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metroblog: the word

## Vet eyes own truck

### Despite preferred status, vendor licenses tough to land

the word by patrick arden

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**After returning from his second tour of duty in Iraq, Marine veteran Jose Cabrera applied for a pushcart permit.**



Veterans such as Jose Cabrera will get priority when the city issues 1,000 new permits for produce carts in low-income neighborhoods, but Cabrera would rather have his own hot dog cart. (Photo: patrick arden/metro)



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Under state law, disabled vets are supposed to get special permits “to hawk or peddle,” but Cabrera, 25, claims his application was rejected. “The city wouldn’t work with me,” he said.

“See this decal here,” explained Cabrera’s boss, Dan Rossi. A Vietnam vet, Rossi pointed to the permit on his hot-dog cart.

“Jose is entitled to this, but the city is refusing to give permits to veterans.”

While “veterans get priority on the waiting list for permits,” according to Health Department spokesperson Sara Markt, unfortunately for Cabrera, the number of vending permits has long been capped at 3,100 — and turnover is slow.

“It’s a big problem for all food vendors,” said Sean Basinski, director of the Street Vendor Project at the Urban Justice Center. “There are nowhere near enough permits.”

When Cabrera complained that he was due a permit under the law, he said, “The city told me to lease one from a broker.”

Brokers do a brisk business, but vending permits, like driver’s licenses, are issued to individuals and aren’t supposed to be leased.

“The limit has created a black market,” Basinski said, “and the Health Department has made it worse by not doing something about it.”

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**“The city is refusing to give permits to veterans.”**

Vendor Dan Rossi

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