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June 24, 2009

Dear Colleague:

Introduction 991-2009 is an effort to increase government transparency and access to public data on the municipal level. Intro 991 offers the City Council an opportunity to move New York to the forefront of the growing digital government and data management movements taking place across the country and in the Federal government. This legislation stands to more fully utilize government data, increase civic engagement, and empower the City's tech entrepreneur community.

The bill will require the City to create a centralized online repository of all publicly available information that is either produced or retained by the City. Furthermore, data published under this legislation will be readable by any computer device, whether that is a laptop or a phone. Not only will this collection of information be invaluable to elected officials, other government agencies and public advocates, but it can also be used by private citizens who could use the information in ingenious and unforeseen ways. New York could be a pioneer in an increasingly popular and competitive field: Int. 991, when passed, could place New York ahead of any other major city or state in the nation because our legislation is more comprehensive.

The spirit of this legislation parallels initiatives taken in Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington, D.C., but we have introduced legislation that surpasses their efforts in both its scope and organization. Intro. 991 would create the first central location for all City data, a "www.datanyc.gov" of sorts, much like the Obama Administration's recently launched www.data.gov and www.recovery.gov.

Furthermore, the data requirements of Int. 991 would publish data in formats allowing the tech community to interact with City government in a new and exciting manner. Just imagine looking at a restaurant's ratings (and violations) on your computer or mobile device based on your search or GPS location. On the academic side, students can research legislation and statistics instantly. Open access to information ensures government accountability to provide the most detailed and user-friendly data format, while maintaining user privacy. Essentially, government transparency generates greater collaboration between the people and the government, as it fosters awareness for the local community.

The Technology in Government Committee will hold a hearing regarding this legislation on Monday, June 29, 2009 at 250 Broadway, 14th Floor Hearing Room at 1:00pm. If you would like to sign on to Int. 991-2009, please contact Kunal Malhotra, Legislative and Budget Director, at (212) 788-6975 or kmalhotra@council.nyc.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gale A. Brewer".

Gale A. Brewer