This Week in New York

Covering New York State and City Government

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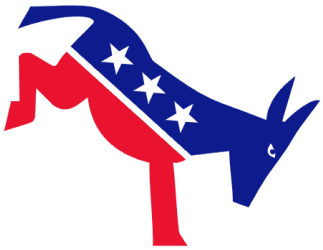
In the News – State

The Voters Have Spoken



Voters Have Elected and Re-Elected Democratic Statewide Office Holders & Candidates by Wide Margins of Victory!

Governor Andrew Cuomo /Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul (D)

NYS Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli (D)

NYS Attorney General Leticia James (D)

U.S. Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand

NYS Senate* – 37 Democrats – 23 Republicans **

NYS Assembly* - 107 Democrats – 43 Republicans

(*) Results Pending Source: NYS Board of Election
(**) – There are 3 Senate races being contested

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Leticia James, NYS Attorney General

New York State's First African-American and Elected Female Attorney General

Attorney General-Elect Leticia James

New York City Public Advocate Letitia James was elected Attorney General Tuesday night over Republican Keith Wofford. Ms. James' victory makes her the first African-American Attorney General in New York, as well as the first African-American woman elected to a state-wide position. She is also the first elected female Attorney General.

Attorney General-elect James assumes the office from Barbara Underwood, New York's first female Attorney General who completed the term of Eric Schneiderman.

The Attorney General-elect won with nearly 60% of the vote state-wide. She was carried by downstate, receiving over 88% of the vote in the Bronx and 83% in her home borough of Brooklyn. Attorney General-elect James also performed well in the suburban counties, where she received 54% of Nassau, 66% of Westchester and 55% of Rockland County. In Upstate New York her strongest counties were Albany, Tompkins, Monroe, and Onondaga.

Ms. James made history in 2014 by becoming the first woman of color to hold citywide office in New York City. As Public Advocate, she passed more legislation than all her predecessors combined.

Attorney General-elect James is a strong advocate for criminal justice reform and led the push for police body-worn cameras in the NYPD. She was one of the first to call for special prosecutors to be used in all cases of police misconduct. In addition, she is a staunch supporter of children and families including enacting family leave, ending gender wage discrimination, providing universal free lunch for public school students, and reforming the transportation and education of students with disabilities.

Before her tenure as Public Advocate, Attorney General-elect James served as the head of the Attorney General's Brooklyn Regional Office and represented the City Council's 35th District in Brooklyn from 2004 to 2013. As a City Council Member, she fought for Paid Sick Leave, and passed the Safe Housing Act. Also, Attorney General-elect James was an early whistleblower on the Office of Payroll Administration's CityTime contract and ultimately passed legislation addressing oversight of high-cost service contracts. As Chair to the Council's Sanitation Committee, she pushed-through a package that included expanding plastic recycling, a new clothing and textile recycling program, and improved public space recycling.

Attorney General-elect James is a graduate of CUNY's Lehman College and Howard University School of Law.

Andrea Stewart-Cousins to Become First Female Senate Majority Leader

Senator Andrea Stewart Cousins

Andrea Stewart-Cousins (D-35th district) is poised to become the first female State Senate Majority Leader, with Democrats taking the Senate during this week's general election. This is the first time Democrats have controlled the State Senate since 2010 and only the third time since 1939.

Democrats won 37 of the State Senate's 63 districts on Tuesday night and could have as many as 40 of the seats by January. Three races remain contested and Brooklyn Democrat Simcha Felder could possibly still caucus with the Republicans next session.

Senator Stewart-Cousins, who won her own uncontested election this week, was first elected in 2006. She represents parts of Westchester County, including Yonkers, New Rochelle, White Plains, Scarsdale and Greenburgh. In 2012 she was named the Leader of the Senate Democratic Conference. This made her the first female leader of a legislative conference in New York State as well as the Minority Leader in the Senate.

During her tenure, Senator Stewart-Cousins has sponsored and passed numerous initiatives including the Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act, which empowers communities across the State to consolidate local governments; Jimmy Nolan's law, which extends the time by which 9/11 responders can file compensation claims for injuries sustained from the World Trade Center rescue, recovery or cleanup operations; and the Child Health Plus and School Meal Enrollment Coordination Law, which allows families to use their proof of eligibility for Free or Reduced Price School Meal Programs as proof of income to enroll their child in Medicaid and Child Health Plus.

Before becoming a Senator, Ms. Stewart-Cousins represented her home city of Yonkers in the Westchester County Legislature from 1996-2006. She also spent time as the Majority Whip and Vice-Chair in the County Legislature. In 1992, then Yonkers Mayor Zaleski named her the first African-American Director of Community Affairs. In this role Ms. Stewart-Cousins help create the city's annual Riverfest. Prior to entering public service, she spent twenty years in the private sector, working in sales and marketing for New York Telephone/AT&T for thirteen years and also worked as a reporter and teacher.

Senator Stewart-Cousins earned her Bachelor of Science Degree from Pace University and her teaching credentials in Business Education from Lehman College. In 2008, she earned her Masters of Public Administration from Pace University.

NYS Assembly Next Steps

Armed with a 107-43 majority and a Democratic leadership in the Senate, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie challenged the State's Democrats to listen to the voters and advance initiatives that have "the potential to reverberate for generations to come."

"New York State has always been a national leader in progressive policies that build up all our citizens, and I am proud that the Assembly has long been at the forefront," Speaker Heastie explained. "In recent years, we have had to contend with a Republican Senate that limited our progress. But last night, New Yorkers and people across the country voted overwhelmingly to reject the status quo. Now it is up to us to deliver the results working with the new Senate Democratic Majority."

In outlining his agenda, Speaker Heastie drew upon the "unique perspective" that he received from the State tour that he undertook when he became Speaker. With that, the Speaker is putting forth a statewide agenda including:

EDUCATION

- Increased support for schools across the state and expanding pre-k and afterschool programs.
- Building on initiatives like My Brother's Keeper to ensure that all of our students can be successful.
- Enacting the Dream Act and the "Higher Education Road to Success" initiative which provides support for opportunity programs and community colleges.

ELECTION LAWS

- Expanding voter access including an early voting period and no excuse absentee voting.
- Combining federal and state primaries, bringing New York State in compliance with federal law.
- Establishing an online registration process.
- Closing the LLC loophole.

TRANSPORTATION

- MTA: Identifying new sustainable funding sources that will support capital and operating needs.
- "Upstate and in every region": Support funding for maintenance for state and local roads, railways and bridges.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

- Reforming the bail system.
- Continuing reform the use of solitary confinement.
- Prohibiting the use of racial and ethnic profiling, update and reform our state's discovery laws, increase transparency in grand jury proceedings, and reform the speedy trial provision.
- Sealing the records of low-level marijuana possession convictions.

GUN CONTROL

- Requiring comprehensive background checks, banning bump stocks, and keeping guns out of the hands of those proven to be a risk to others.

RENT LAWS

- Extending and strengthening rental control.

CHILD VICTIMS ACT

- Passing the Child Victims Act to extend the statute of limitations for criminal and civil cases involving sexual abuse of children.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

- Passing the Reproductive Health Act, Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act and the Boss Bill, ensuring that women in New York have access to contraception, and cannot be penalized by their employer for their healthcare choices.

HEALTHCARE

- Continuing to make the necessary investments in our healthcare systems to ensure that all our citizens have access to a world class healthcare system.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Making "smart investments and create programs so that businesses can thrive and our young people can stay and grow their communities."

Chapters of the Laws of 2018

Chapter 291 – Sponsored by M of A Stirpe / Senator Bonacic -- Relates to establishing a court-appointed special advocates program to aid the family court.

Chapter 322 – Sponsored by M of A Cusick / Senator Lanza -- Relates to use of personal confidential information received from veterans or family members of veterans receiving services from the state.

Chapter 323 – Sponsored by M of A Davila / Senator Comrie -- Relates to the preparation of educational materials relating to substance abuse among students.

Chapter 329 – Sponsored by M of A Hyndman / M of A LaValle -- Relates to eligibility for the science, technology, engineering and mathematics program.

Chapter 335 – Sponsored by Senator Tedisco / M of A Gottfried -- Provides that policies and contracts covering diagnostic screening for prostate cancer shall not be subject to cost sharing.

Chapter 337 – Sponsored by Senator Serino / M of A Hunter -- In relation to lyme and tick-borne diseases.

Chapter 339 – Sponsored by Senator Golden / M of A DenDekker -- Relates to clean air taxicabs.

Chapter 342 – Sponsored by Senator Hannon / M of A Gottfried -- Authorizes a patient's attending nurse practitioner to witness the patient's execution of a health care proxy.

Chapter 347 – Sponsored by Senator Marcellino / M of A Cusick -- Relates to the calculation of nonpublic schools' eligibility to receive aid.

Chapter 353 – Sponsored by Senator Hannon / M of A Mikulin -- Relates to the Nassau county civil divisions act.

Chapter 354 – Sponsored by Senator Serino / M of A Barrett -- Relates to installing Lyme and tick-borne disease warning signs at all state-managed parks.

Chapter 355 – Sponsored by Senator Rules / M of A Hooper -- Relates to salary adjustments according to plan and step-ups or increments.

In the News – City

City Voters Approve Proposals to Revise City Charter

New York City voters approved three ballot questions on Tuesday to revise the City Charter, including changes to the campaign finance system and term limits for community board members. The ballot questions were developed by the 2018 New York City Charter Revision Commission, chaired by Cesar Perales. The ballot questions were supported by Mayor Bill de Blasio.

Voters approved revisions to the New York City Charter to:

Campaign Finance: Lower contribution limits, increase public matching funds available to participating candidates and make funds available earlier in the process. For citywide offices, the top contribution would drop from $5,100 to $2,000; for borough presidents, it would drop from $3,950 to $1,500; for city council candidates, from $2,850 to $1,000.

Civic Engagement: Establish a Civic Engagement Commission that would be responsible for implementing a citywide participatory budgeting program, partnering with community-based organizations, civic leaders and other City agencies in civic engagement efforts, and establishing a program to provide language interpreters at City poll sites.

Community Boards: Impose term limits on Community Board members, create standard board membership application requirements and provide community boards with additional resources, such as urban planning and language access assistance. Members will be allowed to serve four two-year terms

Briefs

MTA Chair Joe Lhota Resigns

Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Chairman Joe Lhota this morning announced his resignation from the Authority effective today.

"I want to take this opportunity to thank Governor Cuomo for the trust and support he has given me," Chairman Lhota said in a prepared statement. "His non-stop drive, enormous energy and vision are recreating a better and stronger MTA.…In late spring 2017, following a well-documented period of rapid deterioration of transit services, I volunteered to become MTA chairman with the sole purpose of halting the decline of service and stabilizing the system for my fellow New Yorkers."

In his statement, Chairman Lhota recounted his success in having "successfully arrested the subway's decline."

"The Subway Action Plan was developed in my first month at the MTA and it has successfully arrested the subway's decline. The plan has produced a 34.8% decline in major subway incidents causing delays (a comparison of 9/2017 to 9/2018). In September 2018 the number of total train delays fell to the lowest point since February 2016. There is still a long way to go to achieve the performance that New Yorkers demand and deserve. The proposed Fast Forward plan provides the roadmap for modernizing the entire system."

AG Underwood to Return as Solicitor General

Attorney General-elect Letitia James on Thursday announced she would appoint Attorney General Barbara Underwood as the State's Solicitor General. Ms. Underwood had served in that role until May, when she was appointed by the State Legislature to complete the remainder of Eric Schneiderman's term.

"She is an exceptionally qualified attorney who has the experience and skills we need to continue taking on the greatest challenges facing our state," Attorney General-elect James said. "I am honored and proud to make this appointment and to have her serve alongside me."

At the time of her appointment, Attorney General Underwood said she would not run for the post.

DEC & Parks Rec Commissioners to Step Down

Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Basil Seggos and State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Commissioner Rose Harvey announced this week that they will be stepping down from the Cuomo Administration.

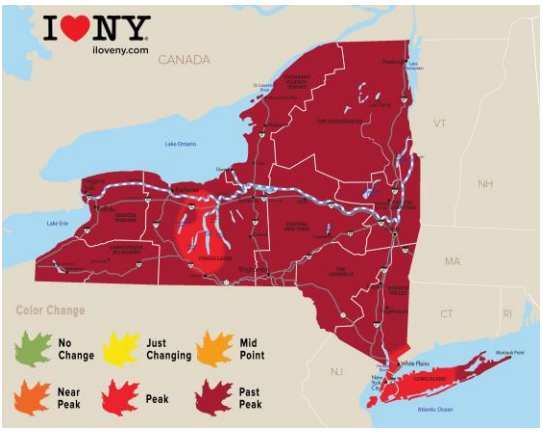
Prior to being appointed Commissioner, Mr. Seggos was an environmental conservation advisor to Governor Andrew Cuomo.

"This has been the best job, at the best agency, with the best colleagues, working for the best governor in the country," Commissioner Seggos posted to *Twitter*. "I'm proud of all we have accomplished and will be working hard into 2019 on the Gov's vision. No letting up!"

Commissioner Harvey has led the State's Parks Department for Governor Cuomo's first two terms in office. Prior to becoming Commissioner in 2011, she held multiple leadership positions with The Trust for Public Land, beginning as a community organizer and rising to Senior Vice President and Regional Director of the Mid-Atlantic Region and finally as National Director of Urban Programs.

"I feel confident that after nearly eight years of putting Gov. Cuomo's bold vision for the state park system into action, I will be leaving it much better prepared to meet the needs of 21st-century park visitors," Commissioner Harvey said in a statement Thursday. "I look forward to staying into the new year and assisting with the transition."

New York Fall Foliage Report



Vibrant Peak Foliage Reaching Final Destinations in New York State

Colorful peak foliage will reach its final destinations in New York State this weekend, according to volunteer observers for Empire State Development's I LOVE NY program. This weekend, travelers can expect to find leaves at peak throughout New York City and western Long Island, and in parts of the Finger Lakes and Hudson Valley regions. I LOVE NY defines 'peak' as the overall best appearance the foliage will have during the season.

Coming Up

New York State

Wednesday November 14th

Healthy Aging: New Yorkers aging independently and safely within their homes and communities
Assembly Standing Committee on Aging, Hamilton Hearing Room B, Legislative Office Building, 2nd Floor, Albany, 10 a.m.

Examining the effectiveness of medication-assisted treatment programs in state and local correctional facilities in the state
Joint Assembly Standing Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, Committee on Health, and Committee on Correction, Assembly Hearing Room, 250 Broadway, Room 1923, New York, 10:30 a.m.

Thursday November 15th

Improving opportunities to vote in New York State
Joint Assembly Standing Committee on Election Law and Subcommittee on Election Day Operations and Voter Disenfranchisement, Assembly Hearing Room, 250 Broadway, Room 1923, New York, 10:30 a.m.

Friday November 16th

Recycling
Assembly Standing Committee on Environmental Conservation, Roosevelt Hearing Room C, Legislative Office Building, 2nd Floor, Albany, 11:30 a.m.

Electronic filing of court papers
Assembly Standing Committee on Judiciary, Assembly Hearing Room, 250 Broadway, Room 1923, 19th Floor, New York, 10 a.m.

New York City

Tuesday November 13th

Committee on Housing and Buildings, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.

Committee on For-Hire Vehicles, Committee Room – 250 Broadway, 16th Floor, 11 a.m.

Committee on Youth Services, Committee Room – City Hall, 1 p.m.

Committee on Juvenile Justice, Committee Room – City Hall, 1 p.m.

Committee on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing, Committee Room – 250 Broadway, 14th Floor, 1 p.m.

Committee on Veterans, Committee Room – 250 Broadway, 16th Floor 1 p.m.

Committee on Technology, Committee Room – 250 Broadway, 16th Floor, 1:30 p.m.

Committee on Land Use, Committee Room – City Hall, 11 a.m.

Wednesday November 14th

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

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

Thursday November 15th

Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises, Committee Room – City Hall, 9:30 a.m.

Committee on Public Housing, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.

Subcommittee on Capital Budget, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.

Committee on Contracts, Committee Room – 250 Broadway, 14th Floor, 10 a.m.

Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitting and Maritime Uses, Committee Room – 250 Broadway, 16th Floor, 12 p.m.

Committee on General Welfare, Council Chambers – City Hall, 1 p.m.

Committee on Immigration, Council Chambers – City Hall, 1 p.m.

Committee on Hospitals, Committee Room – City Hall, 1 p.m.

Committee on Health, Council Chambers – City Hall, 1 p.m.

Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction, Committee Room – City Hall, 1 p.m.

Committee on Criminal Justice, Committee Room – City Hall, 1 p.m.

Subcommittee on Planning, Dispositions and Concessions, Committee Room – 250 Broadway, 16th Floor, 2 p.m.

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