

East Harlem Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito Tops Human Rights Report

November 14, 2011 2:46pm | By Jeff Mays, DNAinfo Reporter/Producer



East Harlem Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito said the neighborhood should be declared a "hate-free zone." "We will not accept anyone being discriminated against because of who they are," said Mark-Viverito. (DNAinfo/Jeff Mays)

HARLEM — For the [second year](#) in a row, East Harlem City Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito has topped the [New York City Council's Human Rights Report Card](#) from the [Urban Justice Center](#).

[Mark-Viverito](#) ranked ahead of all 51 council members, receiving a 90 percent grade, or A+, for categories such as housing rights, workers rights, criminal and juvenile justice and government accountability.

"We commend Council Member Mark-Viverito for scoring the highest marks in this year's human rights report card, and for consistently voting for and sponsoring legislation to promote the basic human rights of New Yorkers," said Ejim Dike, director of the Human Rights Project at the Urban Justice Center.

Mark-Viverito said she was honored to receive top position again. One of the bills she was heavily involved in aimed to limit cooperation between the Department of Correction and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and another was decriminalizing possession of small amounts of marijuana. She also [created a task force to address youth violence in East Harlem](#).

"It's the essence of what I feel. We all deserve to be treated the same," said Mark-Viverito.

But the report criticized the City Council Speaker Christine Quinn for failing to bring important human rights legislation to a vote, even though the legislation may have veto-proof support among Council members.

Only eight of 49 Council bills passed into law over the past year addressed human rights and those eight were all minor, according to the report.

Due to the City Council tradition where bills without support of the speaker don't make it to a vote, bills regarding a right to housing and the NYPD's Civilian Complaint Review Board did not get a hearing despite having more than half the Council as sponsors.

Only half of bills without support of Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Speaker Quinn made it to a vote, according to the report. Bills with both Bloomberg's and Quinn's support made it to a vote 81 percent of the time.

The report suggested the Council use a rule that allows bills to be pushed out of committee if supported by a majority of the Council, the lead sponsor and seven additional sponsors.

The Council is probably reluctant to do that because of the political ramifications, the report said.

"We realize that the Speaker is the most powerful council member and has failed to bring key bills up for a vote. However, we have also identified existing mechanisms in the rules of council that allow members to challenge the political power of the Speaker, and we would like to see council members take advantage of those rules even if that means weathering political reprisals," said Dike.

Quinn's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Other Manhattan council members who scored high on the report include the Upper West Side's Gale Brewer, with an A, and Washington Heights' Ydanis Rodriguez with a B+. Quinn scored a D+.

RELATED CONTENT

- [Upper Manhattan Council Members Push for Marijuana Reform Bill](#)
- [Council Passes Bill to Curtail Deportation for Jailed Immigrants](#)
- [East Harlem Councilwoman Gets A+ on Human Rights](#)



By [Jeff Mays](#), DNAINFO.COM
[Follow Jeff on Twitter @JeffCMays](#)

Read more: <http://www.dnainfo.com/20111114/harlem/east-harlem-councilwoman-melissa-markviverito-tops-human-rights-report#ixzz1diabGzUV>