



This Week in New York

Covering New York State and City Government

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In the News – State



Governor Signs Legislation to Allow Striking Workers to Receive Benefits Sooner

Striking workers in New York State will be eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits two weeks after joining the picket line, under legislation (Chapter 20 of the Laws of 2020) signed into law this week by Governor Andrew Cuomo.

The legislation, sponsored by Buffalo-area legislators Senator Tim Kennedy and Assemblyman Sean Ryan, reduces the waiting period for striking workers from seven consecutive weeks to two weeks. As with current law, it applies to workers who lose their employment due to strike or other industrial controversy, “including concerted activity not authorized or sanctioned by the recognized or certified bargaining agent of the claimant, and other concerted activity conducted in violation of any existing collective bargaining agreement.”

Prior to enactment, in New York State, workers on strike were permitted to receive unemployment insurance benefits after the expiration of a 49-day suspension period, unless there is a lockout or their employer hires replacement workers.

"This a huge victory for unionized workers who until now had to endure an incredible hardship by waiting seven weeks to claim unemployment benefits," said AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento.

Senator Kennedy and Assemblyman Ryan worked with Governor Cuomo to address concerns with their initial legislation (Chapter 755 of the Laws of 2019) which would have reduced the waiting period to one week. The agreed-upon chapter amendment (Chapter 20 of 2020) and the initial legislation went into effect immediately upon signature on Thursday.



Governor Cuomo Announces Medicaid Redesign Team II Members

Governor Andrew Cuomo this week released the members of the Medicaid Redesign Team II (MRT II). The team, announced in the Governor's Executive Budget address, will work to find \$2.5 billion in savings in the Medicaid program to help close New York's \$6.1 billion deficit.

The MRT II's 21 voting members are:

- Co-chair: Michael Dowling, President and CEO of Northwell Health
- Co-chair: Dennis Rivera, Former Chair of SEIU Healthcare
- Dr. Steven Corwin, President and CEO, New York Presbyterian
- Thomas Quatroche, PhD, President and CEO, Erie County Medical Center
- LaRay Brown, CEO of One Brooklyn Health
- Mario Cilento, President of New York State AFL-CIO
- Christopher Del Vecchio, President and CEO of MVP Health Care
- Pat Wang, President and CEO of Healthfirst
- Emma DeVito, President and CEO of VillageCare
- Wade Norwood, CEO of Common Ground Health
- Steven Bellone, County Executive, Suffolk County
- T.K. Small, Director of Policy at Concepts of Independence
- Donna Colonna, CEO, Services for the UnderServed (S:US)
- Todd Scheuermann, Secretary of Finance, NYS Senate
- Blake Washington, Secretary of Ways and Means, NYS Assembly
- Paul Francis, Deputy Secretary for Health and Human Services, Governor's Office
- Dr. Howard Zucker, Commissioner of Health
- Dr. Ann Sullivan, Commissioner for the Office of Mental Health
- Arlene González-Sánchez, Commissioner of the Office of Addiction Services and Supports
- Dr. Theodore Kastner, Commissioner of the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities
- Robert Megna, Senior Vice Chancellor and COO, SUNY

New York State Medicaid Director Donna Frescatore will serve as the Executive Director and the Division of Budget Director Robert Mujica will serve as a non-voting member of the MRT II.

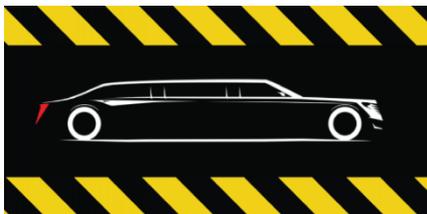
MRT II will hold its first meeting next week on Tuesday, February 11th. The final report with findings and recommendations will be submitted to the Governor and the Legislature in March. Recommendations and proposals may be submitted [online](#) beginning February 11th.

MRT II, will develop recommendations to continue the results of the first MRT while locating changes to the State's Medicaid program that will create \$2.5 billion in recurrent savings within the Fiscal Year 2021 State Budget. The Governor has ordered MRT II to find savings while ensuring that there are zero impacts on local governments and beneficiaries.

Recommendations that are expected to be addressed include:

- The drivers of greater-than-projected costs and growth in the Medicaid program.
- Models of healthcare delivery to improve care management for beneficiaries with complex health conditions.
- Existing regulations, laws and programs that hinder the modernization or achieving efficiencies in the Medicaid program and for the healthcare industry.
- Ways to ensure the availability of a stable and appropriately skilled workforce, especially with respect to meeting the needs of an aging population.
- Strengthening the sustainability of safety net providers serving vulnerable populations, including through regulatory reform.
- Changes in the Medicaid program to achieve short-term solutions and long-term systemic changes that advance the State's successful healthcare reform strategy while restoring financial sustainability to ensure that benefits will always be available to those who need it.
- Whether any changes to the metric for calculating the Medicaid global cap are necessary.
- The introduction of new data sets, data analytics and technologies to identify current and future trends and improve program oversight.
- Policies to ensure the efficient and effective use of Medicaid dollars and reduce waste, fraud and abuse.

MRT II will also create an advisory work group which will focus on issues with long-term care due to the accelerating spending and enrollment in long-term care the previous three years.



Governor Cuomo Signs Limousine Safety Package

Governor Andrew Cuomo this week signed a package of bills aimed at increasing safety standards on the limousine industry. The package was proposed in the wake of the 2018 Schoharie limousine crash as well as a similar fatal accident on Long Island in 2015.

"These far-reaching reforms deliver much-needed protections that will help keep dangerous vehicles off our roadways, crack down on businesses that do not prioritize safety and will give New Yorkers peace of mind when they enter a limo in this state," Governor Cuomo said.

The 10-bill package includes new seatbelt requirements; requiring limousine operators to obtain commercial driver's licenses to operate vehicles that seat nine or more passengers; mandating random and pre-employment drug and alcohol testing for limousine drivers; and installing and using commercial GPS systems and increased penalties for illegal U-turns. Specifically, the 10 bills are:

Chapter 2 – Sponsored by M of A Paulin / Senator Metzger -- Relates to drug and alcohol testing for for-hire vehicle drivers

Chapter 3 – Sponsored by M of A Paulin / Senator Kaplan -- Relates to establishing the stretch limousine passenger safety task force

Chapter 4 – Sponsored by M of A Santabarbara / Senator Gaughran -- Relates to the punishment for certain traffic infractions committed by an operator of a stretch limousine or other motor vehicle designed or modified for purposes of having a seating capacity of nine or more passengers.

Chapter 5 – Sponsored by M of A Santabarbara / Senator May -- Requires the commissioner of transportation to establish, maintain, monitor and publicize a hotline operated and maintained by the department of motor vehicles through which any person may report safety issues with stretch limousines and to use such reports when determining withdrawing a motor carrier's operating authority or denying applications for new or revised operating authority.

Chapter 6 – Sponsored by M of A Santabarbara / Senator Kennedy -- Relates to stretch limousine safety requirements and changes the class of license required to operate stretch limousines; stretch limousines are vehicles that have a seating capacity of nine or more.

Chapter 8 – Sponsored by M of A Magnarelli / Senator Hoylman -- Requires passengers under 16 to wear safety belts in taxis and livery vehicles.

Chapter 9 – Sponsored by M of A Magnarelli / Senator Kennedy -- Allows the commissioner of transportation to impound stretch limousines in certain situations

Chapter 10 – Sponsored by M of A Paulin / Senator Kennedy -- Relates to the installation of safety belts in stretch limousines and the posting of notice, therein

Chapter 11 – Sponsored by M of A Santabarbara / Senator Gaughran -- Requires stretch limousines to use commercial global positioning system technology

Chapter 12 – Sponsored by M of A Santabarbara / Senator Sanders-- Provides that every motor carrier shall furnish the department of motor vehicles a list of each altered motor vehicle commonly referred to as a "stretch limousine" designed to carry 9 or more passengers; requires the commissioner of motor vehicles to annually review the bus driver files of each driver employed by a motor vehicle carrier who operates such stretch limousine; makes related provisions.

In the News – City



State of the City 2020: Mayor de Blasio Unveils Blueprint to “Save Our City”

Mayor Bill de Blasio this week delivered his seventh State of the City Address, unveiling his Administration’s plan with two years left in his final term.

“New York City is the greatest city in the world, but many New Yorkers have real fears that the city they love is slipping away,” said Mayor Bill de Blasio. “... We must make New York City easier to afford, protect the mom-and-pop businesses that make New York, New York, and hand this city back to the people who make it so great.”

Mayor de Blasio’s 2020 agenda includes:

Environmental Initiatives:

Stop New Fossil Fuel Infrastructure: The Mayor will issue an Executive Order 52 to stop a new infrastructure, such as power plant expansions, pipelines, or terminals that expands the supply of fossil fuels in our city.

End Unnecessary Single-use Plastic Bottles: Through Executive Order 54, New York City government will end the purchase of unnecessary single-use plastic bottles and restrict the sale of single-use plastic bottles (21 fluid ounces or less) on City property by 2021.

Make ALL City Vehicles Electric: The Mayor will issue Executive Order 53 to have all on-road vehicles in the fleet be plug-in electric by 2040. By 2025, 4,000 vehicles will be replaced or converted to electric, and by 2040, we will work to make the entire City fleet fully electric.

Investment in Wind: In conjunction with the State and Empire Wind partners – the City will equip the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal in Sunset Park as a new hub for staging, installing and operating turbines across the tri-state area. The program will create 500 green jobs.

Double Solar Power: New York City will launch a new program to defray upfront costs of solar power, letting homeowners pay for them over years out of the savings on their energy bills. The City will help install solar panels on 50,000 one-to-four family homes, doubling the amount of solar power produced in New York City and creating 5,000 green jobs.

Bring Hydro to New York City: This year, the City will secure an agreement to bring more zero-emission hydropower to New York City by 2025.

End the use of Fossil Fuels, including Natural Gas: By 2040, we still stop using natural gas and other fossil fuels in large building systems in New York City, starting in government buildings. We will work with lawmakers to ensure that new permits for building systems are aligned with our goal of carbon neutrality by 2050.

Small Business:

Invest Pension Funds in Local Businesses: Commit \$500 million of New York City pension funds to invest in our local businesses, with a focus on small businesses.

Expand Small Business Navigators: Help businesses with applications for permits and licenses.

Provide Free Lawyers and Fair Loans: Provide free legal services for lease negotiation and low-interest loans from trustworthy community lenders. We will also pursue local legislation to mandate lease transparency requirements for all small businesses.

Create a Blue Ribbon Commercial Rent Control Commission: Convene a blue ribbon commission to find ways to support small businesses and protect them from egregious rent hikes. This commission will deliver its recommendations by the end of this year.

Housing:

Build New Homes for the Lowest-Income New Yorkers: Your Home NYC will prioritize building new homes, bringing 2,000 more units for low-income New Yorkers over the course of the plan. Half of all City financed newly-built homes will be for families making under \$50,000 per year, and at least half of those will be for families making less than \$30,000 per year.

Rent Without a Security Deposit: Starting with up to 60,000 City-financed homes, the City will offer renters a choice to pay a security deposit or to sign up for renter security insurance that allows monthly payments or a smaller single upfront payment in lieu of the full month deposit. The Administration will pursue local and state legislation to expand these alternative options citywide to all of New York's 2.2 million rental households.

Expand Community Land Trusts to Build Neighborhood Wealth: Support the use of Community Land Trusts and new neighborhood wealth-building tools. The opportunities, offered for organizations to propose community ownership models, will include enough City owned land to gain over 3,000 units of community owned or shared equity housing.

Legalize Basement Apartments: Updating zoning laws and introducing legislation to cut red tape. The City will set aside capital funds to finance low interest loans. These measures are estimated to add approximately 10,000 more affordable homes for New Yorkers within the next decade.

Youth Initiatives:

Youth Coordinators: Deploy 300 Youth Coordination Officers to every precinct, where they will help young people access community resources and will be resident precinct experts for all youth-related matters.

Expand, Reopen, and Build New Recreation and Community Centers: Expand late nights and weekend hours at 36 Parks recreation centers and provide free membership to anyone up to age 24 by eliminating the \$25 membership fee, reopen six closed community centers, complete two Parks recreation center sand build seven new recreation centers in Soundview, Tremont, Coney Island, Bushwick, Astoria, Queens Village and Staten Island’s South Shore. These investments will increase youth membership by approximately 20,000 members and bring the total number of centers to 51.

Make Streets Safer near Schools: Installing 1,000 new lights, stop signs, and speed bumps around schools and in neighborhoods. to keep our youngest New Yorkers safe.

Create a new NYPD Vision Zero Unit: New unit will consist of over 100 personnel and expand enforcement against the most dangerous behaviors on our streets: speeding, red light running, and failure to yield to pedestrians.

Education Initiatives:

Surpass the Nation in Graduation Rate: The DeBlasio Administration made the commitment to surpass the nation’s graduation rate in the next five years, reaching 86% by 2026.

Deepen the Work of EduStat: With a focus on current key indicators such as attendance, credit accumulation, formative assessment, and suspension, the Department of Education will analyze real-time data, identify trends, and deploy resources accordingly. The Chancellor’s Executive Leadership Team will meet at least once a month to review.

Recruiting Diverse Teachers: Adopting a goal of putting an additional 1,000 men of color on the path to becoming teachers by 2022, doubling the previous goal of 1,000 that was hit in 2018.

Begin New Family Home Visits: We will begin a new \$43 million program that offers home visits to all first-time parents in New York City by 2024. They’ll help both parents and babies stay healthy, help new families strengthen their bonds and make sure families know where to turn for childcare, a pediatrician and all the support they need in those critical early years.

Briefs

DOH Proposes Allowing Water Systems to Delay Compliance on New Limits for Three Chemicals

Recently released State Department of Health (DOH) regulations propose offering water systems the option to delay compliance with new limits on three chemicals. Water systems would be allowed to request a two-year deferral of limits on PFOA, PFOS, and 1,4-dioxane. The proposal also allows for water systems to apply for an additional third year of deferral.

In 2019 DOH proposed limits are 1 part per billion for 1,4-dioxane and 10 parts per trillion for both PFOA and PFOS. Under the regulations, water systems serving more than 10,000 customers must begin testing within 60 days. Those with more than 3,300 but fewer than 10,000 have 90 days, and water systems under 3,300 get six months to complete testing for the three chemicals. Water systems could apply for a deferral within 90 days as long as they had test results showing an exceedance.

DOH will collect public comments about the regulations until March 7. They expect to respond to comment shortly after and finalize in April. However, this timeline has been delayed in the past.

Assembly Health Chair Richard Gottfried (D-Manhattan) has expressed that he would look to create legislation to eliminate the deferral provision.

2019 Saw Growth in Local Sales Tax to \$18.3 Billion

New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli's office released a [report](#) this week showing that local sales tax grew to \$18.3 billion in 2019, an increase of 4.7% from 2018. This rate, however, is slower than 2018's 5.3%.

According to the Comptroller, sales tax growth was primarily concentrated in the second half of the year with its strongest performance in the third quarter at 6.3%.

Though all regions of the state saw growth, it was not even across. New York City and the Mid-Hudson were the only regions with growth above the state average at 5% and 7.4%. The large growth in Mid-Hudson was attributed to a tax rate increase in Westchester County.

The Mid-Hudson and Finger Lakes regions were the only two which did not see growth slow in 2019 from 2018. The Finger Lakes regions saw an increase in growth from 3.7% to 4.1%. 13 of the 17 cities (excluding New York City) which impose a sales tax saw an increase, led by Oneida at 8.6% and Norwich at 8.4%. 54 of the 57 counties outside of New York City saw increases in county-sales tax collection.

Attorney General James Delivers Restitution For Wage Theft Victims

New York Attorney General Letitia James this week announced a \$250,000 wage theft settlement with ambulette company, Cathay Express Transportation, Inc. According to the Attorney General, the company cheated 125 employees out of wages by failing to pay overtime to drivers and failing to pay minimum wage in some instances. In addition to repaying employees' earned wages, the company's payment practices will be monitored for a two-year period.

The Attorney General's Office began an investigation in January 2018 into Brooklyn-based Cathay Express Transportation's failure to properly pay its employees, who are primarily from New York's Asian community. During the investigation, the Attorney General's Office determined that, since 2014, the company failed to pay workers time-and-a-half of their hourly rate when they worked overtime hours and, in several instances, failed to pay workers the minimum wage.

Private Schools STEM Grant to Increase

A state program started in 2017 is poised to give \$35 million to private schools. New York State's Math, Science & Technology Teachers in Religious and Independent Schools Grant provides money to private schools to pay for salaries of math and science teachers. In 2017, the program gave out \$5 million to private schools. In 2018 it was raised to \$15 million and then doubled to \$30 million last year.

The majority of private schools, about 90%, receiving this grant money were religious schools with the other 10% being nondenominational or secular private schools. 54% of the schools were Christian, 33% Jewish and 3% Muslim. 383 schools received funding.

First Lady Chirlane McCray Announces Citywide Home Visiting Services Program for All First-Time Parents

The de Blasio Administration this week announced New Family Home Visits, a program that will offer home visiting services to all first-time parents in New York City.

Families will be matched with services that best fit their needs and offered up to six home visits. They will also be provided with health education and connection to resources which will include mental health screenings for anxiety and depression, infant feeding, infant safe sleep and referrals to services such as WIC and SNAP.

The city will invest \$43M a year by 2024 and beyond, aiming to reach 45,000 families across the city when fully implemented. The program will launch this spring in Brooklyn and will reach all Brooklyn families with their first baby by 2021.

Coming Up

New York State

The Legislature is in session Monday February 10th through Thursday February 13th

Monday February 10th

Legislative Fiscal Committee Hearing on 2020-2021 Executive Local Government Budget
Hamilton Hearing Room B, Legislative Office Building, 2nd Floor, Albany, 11 a.m.

Tuesday February 11th

Legislative Fiscal Committee Hearing on 2020-2021 Executive Elementary Education Budget
Hamilton Hearing Room B, Legislative Office Building, 2nd Floor, Albany, 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday February 12th

Legislative Fiscal Committee Hearing on 2020-2021 Executive Public Protection Budget
Hamilton Hearing Room B, Legislative Office Building, 2nd Floor, Albany, 9:30 a.m.

Thursday February 13th

Legislative Fiscal Committee Hearing on 2020-2021 Executive Economic Development Budget
Hamilton Hearing Room B, Legislative Office Building, 2nd Floor, Albany, 9:30 a.m.

Legislative Fiscal Committee Hearing on 2020-2021 Executive Taxes Budget
Hamilton Hearing Room B, Legislative Office Building, 2nd Floor, Albany, 1 p.m.

New York City

Monday February 10th

Committee on Resiliency and Waterfronts, Committee Room – 250 Broadway, 14th Floor, 10 a.m.

Committee on Economic Development, Committee Room – 250 Broadway, 16th Floor, 11 a.m.

Committee on General Welfare, Committee Room – 250 Broadway, 16th Floor, 12 p.m.

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

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

Tuesday February 11th

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

Committee on Rules, Privileges and Elections, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10:30 a.m.
Continuation of the February 3, 2020 Recessed Meeting

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

Wednesday February 12th

Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.

Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings and Dispositions, Committee Room – 250 Broadway, 16th Floor, 1 p.m.

Committee on Governmental Operations, Committee Room – 250 Broadway, 14th Floor, 1 p.m.

Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and Intergroup Relations, Committee Room – City Hall, 1 p.m.

Thursday February 13th

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

Committee on Civil Service and Labor, Committee Room – 250 Broadway, 14th Floor, 1 p.m.

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