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THIS WEEK IN NEW YORK

COVERING NEW YORK & CITY GOVERNMENT

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"No Man can be a good citizen unless he has a wage more than sufficient to cover the bare cost of living, and hour of labor short enough so that after his day's work is done he will have time and energy to bear his share in the management of the community, to help in carrying the general load" Governor Theodore Roosevelt.

In The News-New York State

New York AG and Other AGs Reach $17.1 Billion Settlement with Meta

Meta Must Change its Platform to Protect Children

For the past few years, New York has embarked on a campaign to reduce the amount of time children spend glued to their phones and social media. This week those efforts received a major boost, as Attorney General Letitia James announced a "landmark" multistate settlement with Meta that could be worth as much as $17.1 billion and require significant changes to how Facebook and Instagram interact with users under 18.

The settlement represents the conclusion to litigation accusing Meta of deliberately designing Facebook and Instagram to keep young people scrolling, even as concerns mounted about the effect excessive and addictive social media use was having on children's mental health. The agreement came shortly after the beginning of a closely watched federal trial in California, where Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg had been expected to testify. The litigation was part of a broader national effort by state attorneys general to hold social media companies accountable for allegedly designing products to encourage compulsive use among children and teenagers.

Under the agreement, Meta will pay the states at least $12.1 billion, with the total potentially increasing to $17.1 billion depending on future settlements involving other major social media companies. New York is expected to receive at least $819 million and potentially as much as $1.15 billion, with the money intended to support education, mental health services, and programs addressing unhealthy social media use among young people.

The agreement will also force Meta to address many of the complaints that parents and educators have expressed for years that its platforms are highly addictive, and lead to a litany of mental health problems. The agreement requires Meta to verify users' ages and limit users under 18 to two hours per day across Facebook and Instagram, excluding messaging. Minors generally will not be able to access the platforms between midnight and 6 a.m., while push notifications will be restricted at night and during school hours. Meta will also pause content and issue reminders after young users reach certain usage thresholds, while providing an option for chronological, non-algorithmic feeds. Parents will have to explicitly approve disabling many of these protections.

Attorney General James argues that those protections are necessary because the consequences of excessive social media use increasingly extend beyond the amount of time children spend staring at a screen. She said, “we cannot allow social media companies to continue fueling the growing rates of low self-esteem, isolation, and depression among our youth.”

There is a growing body of research behind those concerns. A 2026 study of more than 50,000 American children and adolescents between the ages of 6 and 17 found that spending four or more hours per day on screens was associated with a 45 percent higher likelihood of anxiety and a 61 percent higher likelihood of depression, compared with lower levels of screen use. Higher screen time was also associated with increased behavioral problems and ADHD. The researchers found that reduced physical activity, irregular bedtimes, and insufficient sleep helped explain part of the relationship between screen time and poorer mental health.

The settlement compliments Governor Kathy Hochul’s broader push to reduce screen time and address the impact smartphones and social media have on children's mental health and their ability to learn. Governor Hochul has made the issue a major component of her children's mental-health agenda, including successfully pushing for distraction-free schools and signing New York's SAFE for Kids Act in 2024.

The SAFE for Kids Act attacks some of the same features at issue in the Meta litigation. Beginning in January 2027, social media companies covered by the law will have to restrict algorithmically personalized feeds and nighttime notifications for users under 18 unless they receive parental consent. State officials point to research linking these addictive features and excessive social media use with depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and disrupted sleep among children and teenagers.

Governor Hochul has also successfully pushed New York to take smartphones out of the classroom, securing a statewide “bell-to-bell” restriction on the use of smartphones and other personal internet-enabled devices throughout the entire school day. The policy, which took effect for the 2025–26 school year, grew out of Hochul’s statewide listening tour with educators, parents, students and public safety officials and was based in part on concerns that constant access to phones and social media was undermining students’ ability to concentrate, learn and interact with their classmates. The early results have been encouraging according to the Governor’s office, 83 percent of schools surveyed reported more positive classroom environments and better student engagement after implementing the distraction-free policy.

The Meta settlement takes the distraction-free policy another step by imposing actual limits on the amount of time minors can spend on two of the world's largest social media platforms. It also creates a potentially significant source of funding for healthy activities. New York's share could support phone-free classrooms, after-school and summer programs, training for school mental health professionals and other initiatives designed to help young people develop healthier relationships with technology.

Taken together, the Meta settlement, the SAFE for Kids Act and Hochul's push to get smartphones out of classrooms reflect an increasingly aggressive approach by New York: children's attention should not simply be another commodity for technology companies to inflate their stock prices.

For parents who watched social media and smartphones transform childhood in little more than a decade, the policy debate is now beginning to catch up with the technology. New York is betting that giving children fewer algorithmic distractions, more time away from their screens and stronger protections online can translate into more time learning, exercising, sleeping, and interacting with one another in the real world while reducing mental health issues.

Dolly Parton: Singer, Songwriter, Philanthropist, and Card-Carrying Member of the AFL-CIO

Award-winning country music singer, songwriter, and actress Dolly Parton is well-known for her lifelong commitment to helping children, families, and communities; combining personal experience, compassion, and strategic giving to create lasting impact. She dedicated decades to philanthropy, focusing on literacy, education, disaster relief, healthcare, and community support.

Born in a one-room cabin in Pittman Center, Tennessee, Dolly was the fourth of 12 children. The Parton family was “dirt poor,” as she described. According to the Sevierville Convention & Visitors Bureau, the following day after graduating from Sevier County High School in Sevierville, Tennessee, in 1964, Dolly moved to Nashville, Tennessee and embarked on a career that spanned decades.

In 1986 Parton opened her Dollywood theme park in Tennessee as both a show of pride in her background and a desire to give back to the community. The theme park is the largest employer in Sevier County, creating more than 23,000 jobs there and generating around $1.8 billion annually for the region, according to a 2021 economic impact study.

The Dollywood Foundation, founded in 1988 in Sevier County, Tennessee, was created to reduce high school dropout rates and support educational success. Early initiatives included the Buddy Program, which offered $500 to seventh- and eighth-grade students who graduated high school, reducing the dropout rate from 35% to 6%. The foundation also awards the Dolly Parton Scholarship, providing $15,000 annually to five high school seniors to pursue higher education

Launched in 1995, the Imagination Library is Parton’s flagship literacy program, inspired by her father’s inability to read. The initiative aims to foster a lifelong love of reading and learning. It mails free, age-appropriate books monthly to children from birth until their first year of school. As of June 2026, the Imagination Library had gifted more than 325 million free books to children from birth to age five across the U.S., Canada, the U.K., Australia and Ireland, distributing over 3.5 million books every month. The program runs through a network of state, local and corporate partners rather than Parton's personal bank account alone, but it exists because she founded it and has championed it publicly for three decades, according to Fortune. The Imagination Library continues to be the signature program of the Foundation.

In 2022, Dollywood Parks and Resorts began covering 100 percent of the tuition costs, fees, and books for employees who pursue higher education. Starting on their first day of employment, all part-time and full-time employees at Dollywood’s parent company, Herschend Enterprises, can register for the GROW U pilot program, offering over 100 diploma, degree, and certificate programs.

Parton continually invested in disadvantaged communities. For example, Parton invested in a nearly 7000 SF commercial property in a historically Black neighborhood in Nashville, purchasing it with the royalties she earned from Whitney Houston's cover of *I Will Always Love You* from the soundtrack of the 1992 film *The Bodyguard*.

"It was a whole strip mall, and I thought this is the perfect place for me to be, considering it was Whitney, so I just thought, 'This is great, I'm just going to be down here with her people, who are my people as well,'" Parton said in a 2021 interview on Bravo's Watch What Happens Live With Andy Cohen.

She consistently responded to natural disasters and made significant donations to medical research and hospitals. In 2016, she launched the *My People Fund* to aid families affected by the Great Smoky Mountains wildfires, providing $1,000 per month for six months to almost 900 families, totaling over $12 million in direct aid. She contributed $1 million to Vanderbilt University Medical Center for COVID-19 vaccine research in 2020, aiding the development of the Moderna vaccine. She also donated $1 million in 2017 to the Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital in honor of her niece and another $1 million in 2022 for pediatric infectious disease research.

Parton's philanthropy has earned her numerous accolades, including the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy in 2022 and the Bezos Award for Courage and Civility, which included $100 million to support charitable causes.

Parton was also a union sister for decades—carrying the card of multiple labor organizations, including the Screen Actors Guild–American Federation of Television and Radio Artists which she joined in 1969.

Parton wrote one of the great anthems of the American working class. The title song from *9 to 5*, the 1980 movie about battling gender inequity in the workplace, gained an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Song, and won two Grammys.

Service Employees International Union Local 925, which has its roots to the 1970s organizing of women office workers that helped to inspire *9-5*, honored Parton.

"We're not in the habit of recognizing celebrity deaths here at 925. That said, Dolly Parton is a national treasure and some folks here joke that Dolly is our Local's patron saint," the union released in published reports. "After all, her song '9 to 5' is our anthem."

The American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (AFM), the AFL-CIO-affiliated labor union that represents 70,000 professional singers and players recalled Dolly as a member whose "influence went far beyond the boundaries of country music, but she never lost track of who she was and her values."

"Dolly Parton knew what it was like to struggle as she fought for working families her whole career," AFL-CIO said in a Post on X. "From providing free books to kids to giving working women our '9 to 5' anthem, she was an icon and an inspiration. Rest in power to our union sister. We will always love you."

In The News-New York City

NYC Extends Deadline for Pied-à-Terre Exemption Requests

New York City Finance Department (DOF) this week further extended the deadline for exemption applications to the City's new pied-à-terre tax to October 6th.

Property owners who received letters indicating they may be subject to the surcharge on second homes now have until October 6th to apply for an exemption, according to a DOF webpage for the surcharge. The city previously extended the original exemption application deadline from late August to September 18th.

"From the beginning, we have been committed to ensuring that New Yorkers have the time and information they need," a Department of Finance spokesperson said in published reports.

To date 5,500 exemption applications have been completed and approximately 2,900 exemptions have been granted.

The levy applies to single-family homes with market values of $5 million or more, and co-ops and condominiums worth at least $1 million. According to DOF, only owners who received a notice from the city must either appeal the assessment or pay it on next year's tax bill.

New York Housing Court to Fast Track Cases for Tenants in Hazardous Building Conditions

Under a new directive from the Administrative Judge of the New York City Civil Court, Housing Court judges will expedite hearing cases involving vacate orders, immediately hazardous building-wide conditions or elevator outages, and Article 7A proceedings in which the City or tenants seek the appointment of third-party building management because of landlord neglect.

New York City Civil Court Administrative Judge Shahabuddeen Ally this week issued a new directive instructing Housing Court judges to expedite emergency cases. The administrative order creating the fast track applies to:

- Housing Part ("HP") cases with one or more of the following conditions:
    1. A vacate order affecting one-third or more of the apartments in a building, or the entire building;
    2. An open, immediately hazardous HPD Class C violation for lack of essential services – including heat, hot water, electricity, gas or water – in one-third or more of the apartments in a building, or the entire building; or
    3. All elevators in a building or building section being out of service.

- Article 7A proceedings in which the City or tenants seek the appointment of a third-party building manager at buildings with an open, immediately hazardous HPD Class C or DOB Class 1 violation.

Housing Court cases in these categories will now be assigned a judge on the same day they are filed, with subsequent filings and appearances held on an expedited timeline. Once service is completed, the parties will have no more than five days to appear in court. To support the new fast track, the Unified Court System is expanding the number of judges eligible to be assigned to Housing Part and Article 7A cases.

"Upholding housing standards is one of the key statutory mandates of the Housing Court. The New York State Unified Court System is committed to ensuring that tenants facing the most severe and dangerous housing conditions receive timely access to justice," said New York City Housing Court Supervising Judge Jack Stoller. "The Housing Court's new procedure focuses on matters where city agencies have documented that a building is under a vacate order, lacks essential services, or has elevators that are completely inoperable and the situation is urgent.

Governor Hochul Announces $3.5 Billion in Regional Economic Impact From FIFA World Cup 2026

FIFA World Cup 2026™ generated $3.5 billion in total economic impact across New York and New Jersey, exceeding the region's original projected impact of $3.3 billion, according to a report conducted by Tourism Economics, an Oxford Economics company.

More than 645,000 fans attended the region's eight matches, including the July 19 final between Spain and Argentina at MetLife Stadium. Another 626,300 non-local visitors traveled to New York or New Jersey for Official Fan Events and related programming, according to the report.

"Our mission was to welcome the world to New York, while making sure that every New Yorker had the chance to participate in and benefit from this once-in-a-generation event," Governor Kathy Hochul said**.** "And that's exactly what we did. From increased spending at local businesses and restaurants to higher hotel revenues, the World Cup has left a lasting impact on our state. Here in New York, we want to continue to ensure that New Yorkers are reaping the benefits and joy of the World Cup by building more soccer infrastructure for our kids to play across the state."

FIFA World Cup 2026™ activity in New York and New Jersey generated approximately $1.9 billion in direct spending, supported 27,424 total full-and part-time jobs, generated approximately $1.4 billion in total labor income, and spurred $414.2 million in total state and local tax revenues.

Combined, visitors contributed $1.7 billion into the regional economy; the Host Committee, FIFA, and other stakeholders added another $286 million in operational spending, the report's authors said.

Briefs

NYC Office of Labor Relations Commissioner Renee Campion to Retire

Renee Campion, Commissioner of the New York City Office of Labor Relations (OLR) since January 2019, will retire on December 1, 2026.

She first joined OLR in 2002 as assistant commissioner and advanced through the ranks to associate commissioner, first deputy commissioner, and finally commissioner. Commissioner Campion served under three mayors: Bill de Blasio, Eric Adams, and Zohran Mamdani.

Prior to her time at OLR, Commissioner Campion was Director of Contract Administration for Doctors Council SEIU, where she negotiated union contracts on behalf of 3,300 medical doctors and dentists employed in the public and private sector. During her time with Doctors Council, she served both as the union's negotiator and Chief of Staff. Campion was also a member of the Board of Directors for the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health.

She holds a B.A in American Government from Clark University.

Comptroller DiNapoli: Pension Fund Valued at $309.7 Billion at End of First Quarter

The estimated value of the New York State Common Retirement Fund (Fund) was $309.7 billion at the end of the first quarter of State Fiscal Year 2026-27, New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli announced. Fund investments returned an estimated 6.12% for the quarter.

"The New York State Common Retirement Fund returned another strong quarter despite a host of factors including persistent inflation, higher energy prices, and ongoing geopolitical conflicts," Comptroller DiNapoli said. "Our disciplined investment strategy is focused on diversification, responsible risk management, and long-term stability so that we achieve the Fund's purpose of protecting the retirement security of our public workers, retirees, and their families."

The Fund's estimated value was $295.4 billion as of March 31, 2026, the end of the state's fiscal year. As of March 31, 2026, the Fund had 39.4% of its assets invested in publicly traded equities. The remaining Fund assets by allocation are invested in cash, bonds, and mortgages (22.9%), private equity (14.3%), real estate and real assets (14.3%), and credit, absolute return strategies, and opportunistic alternatives (9.1%). The Fund's long-term expected rate of return is 5.9%.

Attorney General James Stops Agreement to Eliminate Competition Between Zillow and Redfin

New York Attorney General Letitia James, a coalition of four other attorneys general, and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) this week put an end to an illegal agreement between Zillow Group, Inc. (Zillow) and Redfin Corporation (Redfin) that prevented them from competing.

According to the Attorney General, in February 2025, Zillow paid Redfin $100 million to shut down its multifamily rental advertising business and transfer its clients to Zillow. In exchange, Redfin agreed to use its websites to exclusively display copies of Zillow's apartment rental listings and stay out of the multifamily rental advertising market for up to nine years. In October 2025, Attorney General James and the coalition sued Zillow and Redfin for violating federal antitrust laws with this agreement, which harmed both building managers and renters with higher prices, fewer listings, and lower quality services.

Under the settlement, Zillow and Redfin must restore the competition that existed prior to their unlawful agreement. Redfin will invest in rebuilding its apartment advertising business and hire staff to acquire and maintain customers. Redfin will once again be able to list its own apartment units and will no longer have to exclusively show Zillow's listings. Zillow and Redfin are also barred from entering into future anticompetitive agreements. As a result, Redfin and Zillow will again compete for both advertisers and renters and will be incentivized to attract users by innovating and improving their services. The companies must also pay the coalition $2 million.

Joining Attorney General James in securing this settlement are FTC and the attorneys general of Arizona, Connecticut, Washington, and Virginia.

THIS IS WHAT GREAT FUN LOOKS LIKE!

Governor Kathy Hochul this week kicked off the 2026 Great New York State Fair, which runs from August 26th through Labor Day Monday, September 7th.

"There is so much to love about The Great New York State Fair, and at its core, it is a place that truly honors New York's tremendous agricultural community," Governor Hochul said.

The Fair's 2026 butter sculpture was unveiled Tuesday morning, revealing a depiction of the state fair, the Empire State Building in Manhattan, Doubleday Field in Cooperstown, fireworks, and a dairy farm.

This year's creation is titled "Milk. Memories. Tradition. Rooted in New York." It celebrates the state's connection to America's pastime, America's first state fair, America's most recognized skyline and ice cream, one on of the country's favorite summer treats.

Sculptors Jim Victor and Marie Pelton spent 12 days turning 800 pounds of unsalted butter into the finished display. The butter came from O-AT-KA Milk Products in Batavia.

` Officials estimated that producing that much butter requires about 1,972 gallons of milk, or roughly one day's work from 212 cows. At the end of the Fair, the butter will head to Noblehurst Farm in Pavilion to be recycled into renewable energy.

"I absolutely love it," said the state's Department of Agriculture and Markets Commissioner Richard Ball. "What better way to celebrate America's 250th anniversary than with the many longtime traditions that bring us together, including New York dairy, baseball and fireworks."

Coming Up

New York State

Thursday, September 3rd

Cannabis Control Board Meeting, CUNY Graduate School of Public Health & Health Policy, 11 a.m.

New York City

Tuesday, September 1st

Committee on Rules, Elections, Standards and Ethics, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.

Tuesday, September 2nd

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

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