



NEW YORK CITY LAW DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CORPORATION COUNSEL

Michael A. Cardozo, *Corporation Counsel*

Press Release

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For Immediate Release

LAW DEPARTMENT ATTORNEY RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS GOVERNMENT SERVICE AWARD FROM THE AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

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New York, November 18, 2011 – Gabriel Taussig, Chief of the New York City Law Department's Administrative Law Division, has been selected to receive the prestigious 2011 Mary C. Lawton Outstanding Government Service Award. Each year, the American Bar Association's Section of Administrative Law and Regulatory Practice honors one attorney nationwide for outstanding contributions to the development and implementation of administrative law and regulatory practice. Mr. Taussig has worked at the Law Department for the past 37 years on a wide range of City regulations including City codes mandating window guards to protect young children and the posting of calorie information in chain restaurants.

"Gabe is one of the City's unsung heroes. The impact he's had on our lives can be seen all around the City – his efforts keep us safe, improve our quality of life, and affect the lives of everyone who lives in and visits New York," said Corporation Counsel Michael A. Cardozo. "We are extremely proud of Gabe's achievement. New Yorkers are fortunate to have someone of his caliber and dedication in their corner."

The Administrative Law Division litigates on behalf of the City in challenges related to laws and regulations that were adopted to promote public health and safety, protect consumers, and enhance quality of life. The Division advises every City agency that creates regulations – from the Taxi and Limousine Commission to the Parks Department. Many of these regulations have been challenged – and successfully defended – in court by the Division. Mr. Taussig has been intimately involved in the development and promulgation of many local laws and initiatives that impact the daily lives of New Yorkers and include the following:

Public Health

- Ground breaking health code regulations banning smoking in public places, including places where people work and at City parks and beaches.
 - The Calorie Law, which requires certain restaurants to post calorie information on menus and menu boards. The law was adopted to address increasing obesity rates and was upheld by the courts.
 - City protocols for implementing Kendra's Law, which authorizes court-ordered outpatient treatment for certain persons who are mentally ill and refuse to undergo voluntary treatment.
 - The Health Department's response to the HIV/AIDS crisis through education and litigation against commercial establishments where high risk activity was taking place.
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First Amendment Rights

- The City's efforts to balance protestors' freedom of speech with public health and safety concerns with regards to the Occupy Wall Street protests in Zuccotti Park.
- Parks Department rules that limit the number of special events and demonstrations in Central Park.
- Parks Department regulations on the number of artists allowed to vend in City parks.

Quality of Life

- Installation of new customer service equipment in taxi cabs including GPS systems and credit card processors.
- Police regulations that require processions and races of more than 50 bicyclists to obtain a parade permit in order to protect the safety of bicyclists, motorists and pedestrians, and prevent traffic congestion.
- Police rules that prohibit issuance of a parade permit to any new parade along Fifth Avenue.
- Zoning initiatives including the 1995 adoption of regulations governing "adult" stores and clubs. These codes were ultimately upheld by the courts.
- The ordinance requiring newsstands to be maintained as part of a comprehensive street furniture franchise program. As part of this, old newsstands were replaced by new state-of-the art structures.
- Enforcement efforts to address illegal conversions of residential buildings to transient hotels.
- Licensing protocols that require detailed background checks to unearth integrity issues in industries that have historically been dominated by organized crime. Mr. Taussig participated in the adoption of local laws regulating the private carting industry, certain produce and fish markets, as well as off-shore gambling.

Protecting Landmarks

- Zoning the South Street Seaport in a way that preserved the neighborhood's scale and historical context.
- Countering efforts from developers to prevent a building's designation as a landmark by stripping architectural detail from building façades or not keeping landmarked buildings in good repair. Attorneys obtained \$1.1 million in civil penalties and a court order requiring owners to make repairs to the 127-year-old Windermere – one of the oldest remaining large apartment houses.

Public Safety

The Division also brings civil actions to obtain compliance with laws and regulations and prosecute violators in Criminal Court. Mr Taussig has been involved with:

- Criminal prosecution of the owners of illegal public assembly spaces in an effort to avoid tragic accidents. These efforts increased after a fire at the Happy Land social club left 87 people dead in 1990.
- Building and fire safety regulations, such as those governing installation of fire safety devices in places of public assembly and high rise buildings, and the inspection and maintenance of building façades.
- Reducing the proliferation of illegal billboards – both near highways and atop buildings.

- Vending initiatives – including the development of regulations for the vending of food and expressive matter in City parks. Mr. Taussig has also helped the Police Department develop protocols for enforcing the City’s vending regulations.

Mr. Taussig was nominated by his peers based on these and numerous other achievements during his tenure in City government. He graduated from Queens College in 1971 and received his law degree from Brooklyn Law School. He was born in Haifa, Israel and raised and educated in Queens. He remains a resident of Queens, where he and his wife Ethel raised their son Doron and daughter Dana. He is also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Queens Public Library.

The award will be presented to him by the American Bar Association at the annual Administrative Law Conference in Washington, D.C. which attracts some 700 attorneys, judges and academics.

The New York City Law Department is one of the oldest, largest and most dynamic law offices in the world, ranking among the top three largest law offices in New York City and one of the largest public law offices in the country. Tracing its roots back to the 1600's, the Department has an active caseload of 90,000 matters and transactions in 17 legal divisions. The Corporation Counsel heads the Law Department and acts as legal counsel for the Mayor, elected officials, the City and all its agencies. The Department's 650 attorneys represent the City on a vast array of civil litigation, legislative and legal issues and in the criminal prosecution of juveniles. For more information, please visit nyc.gov/law.

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