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THIS WEEK IN NEW YORK
COVERING NEW YORK & CITY GOVERNMENT
OCTOBER 23, 2026 EDITION



"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

General Election: November 3rd

Early Voting Begins October 24th

General Election Contest List Includes: Governor/Lieutenant Governor; State Comptroller; Attorney General; Surrogate, Supreme, & Civil Court Justices; Congressional Representatives & State Legislators



Governor Hochul Unveils Second Wave of Regulatory Reforms Under 'Express NY' Initiative

Governor Kathy Hochul this week announced the second wave of state regulatory reform actions through her EXPRESS NY initiative to make government work better for New Yorkers. The 75 regulatory reform actions across 17 state agencies build on the first wave of 50 reforms announced in June.

The 75 regulatory reform actions are focused across four primary areas:

Expanding Access To Child Care, Health Care, And Mental Health Services

- **Expanding the supply of child care educators** by broadening the list of eligible fields of study, creating new career pathways in early childhood education.
- **Making it easier to operate child care in school buildings** by aligning facility requirements between the Office of Children and Family Services and the State Education Department for school-aged children who are receiving child care in school buildings..
- **Reducing administrative delays around often duplicative background checks** for child care educators.
- **Providing flexibility for child care directors** to serve multiple sites by allowing child care directors at day care centers to work across two sites
- **Speeding up certification for mental health services** by updating the Office of Mental Health's Prior Approval Review (PAR) process.
- **Reducing reporting frequencies of nursing home bed census reporting** from weekly to monthly. This will lighten the administrative burden for 598 nursing homes while preserving key oversight metrics.
- **Streamlining home care agency reporting** by eliminating a redundant reporting requirement for licensed Home Care Service Agencies.
- **Increasing support to young adults in foster care** by allowing virtual caseworker visits.

Higher Education & Housing

- **Modernizing community college residency rules** by eliminating tuition penalties for in-state students who miss the filing deadline.
- **Allowing colleges to waive tuition liability when students face emergencies.**
- **Modernizing regulations** of the Rural Rental Assistance Program.

Cutting Red Tape for Businesses

- **Modernizing the Department of Labor payroll system** based directly on employer feedback and submissions into the EXPRESS NY Portal.

Modernizing State Operations

- **Modernizing 29 state labor dispute proceedings** including labor relations claims and dispute procedures, authorizing electronic filing, eliminating unnecessary verification requirements, allowing oral summations, and repealing outdated publication rules which will impact nearly 800,000 public and private sector employees and employers.

- **Repealing eleven outdated workers' compensation rules** including an unused rule for judges, two defunct Medical Appeals Unit regulations, four obsolete regulations over disputed medical bills, and obsolete third-party recovery rules.



Chapters of the Laws of 2026

Chapter 313, Sponsored by AM McMahon/Senator Martinez: Increases the volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers' personal income tax credit from $200 to $800 for eligible individuals and from $400 to $1600 for eligible married joint filers.

Chapter 314, Sponsored by AM Zaccaro/Senator Fernandez: Empowers the council on the arts to designate Little Yemen as a cultural district.

Chapter 315, Sponsored by AM Anderson/Senator Bottcher: Establishes violations for the failure to safely store rifles, shotguns, and firearms in the presence of a minor or a prohibited person.

Chapter 316, Sponsored by Senator Gianaris/AM Dinowitz: Requires ammunition background checks to be denied if the prospective purchaser cannot lawfully possess a rifle or shotgun under federal or New York State law.

Comptroller DiNapoli Comptroller : MTA Financial Outlook Stable in Short Run but Gaps Loom as Costs Rise

Outyear budget gaps fueled by rising costs require the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to find long-term strategies to further control non-discretionary costs while continuing to build ridership, hit its savings targets, and negotiate a new labor contract, according to State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli's annual report on the authority's finances.

"The MTA's near-term financial outlook remains stable, but that could change in the coming years," DiNapoli said. "Meeting higher savings goals, keeping a tight focus on growing ridership through safe, reliable service and working constructively with labor will help avoid a return to the fiscal instability of years past. New Yorkers need a strong MTA to keep our economy running well."

The MTA's most recent Financial Plan shows budget balance in its $21.9 billion 2026 operating budget, but outyear budget gaps continue to widen, driven by rising non-discretionary costs during the financial plan period, creating increases in unanticipated expenses when compared to earlier financial plans. The MTA projects gaps of $295 million in 2027, $507 million in 2028, $707 million in 2029, and $897 million in 2030. These gaps have widened despite stronger than expected tax revenues and recent progress on savings initiatives.

Over its 2027-2030 Financial Plans, the MTA expects operating expenses to increase 3.4% annually. Much of this is driven by non-discretionary costs, including healthcare, pensions and benefits, energy, debt service, and paratransit. These costs are expected to grow 5% a year from 2026 to 2030, by which point they will account for more than half of all operating costs. These costs are set against an expected 2.1% rise in annual revenues (including as-yet unapproved fare and toll increases in 2027 and 2029) from 2027 to 2030.

The MTA has yet to reach a new agreement with the Transport Workers Union following the contract's expiration in May 2026. Since early 2026, the Authority has lost more than 1,000 operations and maintenance workers, amid concerns about ongoing increases in overtime costs.

Comptroller DiNapoli's report notes that management of several of the MTA's budget pressures are within its control, and proactive monitoring of revenue collections, continued expansion of recent cost savings efforts, and a negotiated labor settlement should provide clarity as to how it will maintain budget balance in the coming years.

In The News-New York City

BOARD OF ELECTIONS IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Early Voting Starts Saturday, October 24th through November 1st

Early Voting Poll Sites

Manhattan Bronx Brooklyn Queens Staten Island

NYC Office of Labor Relations

Mayor Mamdani Appoints Liz Vladeck as Commissioner of the Office of Labor Relations

Mayor Zohran Kwame Mamdani has appointed Liz Vladeck as Commissioner of the New York City Office of Labor Relations (OLR).

As OLR Commissioner, Vladeck will oversee labor negotiations, the implementation and enforcement of labor contracts with the City's 150 collective bargaining units, representing 360,000 employees, as well as the City's employee health insurance plans and benefits programs.

She most recently served as Chief Legal Officer and General Counsel of New York City Public Schools. Prior to joining NYCPS in 2021, Liz served as Senior Labor Policy Advisor in the New York City Mayor's Office of Policy and Planning and as Deputy Commissioner and founding Director of the Office of Labor Policy and Standards in the NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection.

"CSA welcomes Mayor Mamdani's appointment of Liz Vladeck, whose experience representing workers as a labor attorney and serving as the Department of Education's chief legal officer gives her an important perspective on this vital role," said **CSA President Henry D. Rubio.** "Her record gives us confidence that she will approach negotiations with fairness, listen to our union's concerns, and work collaboratively to provide schools what they need to succeed. We look forward to building a productive relationship with Commissioner Vladeck focused on supporting New York City's school leaders and the families they serve."

NYC Department of Consumer Affairs

NYC Proposes Crackdown on AI Customer Service Chatbots

Mayor Zohran Mamdani's administration is proposing a new rule cracking down on companies using automated chatbots for customer service, requiring businesses to disclose when they use such systems and to allow customers the option of talking with a person instead.

The rule requires businesses to provide timely and reasonable customer service and offer customers easy access to a human representative if that service falls short. When finalized, it would put an end to customer service "doom loops" that cause New Yorkers wasted time, prolonged consumer disputes, and financial harm.

The new proposed rule is the first of its kind in the country, according to the Mamdani administration. It would also require such automated customer service systems to provide help in a "reasonable and timely manner," and avoid repeatedly directing consumers to menus that don't answer their questions or respond with irrelevant or incorrect information.

"Sometimes bad customer service is merely exasperating. Other times it's all the difference between refilling a critical prescription, rehabilitating a student loan, or recovering a large refund. That's why New York City is drawing a line against automated doom loops—proposing rules to ensure consumers have access to the meaningful customer service they expect," said DCWP Commissioner Levine**.**

The rule will apply to any companies doing business in New York City, Commissioner Levine said, not just those based in the city. The rule applies to any customer service system in which all or "substantially all" the communication is made by technology, rather than a human being. The proposed policy relies on the city's Consumer Protection Law. Violators would be required to pay $525 for their first violation, $1,050 for their second violation, and $3,500 for their third and any subsequent violations.

DCWP's proposed rule would codify that it is a deceptive and unconscionable trade practice for businesses to insinuate that customer service is available, only to repeatedly and unreasonably fail to address consumers' inquiries, or to only respond to consumers' inquiries with unresponsive, irrelevant, or erroneous information.

DCWP proposed this rule by publishing it in the ***City Record*** on October 20, 2026. Following the proposal, under the City Administrative Procedures Act (CAPA), stakeholders have a 30-day comment period, including a public hearing, in which to provide DCWP feedback and comments on the proposed rule. After the comment period, DCWP will review all submissions before the rule is finalized and adopted. According to Commissioner Levine, there will be a public hearing on November 19th.

Mamdani Administration Announces 1,200 Sidewalk Sheds Taken Down, Unveils New Designs to Brighten City Streets

Mayor Zohran Kwame Mamdani, Deputy Mayor Leila Bozorg, and Department of Buildings (DOB) Commissioner Ahmed Tigani announced New York City has reduced the number of sidewalk sheds by approximately 1,200 since January, a decrease of more than 15% in 10 months.

The administration is also advancing new rules to bring better-designed sidewalk sheds to streets across the five boroughs. The two sheds now installed in Lower Manhattan are the "Baseline Shed" and the "Speed Shed," both developed by a design team led by PAU:



The new Baseline Shed and Speed Shed models

- ***Baseline Shed*:** Available in heavy-duty and light-duty versions, the design features transparent polycarbonate decking and an innovative angled roof that lets in natural light, improves sightlines to ground-floor businesses and creates a more open sidewalk.
- ***Speed Shed*:** Designed for lighter-duty use, this shed features an angled roof made with rockfall netting roof to catch debris while allowing light to reach the sidewalk. Detachable wheels allow the structure to be moved quickly between locations as needed.

Briefs

Comptroller DiNapoli: State Tax Receipts Significantly Higher Than Projections Through Mid-Year

State tax receipts totaled $68.5 billion through the middle of State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2027, $7.3 billion higher than estimates by the Division of the Budget (DOB). State tax collections were also $8.6 billion higher than those through September 2025, according to the monthly State Cash Report released by New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli.

"Higher state tax collections, particularly personal income and business tax receipts, are partially a result of financial market growth," Comptroller DiNapoli said. "As noted in my recent report, Wall Street profits have increased significantly in the first half of the year. However, consumer costs keep rising and many families are still struggling. While strong financial market growth bodes well for some, we must ensure the economy works for all New Yorkers."

Personal income tax (PIT) receipts totaled $36.4 billion and were $2.5 billion above DOB's financial plan projections through the second quarter. PIT receipts were also $2.9 billion higher than the same period in SFY 2026; all components of the PIT have shown strong growth.

Year-to-date consumption and use tax collections totaled $12.7 billion which was 7.2%, or $855.4 million, higher than the same period last year, and $421.8 million higher than anticipated by DOB's financial plan. Sales tax receipts, the largest share of these taxes, increased by $840.8 million, or 7.8%, through September. Business taxes, which include collections from the Pass-Through Entity Tax, totaled $17.6 billion, $4.6 billion higher than collections through September last fiscal year and $4.1 billion higher than DOB financial plan projections.

All Funds spending through September totaled $130.1 billion, which was over $10.2 billion, or 8.5%, higher than last year for the same period, primarily due to higher Medicaid costs.

NYC Red Light Cameras Now Total 600

New York City Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) Commissioner Mike Flynn today announced the City has installed red light cameras at 600 intersections across the five boroughs, fulfilling its commitment to expand the Red Light Camera Program and reach the maximum number permitted under state law.

NYC DOT data shows that red light running was involved in 22% of fatal crashes at intersections from 2023 to 2025. Red light cameras have reduced red light running by more than 80% at camera locations.

In intersections with red light cameras, injuries from rear-end collisions have declined by nearly 60% and injuries from T-bone crashes have declined by 70% since installation. In 2025, 95% of vehicles caught running red lights received no more than one or two violations. Fewer than 0.7% received five or more violations. Roughly 39% of red light camera violations are issued to vehicles registered outside New York City.

Report Finds NYC Delivery Worker Minimum Pay Rate Increased Earnings by More Than $2 Billion

Commissioner Samuel A.A. Levine and the New York City Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP) released a new **report** detailing the impact of the City's Minimum Pay Rate for app-based delivery workers through June 2026, finding that the law has increased worker pay by more than $2 billion since enforcement began in December 2023. During this period, workers' average hourly earnings, including tips, increased from $10.48 to $27.03, while consumer demand for deliveries continued to grow.

Not only has total pay to delivery workers increased by over $2 billion since 2023—workers' earnings (which includes pay and tips), per hour and per week, are substantially higher. For example, restaurant delivery workers' total weekly earnings nearly doubled from $19.5 million for the workforce to $38.7 million from the third quarter of 2023 to the second quarter of 2026.

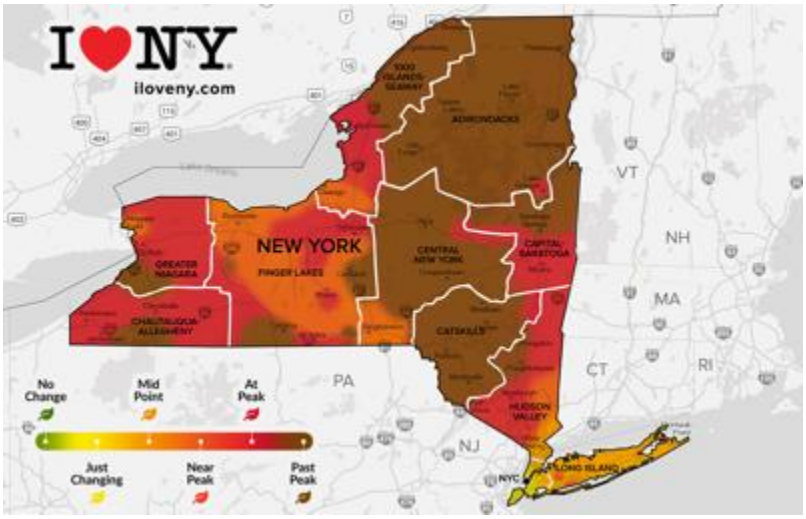
In the restaurant sector, weekly deliveries rose from 2.63 million to 3.39 million, an increase of 29%. Trip time rose from 44% of total hours to 78% of total hours. Deliveries completed per hour worked rose from 1.41 to 2.36, an increase of 68%.

Mamdani Administration Releases 40,000 More 9/11 Records to Public

Mayor Zohran Mamdani and the New York City Law Department this week announced the release of 40,000 additional City records related to the horrific terror attacks of September 11th, bringing the total number of records available at the 9/11 document portal to 200,000.

This release is the second installment of records being made public under the court agreement between 911 Health Watch and the Mamdani Administration. Additional records will be released in the coming months.

Foliage Report



The progression of bright and vibrant fall colors across New York state continues this weekend with peak foliage throughout much of the Capital-Saratoga, Greater Niagara, Chautauqua-Allegheny and Hudson Valley regions, and near-peak and peak leaves dominating the Finger Lakes and central and southern portions of the Thousand Islands. Leaves in the Adirondacks and Catskills will be mostly past-peak, while foliage at midpoint of change is sweeping across Long Island. This is according to the field reports from volunteer observers for the Empire State Development Division of Tourism's I LOVE NY program.

Locations with the most significant changes include Lake George (Adirondacks); Voorheesville, Troy and Schenectady (Capital-Saratoga); Catskill (Catskills); Amsterdam (Central New York); Moravia, Auburn, Elmira, Syracuse; Watkins Glen, Ithaca and Penn Yan (Finger Lakes); Chautauqua and Jamestown (Chautauqua-Allegheny); Buffalo, East Aurora, Batavia, Lewiston and Albion (Greater Niagara); Pulaski and Oswego (Thousand Islands-Seaway); and Hudson, Newburgh, Cornwall-on-Hudson, Goshen and Bear Mountain (Hudson Valley).

Coming Up

New York State

Monday, October 26th

Metropolitan Transportation Authority Board Meeting, MTA Board Room, 2 Broadway – New York – 20th Floor, 9 a.m.

New York City

Monday, October 26th

Committee on Criminal Justice, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 1, 10 a.m.

Tuesday, October 27th

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 3, 9:30 a.m.

Committee on Women and Gender Equity, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 2, 10 a.m.

Committee on Criminal Justice, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 2, 10 a.m.

Committee on Public Housing, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 1, 10 a.m.

Committee on Aging, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 1, 10 a.m.

Committee on Workforce Development, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 2, 1 p.m.

Committee on Children and Youth, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 1, 1 p.m.

Wednesday, October 28th

Committee on Governmental Operations, State & Federal Legislation, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 1, 10 a.m.

Committee on General Welfare, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 3, 1 p.m.

Committee on Hospitals, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 1, 1 p.m.

Committee on Finance, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 2, 1 p.m.

Committee on Housing and Buildings, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 2, 1 p.m.

Thursday, October 29th

Subcommittee on Early Childhood Education, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 1, 1 p.m.

Committee on Small Business, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 1, 1 p.m.

Committee on Contracts, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 2, 2 p.m.

Friday, October 30th

Committee on Governmental Operations, State & Federal Legislation, Council Chambers – City Hall, 1 p.m.

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

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