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MAYOR BLOOMBERG SIGNS EXECUTIVE ORDER INCREASING OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE TRIALS AND HEARINGS OVERSIGHT OF RESTAURANT, TAXI AND OTHER HEARINGS

As the City's Central Adjudication Agency, the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings Will Improve Efficiency and Service to the Public While Enhancing Judicial Independence and Professionalism

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Deputy Mayor for Legal Affairs Carol Robles-Román today announced that the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH) will have increased oversight of hearings on tickets issued to restaurant owners, taxi drivers and many other small businesses in the City. Executive Order 148, signed by the Mayor, will transfer the management of the administrative tribunals of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and of the Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) to OATH beginning on July 3, 2011. Over 150,000 cases a year will be affected. OATH's management means it will be easier for business owners and other members of the public to fight tickets; more hearings will be offered online or by telephone; more hearings will be held at local offices outside Manhattan; and more information will be available to help a party who wants to challenge a violation. OATH is independent of the agencies that write tickets and is dedicated to enhancing the professionalism of the City's administrative judiciary. OATH's oversight of these cases will also ensure that they move quickly and that enforcement of City rules is effective.

"Our Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings has a proven record of streamlining and improving access to the administrative justice system," said Mayor Bloomberg. "Through innovation and reform, they have transformed the City's largest administrative tribunal into one that is more efficient and customer-focused, and our smaller tribunals will now benefit from that experience."

"For many New Yorkers, challenging a ticket at a City tribunal is the most direct experience they will have with our legal system, and having an independent, fair and efficient administrative court is crucial to providing New Yorkers with justice," said Deputy Mayor Robles-Román.

OATH's specialization in tribunal administration will enable it to effectively allocate necessary resources and training to make the hearing process easier and more efficient. In 2008, the

Mayor signed legislation that transferred the administrative tribunal at the Department of Environmental Protection, the Environmental Control Board, to OATH. Under OATH's management, the Environmental Control Board eliminated a backlog of 7,000 cases, shortened the wait time for judicial decisions from 96 days to less than 30, and has made the hearing process easier by providing online hearings and appeals.

"I am proud of the work we perform at OATH and I am committed to maintaining the high level of services that this agency provides, including conducting efficient and fair hearings," said Chief Administrative Law Judge Suzanne Beddoe. "I look forward to the opportunity to share OATH's judicial expertise, professionalism and emphasis on customer satisfaction with the New Yorkers who interact with these two tribunals."

"OATH has demonstrated it can ensure people have a meaningful opportunity to present their cases while being given the information and resources they need and the convenience and courtesy they deserve," said Administrative Justice Coordinator David B. Goldin. "This is a real step forward for justice in our City."

In November 2010, voters approved an amendment to the City Charter that authorized the Mayor to transfer administrative tribunals to OATH. The Charter Revision Commission proposed the amendment so that the City could take greater advantage of OATH's independence, professionalism and expertise in tribunal administration. The amendment also called for the Mayor to appoint a committee to study the City's tribunals and recommend which ones should be consolidated. Last week, the Mayor's Committee on Consolidation of Administrative Tribunals, chaired by Deputy Mayor Robles-Román, recommended the consolidations of these two tribunals. The Committee's recommendations are contained in a public report available at www.nyc.gov.

The Department of Health tribunal has been responsible for hearing cases on tickets issued by the department. Last year, the tribunal handled about 60,000 cases, the majority of them restaurant violations. All hearings are now held in Manhattan, but consolidation with OATH will eventually allow hearings to be held in all five boroughs. The administrative tribunal at the Taxi and Limousine Commission has been responsible for hearing cases on violations of the City's rules and regulations for taxi drivers and medallion owners. Last year, the tribunal conducted hearings for approximately 110,000 cases. The tribunal's locations will remain the same until additional hearing offices are added. As recommended by the Mayor's Committee, the executive order also requires that certain types of cases originating with the Department of Housing Preservation and Development or with the Business Integrity Commission be heard by OATH.

- 30 -

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