



This Week in New York

Covering New York State and City Government

A Publication of Pitta Bishop & Del Giorno LLC

September 7, 2018 Edition



In the News – State



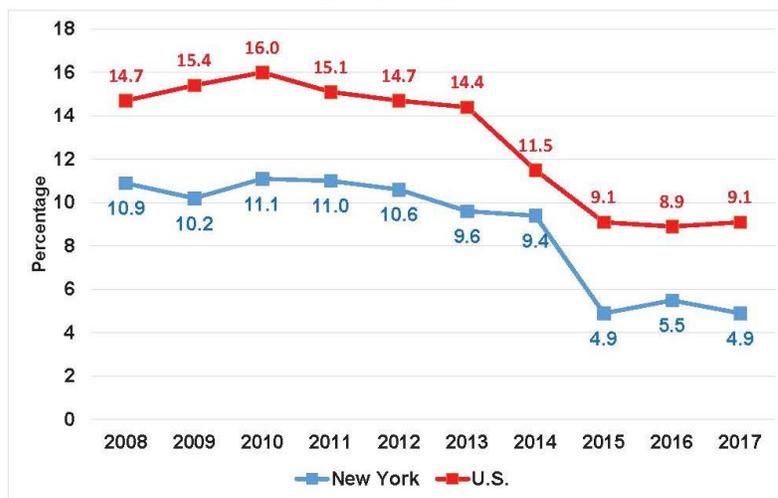
Percentage of New Yorkers Without Health Insurance at All Time Low

Broader coverage options created by the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and other changes in federal and state health care policies, have helped reduce the percentage of people lacking health insurance in New York, according to a report released this week by State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli.

Estimates reported by the National Center for Health Statistics found that the percentage of New Yorkers without health insurance fell from 10.9 percent in 2008 to 4.9 percent in 2017.

Figure 11

Percentage of Persons Lacking Health Insurance Coverage, New York and the U.S. (by calendar year)



Source: CDC National Center for Health Statistics Early Release Reports on Detailed Estimates of Health Insurance Coverage
Note: Percentages reflect those persons who lacked health insurance coverage at the time of interview.

According to the Comptroller, the percentage of New Yorkers without health insurance has also been consistently and significantly lower than the nation over the last decade. In 2017, New York's uninsured rate was lower than the national rate by almost 50 percent.

The Comptroller's report, "7 Million and Counting: More New Yorkers Benefit from State Health Coverage," also found that the number of New Yorkers who rely on Medicaid and other publicly funded health plans has grown sharply over the past decade, leaving New York particularly vulnerable to federal proposals to cut funding. Specifically, the report found that the number of people covered by Medicaid and other major state programs rose by 57 percent over the past decade, to more than 7 million, over one third of the state's estimated 19.8 million residents

"There are disturbing calls in Washington to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and make radical changes to Medicaid," Comptroller DiNapoli said. "We cannot go backwards on health care and force people to choose between buying groceries or seeing a doctor. We need more people to have access to quality health care, not fewer. These cuts would also impact the state budget and require difficult decisions to cover shortfalls."

Medicaid, Child Health Plus (CHP), the Essential Plan and subsidized coverage through the state's health insurance marketplace, New York State of Health (NYSOH), cost a total of more than \$75 billion in state fiscal year (SFY) 2017-18. Spending for New York's Medicaid program totaled \$69.4 billion in SFY 2017-18, an increase of nearly \$24 billion, or 52.4 percent, since SFY 2008-09.

According to the Comptroller, Medicaid enrollment in the state historically has been concentrated in New York City, where enrollment rose 28.6 percent over the past decade. However, growth across the rest of the state over the same period was almost triple the increase in the city, on a percentage basis.

Statewide Medicaid enrollment jumped by nearly 2 million individuals, or 46.3 percent, over the past decade, with increases in every county. In six counties – Dutchess, Nassau, Putnam, Rockland, Schenectady and Suffolk – the number of Medicaid enrollees more than doubled over the decade. Eleven other counties across the state saw enrollment growth of more than 75 percent, specifically Columbia, Ontario, Orange, Saratoga, Seneca, Sullivan, Ulster, Warren, Wayne, Westchester and Wyoming.

In the News – City

New York City
Charter Revision Commission

November Ballot Proposals

The New York City Charter Revision Commission this week voted to approve three ballot questions for the voters to consider in November, including proposals to revise campaign limits for candidates; increase civic engagement, and establish term limits for community boards.

Specifically, the proposals include:

Campaign Finance: If approved, the following amendments would apply to participating candidates who choose to have the amendments apply to their campaigns, beginning with the 2021 primary election. The amendments would then apply to all candidates beginning in 2022.

- ***Lower contribution limits for City elected offices.*** The maximum total amount a participating candidate (i.e., a candidate who chooses to participate in the City's public financing program) may accept from a contributor per election cycle would be reduced from \$5,100 to \$2,000, for candidates for Mayor, Public Advocate, or Comptroller; from \$3,950 to \$1,500, for candidates for Borough President; and from \$2,850 to \$1,000, for candidates for the City Council. The maximum total contribution to a non-participating candidate (that is, a candidate who does not participate in the City's public financing program) would be reduced from \$5,100 to \$3,500, for candidates for Mayor, Public Advocate, or Comptroller; from \$3,950 to \$2,500, for candidates for Borough President; and from \$2,850 to \$1,500, for candidates for the City Council.
- ***Increase small dollar public matching for candidates who participate in the City's public financing program.*** Currently, participating candidates, who meet certain qualifying thresholds, are eligible to receive public matching funds at a rate of \$6 in public funds for every \$1 in matchable contributions, up to the first \$175 per contributor. The proposed Charter amendment would increase the match to \$8 in public funds for every \$1 in matchable private contributions, up to the first \$250 per contributor to candidates for Citywide office and up to the first \$175 per contributor to candidates for Borough President or City Council. The amendment would also ease a requirement that candidates for Mayor, Comptroller, or Public Advocate must meet to qualify for matching funds.
- ***Increase the total amount of public matching funds available to such candidates.*** The proposed amendment would increase the cap on the total amount of public matching funds that a participating candidate may receive, per election, from 55% to 75% of the expenditure limit for the office being sought.

Civic Engagement: If approved by the voters, the City of New York would establish a Civic Engagement Commission whose mission includes expanding language access at polling sites, developing a citywide participatory budgeting program and supporting and partnering with community organizations in their civic engagement efforts.

- ***Civic Engagement Commission*** would be authorized and directed to implement a Citywide participatory budgeting program established by the Mayor, no later than the City Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2020; establish a program for providing language interpreters at poll sites in New York City, to be implemented for the general election in 2020; support and partner with community-based organizations, institutions, and civic leaders in the public and private sectors in their civic engagement efforts; consider the language access needs of limited English proficient New Yorkers in developing and implementing its programs and services; and partner with City agencies to increase awareness of and access to City services, assist them in promoting civic engagement initiatives, and develop strategies to centralize public information about opportunities for civic engagement.

Community Boards: The Commission proposes the following amendments to the Charter, in order to help make community boards more reflective of the communities they represent and more effective in that representation:

- ***Term limits.*** The Commission proposes term limits for community board members, who currently serve for two-year terms without limit, to create opportunities for new voices and leaders on all community boards. Members appointed or reappointed on or after April 1, 2019, would be limited to serving four consecutive two-year terms. However, members appointed or reappointed for a term commencing on April 1, 2020, could be reappointed for up to five consecutive two-year terms, in order to prevent a heavy turnover of community board membership in 2027 and 2028. Appointments made for terms commencing after April 1, 2020, would be subject to four consecutive two-year term limits. These term limits would be prospective only; terms served before April 1, 2019, or April 1, 2020, would not count toward the term limits that start on those dates. Members who have served for the maximum number of consecutive terms would not be barred from re-appointment after one full term out of office.
- ***Appointment process.*** The Commission proposes several changes intended to bring more uniformity and transparency to the process of appointing members to community boards and to encourage diversity in appointments. The proposed amendments would require Borough Presidents to seek out persons of diverse backgrounds for appointment to community boards and make applications available on their websites. The proposal would also add new application and reporting requirements related to these appointments, including an annual report disclosing information about membership and the recruitment and selection process.



Comptroller Stringer: Property Taxes Are Crushing Working New York Families

Calls upon NYC Real Property Tax Commission to Address Disparities

New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer this week released a report detailing the disparity in property tax burdens for working families, including tax rates that have increased three times the rate of incomes.

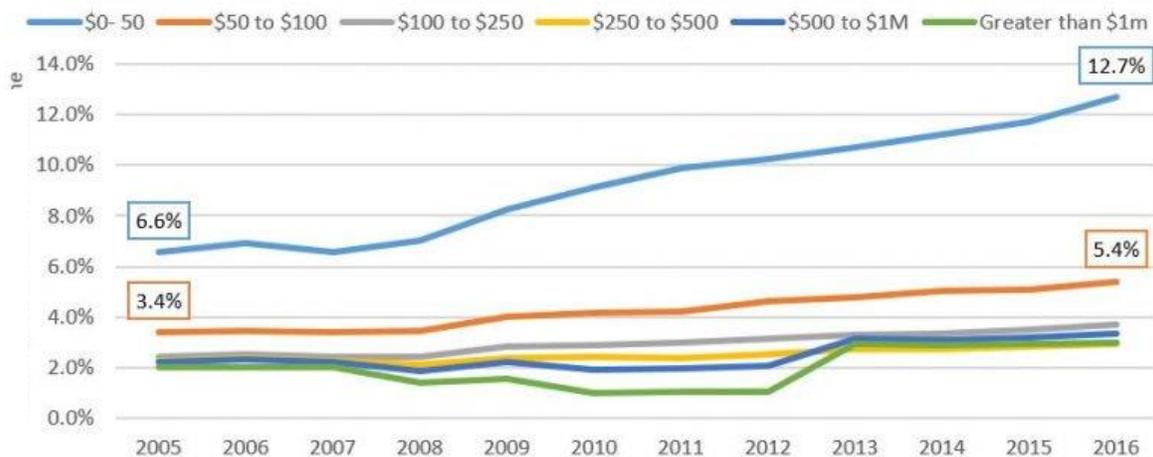
The Comptroller's report highlighted the impact that property tax increases have had on households making less than \$250,000. According to the Comptroller, homeowners earning less than \$100,000 per year make up roughly half of all New York City property tax filers and experience the most significant burdens. Specifically, the report identified:

- Households making less than \$50,000 saw their property taxes increase by 98 percent and their median incomes drop by almost 1 percent since 2005. As a result, the property tax burden for

these New Yorkers nearly doubled from 6.6 percent in 2005 of income in 2005 to almost 13 percent in 2016.

- Households making between \$50,000 and \$100,000 saw their property taxes increase by 67 percent since 2005 as their median income grew by just 4.6 percent. As a result, their burden grew from 3.4 percent of income in 2005 to 5.4 percent in 2016; and
- Households making between \$100,000 and \$250,000 saw their property taxes increase by 54 percent as median income rose by 4.9 percent. As a result, their burden grew from 2.4 percent of income in 2005 to 3.7 percent in 2016.

Regressive Growth in Property Tax Burdens



Comptroller Stringer is recommending the New York City property tax commission explore models for addressing these disparities and making our property tax system fairer for all New Yorkers. The report includes a number of suggestions which include increasing the number of New Yorkers eligible for tax relief programs, expanding benefits, and exploring deferment programs.

Briefs

NYS Court of Appeals Hears Challenge to Executive Compensation Limits

Lawyers for The Coalition of New York State Public Health Plans and Leading Age New York presented arguments to the Court of Appeal this week in relation to a suit involving Department of Health regulations governing executive compensation.

According to published reports, the companies sued the State in relation to regulations (from a 2012 executive order) that prohibit paying executives more than \$199,000 per year or having administrative costs above 15 percent of their total expenses at facilities that contract with the state. DOH also enacted a “soft cap” that placed those limits on health care providers regardless of the funding source. The regulations apply to service providers that receive more than \$500,000 in public money over a two-year period.

Lower appellate courts issued conflicting decisions. The Appellate Division's Second Department upheld both caps. The Third Department upheld the compensation/expense cap for facilities with state contracts, but not the soft cap.

Third Track on LIRR Breaks Ground

The Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) broke ground this week on the \$2.6 billion Third Track expansion effort that includes 50 projects to modernize 9.8 miles along the congested Main Line of the LIRR between Floral Park and Hicksville. Those projects include adding a third track, eliminating all seven street-level grade crossings within the project corridor, adding new power substations and parking, and modernizing track and signal infrastructure. Forty percent of LIRR riders pass through the Main Line.

Project elements along the Main Line corridor include:

- 7 grade crossing eliminations, including Covert Avenue, South 12th Street, New Hyde Park Road, Main Street, Willis Avenue, Urban Avenue and School Street;
- 7 bridge replacements and modifications, including South Tyson Avenue Bridge, Plainfield Avenue Bridge, Tanners Pond Road/Denton Avenue Bridge, Glen Cove Road Bridge, Meadowbrook Parkway Bridge, and Cherry Lane Bridge;
- 5 station improvements, including New Hyde Park Station, Merillon Avenue Station, Mineola Station, Carle Place Station, and Westbury Station; in addition to ADA-compliant elevators at Floral Park Station;
- 7 substation replacements, including Floral Park Substation, New Hyde Park Substation, Merillon Avenue Substation, Mineola Substation, Carle Place Substation, Westbury Substation, and New Cassel Substation;
- 7.5 miles of sound/retaining walls.

State Pension Fund Employer Contribution Rates Stable for State Fiscal Year 2019-2020

Employer contribution rates for the state's pension system in State Fiscal Year 2019-20 will be in line with the previous year, with the Employees' Retirement System (ERS) getting a slight decrease and the Police and Fire Retirement System's (PFRS) rate unchanged, according to State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli. The Comptroller also reported the New York State Common Retirement Fund (Fund) ended the last fiscal year with a funded status of 98 percent, according to actuarial calculations.

The Fund's investment rate of return was 11.35 percent with an audited value of \$207.4 billion at the end of its fiscal year on March 31, 2018. Strong returns raised the Fund's funded ratio to 98 percent in SFY 2017-2018, up from 94.5 percent the previous year, as measured in compliance with Government Accounting Standards Board guidelines. The Fund was ranked one of the nation's best-funded pension plans in 2018, according to Pew Charitable Trusts.

The estimated average contribution rate for participating employers in the ERS will decrease in SFY 2019-20 from 14.9 percent of payroll to 14.6 percent of payroll. The estimated average contribution rate for participating employers in the PFRS will remain at 23.5 percent of payroll.

New Main Entrance to Penn Station & Expansion of LIRR Concourse Planned

Penn Station will soon feature a new entrance at 33rd Street and 7th Avenue providing direct access to the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) Main Concourse and the New York City Subway, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced this week. The announcement also included the expansion of the LIRR corridor at Penn Station to improve safety, security and passenger flow, as well as significant milestones in the on-time, on-budget construction of the Moynihan Train Hall. In addition, the LIRR Main Concourse between 7th and 8th Avenues will be roughly doubled in size and the ceiling will be raised by up to 11 feet.

Bills Signed by the Mayor

Introduction 1089, sponsored by Speaker Corey Johnson, would establish a speed camera program to detect vehicles exceeding the speed limit in school speed zones. The program would not have a cap on the number of cameras that could be operated and would allow the City flexibility in hours of operation to address safety concerns near schools. Vehicle owners would be liable for an operator of that vehicle exceeding the speed limit by more than 10 miles per hour in a school speed zone. Such vehicle owners would be liable for a \$50 penalty.

Prior to City Council approval of this legislation, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed an Executive Order directing the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles to share car owner data with the City for enforcement purposes.

Coming Up

New York State

Monday September 17th

To investigate the use of 9/11 line of duty sick leave, to determine whether the program is working and to discuss any changes that need to be made to the program

Senate Standing Committee on Civil Service and Pensions, Senate Hearing Room, 250 Broadway, 19th Floor, New York, 11 a.m.

New York City

Wednesday September 12th

Committee on Finance, Committee Room – City Hall, 10 a.m.

Committee on Transportation, Committee Room – City Hall, 10:30 a.m.

Committee on Immigration, Committee Room – City Hall, 10:30 a.m.

City Council Stated Meeting, Council Chambers – City Hall, 1:30 p.m.

L' shanah tovah!



Wishing you a happy Rosh Hashanah from
Pitta Bishop & Del Giorno LLC

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