the homeless will host a press conference July 14 to evaluate ineffective homeless policies and suggest practical alternatives. For more information

<http://picturethehomeless.org>