



This Week in New York

Covering New York State and City Government

A Publication of Pitta Bishop & Del Giorno LLC

December 23, 2020 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-

As this eventful year winds to a close,
Pitta Bishop & Del Giorno LLC extends
warm holiday greetings to our clients, colleagues, & friends!



In the News – State

Governor Requests British Airways, Delta Airlines & Virgin Atlantic to Test All UK Passengers Before Entering New York State

In the wake of a new, highly contagious [variant of the COVID-19 virus](#) found in the United Kingdom, British Airways, Delta Airlines and Virgin Airlines have agreed to Governor Andrew Cuomo’s request to require a COVID-19 test before allowing passengers to board planes traveling from the United Kingdom to New York.

With this move, New York joins the list of 120 countries with a similar requirement on flights from the U.K.

On the home front, Wadsworth Laboratory has begun aggressive research of the UK variant. To date, Wadsworth has looked at more than 3,700 virus sequences identified in New York, but has yet to find the U.K. variant present in any of the samples. Additionally, Wadsworth and the Department of Health have forged agreements with six hospitals from across the State to obtain additional samples and is continues to make arrangements with other hospitals to do the same. Those hospitals with agreements already in place include: Montefiore, Memorial Sloan Kettering, Northwell Long Island, University of Rochester, Albany Medical Center, and Saratoga Hospital.

“If it’s here we want to know it—we want to isolate it immediately,” Governor Cuomo said.

Also this week, Governor Cuomo announced the formation of New York's Vaccine Equity Task Force to remove barriers to access and ensure equitable distribution of the vaccine. Task Force members include:

- *Frederick Shack*, CEO, Urban Pathways, Inc.
- *Dr. Havidán Rodríguez*, President, SUNY Albany.
- *Murad Awawdeh*, Interim Co-Executive Director, New York Immigration Coalition.
- *Dr. Henry Chen*, President, SOMOS Community Care.
- *Phyllis Jackson*, Founder and Executive Director, Interdenominational Health Ministry Coalition; Community Wellness Project Manager; Common Ground Health.
- *Guillermo Chacón*, President, Latino Commission on AIDS and Founder, Hispanic Health Network.
- *George Gresham*, President, 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East.
- *Ruth Hassell-Thompson*, Special Advisor for Policy and Community Affairs, NYS Homes and Community Renewal.
- *Frankie Miranda*, President and CEO, Hispanic Federation.
- *Rev. Dr. Calvin Butts*, Pastor, Abyssinian Baptist Church.
- *Jo-Ann Yoo*, Executive Director, Asian American Federation.
- *Dr. Hazel Dukes*, President, NAACP New York State Conference.
- *Rev. Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson*, Senior Pastor, Grace Baptist Church.
- *Judith Watson*, CEO, Mount Vernon Neighborhood Health Center.
- *Dr. Rosa Gil*, Founder, President and CEO, Comunilife, Inc.
- *Dr. Wayne Riley*, President, SUNY Downstate Medical Center; Chair, Board of Trustees, New York Academy of Medicine.
- *Danny Barber*, Chair, NYCHA Citywide Council of Presidents; President, Jackson Houses Tenant Association.
- *Kyle Bragg*, President, 32BJ SEIU.
- *Karim Camara*, Executive Director and Deputy Commissioner, Governor's Office of Faith-Based Community Development Services.
- *Rev. Mark E. Blue*, President, Buffalo Chapter NAACP.



Facial Recognition Technology Banned in Schools

Governor Andrew Cuomo this week signed legislation (A6787-D/S5140-B) suspending the use of facial recognition technology and other kinds of biometric technology in schools, directing a study of whether its use is appropriate in schools.

Specifically, the new law places a moratorium on schools purchasing and using biometric identifying technology until at least July 1, 2022 or until the report is completed and the State Education Commissioner authorizes its use, whichever occurs first. It applies to both public and private schools in New York State.

According to the Governor, the call for this legislation follows concerns raised about potential risks posed to students by some existing facial recognition and other biometric technologies, including reported high rates of misidentification of women, young people, and people of color as well as the safety and security of biometric data and corresponding student privacy concerns.

Under an agreement reached with the Legislature to be passed in the upcoming Legislative Session, the state Office of Information Technology will work with the State Education Department and will seek feedback from teachers and parents, as well as experts in school safety, security, data and student privacy issues. The study will address specific considerations outlined in the legislation, including the technology's potential impact on student civil liberties and privacy and how the data collected would be used.

The legislation was sponsored by Senator Brian Kavanagh and Assemblymember Monica Wallace.

In the News – City



City to Increase Traffic Safety Measures & Calls Upon the State to Approve Night and Weekend Speed Camera Enforcement

NYPD will focus holiday enforcement and education efforts on speeding and DWI

As year-end data proves the COVID-19 pandemic led to unsafe driving speeds on emptier city streets, Mayor Bill de Blasio this week joined the Department of Transportation (DOT) and NYPD to announce initiatives to bolster speed camera enforcement, crack down on drunk driving, and increase public awareness of traffic safety laws.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, New York City is on course this year to record the highest number of deaths of drivers and passengers since it launched a traffic safety initiative in 2014. Through Dec. 16 this year, New York City had recorded 234 total road deaths, including pedestrians and cyclists. They include 115 car drivers, motorcyclists and passengers who have been killed, a 69% increase from the same period last year and the highest number of such deaths since 2006. Meanwhile, pedestrian deaths are on track to reach a record low this year.

Three quarters of traffic fatalities this year happened in times or places where no automated speed enforcement is allowed under current State law, and over a third of non-highway fatalities occurred in school-camera zones during hours when the cameras could not issue tickets.

The City will call on the State to amend the state speed-camera law to allow cameras to operate around the clock. And as the holiday season reaches its peak, NYPD will focus its annual holiday enforcement – including for DWI – along corridors that have seen high rates of speeding crashes.

The administration also released speed camera enforcement [data](#) from 2014 to 2019, which demonstrates the cameras’ effectiveness as a safety tool, and shared new seasonal public-education campaigns focused on driver and motorcyclist safety.

According to Mayor de Blasio, despite those setbacks, this year is on track to conclude as the sixth safest in New York City’s recorded history. The Vision Zero measures include:

NYPD Holiday Enforcement

NYPD will be actively enforcing laws against speeding and Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) throughout the holiday season and beyond. Enforcement will occur along highways and on local streets where excessive speeds have been observed, including by DOT speed cameras. Enforcement will be conducted by NYPD Highway Patrol as well as by local precincts.

Proposed Major Amendment to State Speed-Camera Law

In the wake of the large number of high-speed crashes overnights and on weekends this year, the Mayor proposed expanding the State law that governs the hours during which speed cameras are operational. Under the current law passed in 2019, cameras are limited to 750 school zones Citywide – and can only operate during the hours of 6 am to 10 pm on weekdays. This proposal would make cameras operational 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

New Public-Service Education Campaigns

DOT and NYPD announced that they would be using social media in the coming weeks to highlight major trends in high-speed fatal crashes during 2020.

Briefs

City Launches NYC Vaccine for All Campaign

With the City's vaccine effort now underway, Mayor de Blasio this week announced the launch of the NYC Vaccine for All Campaign. The Campaign—translated into 16 languages for radio, television, newspapers, and digital media—will spread the word of a safe, effective, and free vaccine in New York City.

With a full rollout in January, the campaign will use a host of paid and earned media in over 16 languages—including TV spots, radio, subway and digital ads, social media and more—to spread public awareness around the City's vaccination effort. A social media campaign will begin this week, and digital campaign and subway live boards will begin next week.

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene will also host virtual conversations with residents in the 27 neighborhoods hardest hit by the pandemic and community leaders to share information on vaccine planning.



Comptroller Stringer Audit Uncovers Hazardous Conditions in City Homeless Shelters for Families with Infants

New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer this week released an [audit](#) of infant safety within the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelter system, revealing widespread hazardous conditions in sampled shelters where infants reside – including exposed electrical outlets, mold and mildew, vermin infestations, broken or missing window guards, and unsafe cribs.

The Comptroller's auditors found deficiencies raising health and safety concerns in all 13 shelters they visited and 92 percent of the 91 units they inspected, including 32 units with 4 or more safety concerns in 11 shelters. The audit also found that non-compliant shelter operators faced no apparent consequences; five of the 13 shelters in the audit sample were allowed to continue doing business with the City after receiving poor performance evaluations from DHS.

Comptroller Stringer recommended ten measures to protect the safety and wellbeing of infants in City shelters, including action by DHS to ensure that providers inspect all units where infants reside weekly, promptly correct all deficiencies found, and properly instruct all families with infants on safe sleep practices promptly after they enter a shelter.

Jonah Bichotte Cowan Law

Governor Andrew Cuomo this week signed the Jonah Bichotte Cowan Law (S8525A /A2770C) to establish requirements for treatment when an expectant mother presents at a general hospital with concerns about being in pre-term labor. The law is named in memory of Jonah Bichotte Cowan, son of Brooklyn Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte.

The law will require hospitals to develop their own protocols in line with already existing federal and state requirements for admitting, diagnosing, and treating expectant mothers experiencing an emergency medical condition. Information to patients about pre-term labor and premature birth will be distributed in a pamphlet given at pre-booking and at prenatal care visits. The Department of Health will develop informational materials for emergency department staff reminding them of federal and state discharge and transfer requirements.

Governor's State of the State Address & 2021 NYS Legislative Session

Governor Andrew Cuomo will deliver the annual State of the State Address on Wednesday, January 6th. The 2021 Legislative Session convenes Wednesday, January 6th and is scheduled to close on Thursday, June 10th. A pdf of the calendar is available [here](#).

Coming Up

New York State & New York City

No Meetings Scheduled for Week of December 28th

**“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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