



This Week in New York

Covering New York State and City Government

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January 8, 2021 Edition



“Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book rewritten, every picture has been repainted, every statue and street building has been renamed, every date has been altered. And the process is continuing day by day and minute by minute. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right.”
-George Orwell, 1984-

In the News – New York State



Apparent Democratic Majority in United States Senate Provides Incoming Biden Administration with the Flexibility to Help New York State

The apparent election results in favor of Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock in the Georgia runoff elections for the two vacant United States Senate seats have provided President-Elect Joe Biden with a Democratic majority in both Congressional houses. The Senate will be split 50-50 with Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris as the tie-breaking vote in the Senate and New York State Senator Chuck Schumer will likely be the Senate’s Majority Leader.

With Democratic majorities, the incoming Biden administration will have the ability to pass more expansive legislation than would be possible if the Republicans maintained control of the Senate.

As Majority Leader, Senator Schumer will be in a position to pass legislation that benefits New York. Among the most pressing needs for New York is a federal bailout to help fill the \$25 billion budget hole caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. A Democratic majority in the Senate may be able to pass the infrastructure bill that President-Elect Biden campaigned on which will hopefully provide funding for the Gateway Rail Tunnel which many economists believe will have a significant economic impact for the economies of New York and New Jersey.



Governor Cuomo Announces Proposals to Allow Online Sports Wagering and Legalize an Adult-use Cannabis Program

Governor Andrew Cuomo this week announced legislation to authorize mobile sports wagering as part of the 2021 State of the State.

Under Governor Cuomo's proposal, the New York State Gaming Commission will issue a request for proposals to select and license a sports operator or platform to offer mobile sports wagering in New York. This operator or platform must have a partnership with one of the existing licensed commercial casinos. The Commission will also require any entity operating mobile wagering apps include safeguards against abuses and addiction.

“We want to do sports betting the way the State runs the lottery... where the State gets the revenues,” Governor Cuomo said. “Many states have done sports betting but they basically allow casinos to run their own gambling operations. That makes a lot of money for casinos, but it makes minimal money for the state. I'm not here to make casinos a lot of money, I'm here to raise funds for the state.”

State Budget Director noted that under New Jersey's sports betting model, the State has generated less than \$80 million in three years. Governor Cuomo's model, according to Mujica, could generate \$500 million for the State.

“There are a few states that have done it a different way, where the state contracts with the private sector who runs the sports books, but the state ends up getting the majority of what is left over after everything is returned to the bettors” he explained. “So, the difference between the two estimates would be between the state making somewhere in the neighborhood of \$50 million a year versus \$500 million a year.”

The Governor also announced a proposal to legalize and create a comprehensive system to oversee and regulate cannabis in New York as part of the 2021 State of the State.

Under the Governor's proposal, a new Office of Cannabis Management would be created to oversee the new adult-use program, as well as the State's existing medical and cannabinoid hemp programs. Additionally, a structure for the adult-use market will offer licensing opportunities and assistance to entrepreneurs in communities of color who have been disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs. Once fully implemented, legalization is expected to generate more than \$300 million in tax revenue.

In comparison to sports betting, marijuana revenue is an outyear projection.

“Marijuana has a longer runway by the time you set it up, but ...you'll get about \$300 million a year,” Mujica said. “But again, that will take several years to get up to those numbers.”

Legislative leaders Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie have also looked to sports betting to help close the state's budget deficit.

“We need to create new revenue streams by legalizing mobile sports betting and marijuana,” Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins said during her inaugural address Wednesday, the first day of the 2021 legislative session.

Details of the Governor's proposed legislation are expected on Monday, January 11th, when he delivers the 2021 State of the State address.



Attorney General James Issues Guidance to Law Enforcement on COVID-19 Evictions

New York Attorney General Letitia James this week issued guidance to the New York State Sheriffs' Association regarding law enforcement's role in the eviction process during COVID-19.

The COVID-19 Emergency Evictions and Foreclosure Prevention Act of 2020 was signed into law December 28th, providing protections for tenants at risk of eviction, including clarification for law enforcement officials carrying out evictions. The law allows tenants to get an automatic stay of eviction in all cases through May 1, 2021 by completing and sending a hardship declaration to their landlord, the court, a sheriff, marshal, or city constable. The law also makes all eviction warrants — those currently issued and those that will be issued — defective unless they contain specific language referencing the hardship declaration.

Attorney General James highlights the following reminders regarding hardship declarations:

- The declaration should state that the tenant has either had an income loss; increased living costs related to essential work or health impacts (including from being unable to secure moving expenses); the inability to obtain employment or earn income due to responsibilities to care for children or elderly, disabled, or sick family members; or financial hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Additionally, hardship may include that the tenant, or someone in their household, will suffer a significant health risk of becoming ill from COVID-19 due to an underlying medical condition, if forced to move from their home. A “significant health risk” related to contracting COVID-19 for a tenant or occupant is defined under the law as being over the age of 65, having a disability, or having an underlying medical condition, which may include, but is not limited to, being immunocompromised.

Upon receipt of a declaration, law enforcement officials are prohibited from evicting the tenant and occupants, and instead, must notify the court that a declaration has been received.



Speaker Heastie Announces Committee Chairs for 2021 Legislative Session

Chair, Aging	Ron Kim
Chair, Agriculture	Donna A. Lupardo
Chair, Alcoholism & Drug Abuse	Phil Steck
Chair, Banks	Victor M. Pichardo
Chair, Children & Families	Andrew Hevesi
Chair, Cities	Edward C. Braunstein
Chair, Codes	Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair, Consumer Affairs	Nily Rozic
Chair, Corporations, Authorities & Commissions	Amy Paulin
Chair, Correction	David I. Weprin
Chair, Economic Development	Harry B. Bronson
Chair, Education	Michael Benedetto
Chair, Election Law	Latrice Walker
Chair, Energy	Michael Cusick
Chair, Environmental Conservation	Steve Englebright
Chair, Ethics & Guidance	Jo Anne Simon
Chair, Governmental Employees	Peter J. Abbate, Jr.
Chair, Governmental Operations	Kenneth Zebrowski
Chair, Health	Richard N. Gottfried
Chair, Higher Education	Deborah J. Glick
Chair, Housing	Steven Cymbrowitz
Chair, Insurance	Kevin A. Cahill
Chair, Judiciary	Charles D. Lavine
Chair, Labor	Latoya Joyner
Chair, Libraries & Education Technology	Kimberly Jean-Pierre
Chair, Local Governments	Fred W. Thiele, Jr.
Chair, Mental Health	Aileen M. Gunther
Chair, Oversight, Analysis & Investigations	John T. McDonald III
Chair, People with Disabilities	Thomas J. Abinanti
Chair, Racing & Wagering	J. Gary Pretlow
Chair, Real Property Taxation	Sandy Galef
Chair, Science & Technology	Steven Otis
Chair, Small Business	Al Stirpe
Chair, Social Services	Linda B. Rosenthal
Chair, Tourism	Daniel J. O'Donnell
Chair, Transportation	William B. Magnarelli
Chair, Veterans Affairs	Didi Barrett



Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins Announces Committee Chairs for 2021 Legislative Session

Chair, Aging	Rachel May
Chair, Agriculture	Michelle Hinchey
Chair, Alcoholism and Substance Abuse	Pete Harckham
Chair, Banks	James Sanders, Jr.
Chair, Budget and Revenue	Brian Benjamin
Chair, Children And Families	Jabari Brisport
Chair, Cities 1 (New York City)	Robert Jackson
Chair, Cities 2 (Other NYS Cities)	Jeremy Cooney
Chair, Civil Service & Pensions	Andrew Gounardes
Chair, Codes	Jamaal Bailey
Chair, Commerce, Economic Development & Small Business	Anna Kaplan
Chair, Consumer Protection	Kevin Thomas
Chair, Corporations, Authorities & Commissions	Leroy Comrie
Chair, Crime Victims, Crime And Correction	Luis Sepulveda
Chair, Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks And Recreation	Jose Serrano
Chair, Developmental Disabilities	John Mannion
Chair, Education	Shelley Mayer
Chair, Elections	Zellnor Myrie
Chair, Energy And Telecommunications	Kevin Parker
Chair, Environmental Conservation	Todd Kaminsky
Chair, Ethics And Internal Governance	Alessandra Biaggi
Chair, Finance	Liz Krueger
Chair, Health	Gustavo Rivera
Chair, Higher Education	Toby Ann Stavisky
Chair, Housing, Construction & Community Development	Brian Kavanagh
Chair, Insurance	Neil Breslin
Chair, Internet And Technology	Diane Savino
Chair, Investigations And Government Operations	James Skoufis
Chair, Judiciary	Brad Hoylman
Chair, Labor	Jessica Ramos
Chair, Libraries	Sean Ryan
Chair, Local Government	James Gaughran
Chair, Mental Health	Samra Brouk
Chair, New York City Education	John Liu
Chair, Procurement	Elijah Reichlin-Melnick
Chair, Racing, Gaming And Wagering	Joseph Addabbo, Jr.
Chair, Social Services	Roxanne Persaud
Chair, Transportation	Tim Kennedy
Chair, Veterans, Homeland Security & Military Affairs	John Brooks
Chair, Women's Issues	Julia Salazar
Chair, Administrative Regulations Review Commission	Simcha Felder

In the News – City

COVID-19: Vaccine Distribution in NYC

According to City Health officials, the COVID-19 vaccine is being distributed in phases to groups of people at increased risk of COVID-19 exposure or severe COVID-19 illness. Phased distribution will take time, with vaccines not expected to be widely available to all New Yorkers until mid-2021.

The different phases of COVID-19 vaccine distribution are determined by New York State and may change. The table below reflects the list of those currently eligible and will be updated regularly.

Currently Eligible for the Vaccine

Phase 1a:

Currently Eligible Groups

Health Care Workers

- High-risk health care workers in hospitals and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), including NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH) psychiatric centers
- High-risk health care workers who provide direct in-person care in outpatient/ambulatory settings and other staff in these settings who have direct contact with patients (such as reception staff); this group includes workers in private or hospital-affiliated medical practices, specialty medical practices, public health clinics, dental practices and diagnostic and treatment centers; phlebotomists; dialysis workers; occupational therapists; physical therapists; speech therapists; behavioral health workers; and student health workers
- Emergency medical services (EMS) personnel
- Urgent care providers
- Health care workers administering COVID-19 vaccines
- Health care workers in COVID-19 testing sites
- Home care workers and aides, hospice workers, personal care aides, and consumer-directed personal care workers

Residents and Staff in Certain Group Living Facilities

- Long-term care facilities, including nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities and adult care facilities
- Long-term group living facilities run by NYS OMH, Office People with Developmental Disabilities, and Office of Addiction Services and Supports

Other Eligible Groups

- Medical examiners and coroners
- Funeral workers who have direct contact with infectious material and bodily fluids
- Frontline, high-risk public health workers who have direct contact with patients or handle COVID-19 specimens or vaccinations

As of January 4, eligible New Yorkers can get the COVID-19 vaccine at [sites](#) located throughout the City. Appointments are necessary and can be made online.

Briefs

Governor Calls Upon NYPD, Fire & Large Unions to Develop COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Programs

The NYPD, other police and fire departments, and large labor unions should develop detailed plans to administer the COVID-19 vaccine to their members once they become eligible, Governor Andrew Cuomo said, to relieve the stress on the retail distribution process.

“I’m asking police departments, fire departments, transit workers who are going to be essential workers, if they can operationalize their own vaccination system,” said Governor Cuomo during a press briefing this week. “They have their own employees who can do the vaccines.”

The Governor plan is that more agencies administering the vaccines internally the less pressure on the “retail system” of hospitals, pharmacies, medical practices, and other entities administering vaccines.

“The teachers union, the [Transport] Workers Union, all these front-line essential workers, please now think about organizing your own system so it alleviates the burden on the retail system, which is going to have to be dealing with the general public,” he said.

Mayor de Blasio Appoints Edward Grayson Sanitation Commissioner

Mayor Bill de Blasio appointed Edward Grayson as the Commissioner of the City of New York Department of Sanitation (DSNY). Grayson, a 21-year DSNY veteran, has served as Acting Commissioner since September.

Before serving as Acting Commissioner, Grayson was appointed four-star chief and Director of the Bureau of Cleaning and Collection in September of 2017. As Director of the Bureau of Cleaning and Collection, Grayson oversaw day-to-day operations for DSNY, including the collection, recycling, and disposal of more than 12,000 tons of waste per day. He implemented new technologies to improve snow removal and reform front-line operations.

New York City Council Votes to Approve New Committee Chairs

The City Council this week approved the following Committee Chairs:

- **Council Member Vanessa L. Gibson**, Chair of the Chair, Oversight and Investigations.
- **Council Member Helen Rosenthal** to serve as chair of the Sub Chair, Capital Budget and Finance.
- **Council Member Darma V. Diaz** to serve as chair of the Chair, Women and Gender Equity.
- **Council Member Diana Ayala** to serve as chair of the Chair, Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing.
- **Council Member Farah N. Louis** to serve as chair of the Chair, Mental Health, Disabilities and Addictions.
- **Council Member Kevin C. Riley** to serve as chair of the Sub Chair, Landmarks, Public Sitings, and Dispositions.

Mayor de Blasio Appoints Sherif Soliman as New York City's Finance Commissioner

Mayor Bill de Blasio appointed Sherif Soliman as the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Finance (DOF). Soliman currently serves as Chief of Staff for the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Operations, where he oversees the functions of over 20 agencies and offices, including the Department of Finance (DOF) and the Mayor's Office of Pensions and Investments.

Soliman previously served as Senior Advisor to the First Deputy Mayor where he managed a portfolio consisting of tax, labor and pension policy and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). In the mayor's first term, Soliman served as Director of State Legislative Affairs, where he was the Administration's chief representative in Albany. Soliman brings decades of experience in public employee pensions, having served as Director of Communications at the New York City Employees' Retirement System, legislative representative in the Mayor's Office of State Legislative Affairs, and as Chief of Staff for former Assemblyman Eric N. Vitaliano, Chair of the Assembly Governmental Employees Committee.

Soliman received his bachelor's degree in Political Science from the State University of New York College at Oneonta.

Coming Up

New York State

Monday, January 11th

Governor's State of the State Address, Time to be Determined

NYS Assembly Session, 2 p.m., <http://assembly.state.ny.us/av/live/>.

NYS Senate Session, 3 p.m., <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/nysenate>.

Tuesday, January 12th

NYS Assembly & NYS Senate Session, Times to be Determined

Thursday, January 14th

Assembly Committee on Racing and Wagering, 10:30 a.m. <https://www.nyassembly.gov/av/live/>.

Impact of the Thoroughbred and Standardbred racing and breeding industry on the economy of New York State

New York City

Monday, January 11th

Committee on Land Use, Remote Hearing (Virtual Room #1), 10 a.m.

Committee on Public Safety, Remote Hearing (Virtual Room #2), 10 a.m.

Tuesday, January 12th

Committee on Health, Remote Hearing (Virtual Room #3), 10 a.m.

Committee on Transportation, Remote Hearing (Virtual Room #1), 10 a.m.

Wednesday, January 13th

Committee on Youth Services, Remote Hearing (Virtual Room #1), 10 a.m.

Committee on Public Housing, Remote Hearing (Virtual Room #2), 1 p.m.

Thursday, January 14th

Committee on Higher Education, Remote Hearing (Virtual Room #3), 10 a.m.

**“We believe in the ideas of family, mutuality,
the sharing of benefits and burdens
for the good of all, feeling one another’s pain,
sharing one another’s blessing
recognizing that at the heart of the matter
we are bound to each other.”**

-Mario M. Cuomo-

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