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THE SENATE
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JUDICIARY

July 15, 2014

Hon. Eric Schneiderman
Attorney General
State of New York
The Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Hon. Cesar A. Perales
Secretary of State
State of New York
One Commerce Plaza
99 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12231

Dear Attorney General Schneiderman and Secretary of State Perales:

I am bringing to your attention an apparent scam being run throughout the Times Square area, located in my Senate District, in which individuals affiliated with the for-profit "New York Times Square News" aggressively solicit contributions from passers-by for the alleged benefit of the homeless. I urge you to investigate this activity and take appropriate action.

This dubious business is registered with the NYS Department of State as a Domestic Business Corporation (DOS ID 4258490). According to the company's website¹, "The New York Times Square News vendors are independent contractors that provide information and direct people to [their] website. Any funds given to the vendors by the general public or any other party is offered and accepted as a gratuity for the performance of their duties."

¹ <http://www.tnytsn.com>



A business model based on vendors who have nothing to sell, and are compensated only through voluntary gratuities for a specious service, is questionable. In fact, the New York Times Square News vendors that many of my constituents and I have observed are instead actively seeking donations with the claim that they are collecting funds to help the homeless.

It is notable that the masthead of the most recent online edition of New York Times Square News², from June 2014, lists Myra Walker as Editor. On June 24, 2010, then-Attorney General Andrew Cuomo announced a judgment permanently shutting down the not-for-profit group United Homeless Organization, Inc. and barring Ms. Walker, who was its director, as well as Stephen Riley, its founder and president, from operating not-for-profits in New York State. With the for-profit New York Times Square News, Ms. Walker has ostensibly found a loophole in which to operate.

I have witnessed first-hand that vendors affiliated with New York Times Square News are not just misleading, they are menacing to those who ignore their appeals or question their legitimacy. I urge you to investigate this for-profit enterprise masquerading as a charity and help rid Times Square of the scores of vendors shaking down unsuspecting New Yorkers and tourists alike.

Sincerely,



Brad Hoylman
New York State Senate
27th District

cc: Tim Tompkins, President, Times Square Alliance

² <http://online.flipbuilder.com/tnytsn/June2014/#p=2>