



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Standing Up for Tour Bus Guides

THOMAS K. DUANE November 28, 2011



On November 29, 2011, I joined dozens of licensed New York City tour guides and representatives of Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 225 in a rally to save the jobs of more than 100 Gray Line tour bus guides at risk of being replaced by pre-recorded narration. The guides are currently negotiating a new contract with Gray Line New York, which, according to the union, has said it wants to automate operations and keep only a small number of its unionized guides for private group tours.

As I said at the rally, live guides not only sell tourists on New York with their personalities and individual stories but they also make tour buses safer for passengers and the

communities they drive through. And, of course, a recording cannot answer tourists' questions or give real-time commentary on the colorful characters who populate our streets.

I am particularly concerned that Gray Line is allegedly using New York City Local Law 15 of 2010, introduced by New York City Councilmember Gale Brewer, which requires a five-year phased-in implementation of headphone-limited sound reproduction systems in all open-air sight-seeing buses, as a pretext for laying off live tour guides. I advocated for that law, which was designed to eliminate the disruptive noise that emanates from loud speakers on many tour buses without depriving customers of commentary from their tour guides. It in no way provides a legitimate basis for eliminating such guides.

Tourism is an incredibly important part of New York City's economy. We can and we must have reasonable and thoughtful statutes which support the industry – and its employees – while improving the living conditions of residents. I continue to call upon Gray Line to engage in good faith negotiations with TWU Local 225 and to keep its full fleet of tour guides gainfully employed and promoting our city.