



This Week in New York

Covering New York State and City Government

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“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-



NYS General Election: November 8th

Early Voting Continues Thru Sunday

Early voting for the 2022 general election continues through Sunday, November 6th. New Yorkers will vote for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, State Comptroller, one of the state’s U.S. Senate seats, and the State’s 26 Congressional seats. There are also races for representatives in the state Assembly and the state Senate, as well as state and local judges.

Early voting polling places may differ from the Election Day voting sites and the times vary by county. Poll information can be found at:

NYS Voters (outside NYC): Confirm your voting location by visiting the New York State Board of Elections at <https://voterlookup.elections.ny.gov/>.

NYC Voters: Confirm your voting location by visiting the New York City’s Board of Elections website at <https://voterlookup.elections.ny.gov/>.

In the News – New York State



NYS OPWDD Releases Five-Year Plan to Aid New Yorkers With Developmental Disabilities

The New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) this week released its five-year strategic plan to help strengthen supports and services for New Yorkers. The plan identifies strengthening the direct support workforce as a “top and urgent priority.”

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Developed over the course of 18 months, the [2023-2027 Strategic Plan](#) identifies and organizes agency priorities to guide the delivery of services for people with developmental disabilities statewide over the next half-decade.

“I look forward to working together to make the system more equitable, sustainable, and responsive to the needs of people we support,” OPWDD Commissioner Kerri Neifeld said.

The plan identifies three overarching agency goals with objectives and a range of initiatives that will support the agency's mission:

- Strengthening workforce technology and collaboration
- Transforming the agency through innovation and change
- Enhancing person-centered supports and services



1

Strengthen Our Workforce, Technology, and Collaboration
Advance the service system's infrastructure by investing in the workforce, updating data technology, and improving decision-making through collaboration.

Objectives

- Direct Support Workforce**
Improve the recruitment, retention, and quality of the direct support workforce.
- Data Access and Technology**
Invest in technology that provides more timely information and increases the availability of data.
- Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration**
Promote stakeholder engagement and collaboration to inform decision-making.



2

Transform Our System through Innovation and Change
Expand the system's ability to empower people by strengthening supports, simplifying policies, and exploring new approaches to providing services.

Objectives

- Supports and Services**
Strengthen the quality, effectiveness, and sustainability of supports and services.
- Regulatory and Policy Changes**
Change policies to create greater flexibility, increase opportunity for community integration, and incentivize improved personal outcomes.
- Research and Innovation**
Conduct research, evaluate programs, and test new methods for providing services.



3

Enhance Our Person-Centered Supports and Services
Improve services throughout the lifespan by making sure supports are holistic, needs-based, equitable, and person-centered.

Objectives

- Children, Youth, and Young Adults**
Ensure children, youth, and young adults receive appropriate and coordinated services.
- Complex Needs**
Expand supports for people with complex behavioral and medical needs.
- Cultural and Ethnically Diverse Communities**
Address gaps in services for underserved, culturally, and ethnically diverse communities.

The plan also calls for improving how the agency uses and shares data; making improvements to supports and services; and ensuring that the unique needs of New Yorkers served by the agency are met throughout their lives.

The plan fulfills a requirement under state Mental Hygiene Law requiring OPWDD to prepare guidance for agency activities with input from the public. OPWDD will report progress in achieving the plan's stated objectives and goals to stakeholders on an annual basis, seeking input from them on success, areas for improvement, and any shifting priorities.

"As Chairman of the Disabilities Committee I have staunchly advocated for OPWDD to work with stakeholders to produce this plan and the outcome is encouraging," State Senator John Mannion said. "It has been over ten years since OPWDD last developed a strategic plan... Looking ahead, I'll be focused on making sure the plan is executed with transparency and proper oversight."



Comptroller DiNapoli: New York Drug Overdose Deaths Surged During Pandemic

Drug overdose fatalities surged during the COVID-19 pandemic in New York State, with opioid-related overdose deaths increasing by 68% to nearly 5,000 individuals from 2019 to 2021, according to [an analysis released this week](#) by New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli.

According to the Comptroller, the surge is largely due to a sharp increase in deaths from opioids related to illicit fentanyl and similar synthetic opioids. Overdose deaths statewide from opioids and all drugs (5,841) in 2021 surpassed the previous 2017 peak by more than 1,700 fatalities.

“Too many New Yorkers have died from the misuse of drugs, but the jump in these numbers is alarming. It is a tragedy that devastates families and impacts our communities in countless ways,” Comptroller DiNapoli said. “The data shows our battle against drug overdose deaths is far from over. State leaders must ensure an ongoing commitment of public resources and strategies, including new funding from legal settlements, and innovative, evidence-based solutions for the fight against this deadly epidemic to be effective.”

Comptroller DiNapoli’s report found:

- The share of drug overdose deaths in the state involving opioids increased to 85% in both 2020 and 2021 from 69% in 2010.
- In 2021, 30 New Yorkers per 100,000 died from drug overdoses and 25 per 100,000 New Yorkers died from opioid overdoses, compared to five in 2010. New York’s opioid overdose death rates exceeded national rates in both 2020 and 2021.
- Fatalities grew across all racial and ethnic groups. Death rates increased five-fold for Black New Yorkers, quadrupled for Hispanic or Latino New Yorkers, and nearly tripled for White New Yorkers. In 2020, death rates were highest for White New Yorkers at 28.7 per 100,000 people.
- In 2020, drug overdose death rates were higher than the statewide average (25.4 per 100,000) in 10 of the 15 counties for which Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data is available. Due to low death counts in most counties resulting in privacy and statistical reliability concerns, CDC data is only available for certain counties. The highest rate was in Dutchess County, where over 43 per 100,000 people died of drug overdoses, followed by Niagara County, the Bronx, and Monroe County.

The Comptroller recommended that State policymakers:

- Seek continued improvements to care systems by improving coordination across state agencies, such as OASAS, the state Office of Mental Health and the state Department of Health.
- Use evidence-based practices to achieve the most effective prevention, treatment, and recovery outcomes.
- Improve efforts to track funding, as current financial reporting does not clearly identify total state, federal and local resources dedicated to addressing the opioid crisis.
- Establish clear performance targets and regular metric reporting, program and evaluations.
- Direct funding and support toward communities facing the greatest challenges.

In the News – New York City

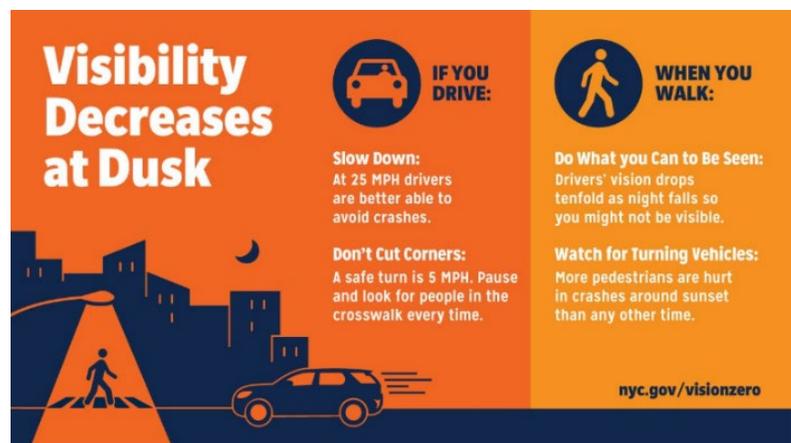


Mayor Adams Brings Back *Dusk and Darkness* Multi-Agency Traffic Enforcement

New York City Mayor Eric Adams this week announced the return of the City’s annual *Dusk and Darkness* traffic enforcement campaign to keep pedestrians, cyclists, and all road users safe during fall and winter evenings, especially after the end of daylight-saving time this Sunday, November 6th.

This year, the *Dusk and Darkness* campaign will focus on promoting safe practices for the carting of commercial waste — handled by private companies — to protect workers and other road users, while the New York City Police Department (NYPD) will expand traffic enforcement of moving violations during evening and overnight hours.

Launched in 2016 and now in its seventh year, the *Dusk and Darkness* campaign combats elevated rates of fatal crashes. During fall evenings, rush hour leads to some of the highest fatal crash rates of the calendar year. In the past, this campaign has reduced the average number of evening and overnight fatalities each year by 13.5 percent over the years it has been in place as compared to the five years prior. In that time frame, the average number of pedestrian fatalities declined 21.7 percent and the average number of motor vehicle occupant fatalities dropped by 25.8 percent.



“We have seen how dangerous the streets can be after the clocks change...Street safety is public safety,” Mayor Adams explained.

Dusk and Darkness this year includes the following initiatives:

Day of Awareness: DOT and NYPD Vision Zero Street Teams are spread out at high-visibility locations across all five boroughs this morning to remind commuters of the increased dangers of traffic crashes during the fall evening and overnight hours. Those teams will also be visible this evening.

Increased Evening and Overnight Enforcement: NYPD enforcement will focus on speeding drivers, drivers that fail to yield, and distracted drivers using their cell phones while behind the wheel. NYPD traffic agents will increase enforcement against vehicles that are double-parked and blocking bike and bus lanes.

For-Hire Vehicle Driver Safety: TLC will visit areas frequented by for-hire vehicle drivers to remind them of the importance of using extra caution during low-visibility periods, including by driving 25 miles per hour unless otherwise posted. TLC will also reiterate this message to drivers and passengers via social media.

Commercial Waste Industry Safety: BIC enforcement activities include evening and overnight operations in partnership with the NYPD and other partner agencies. Safety enforcement includes garage inspections, truck stops, and regulatory action to ensure trade waste companies comply with safety requirements that aim to protect trade waste workers and all road users.



Bills Approved by the City Council

Introduction 516-A, sponsored by Speaker Adrienne Adams, would require the FDNY, in consultation with the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, to develop and implement a plan for the recruitment and retention of firefighters from underrepresented groups within the department — female firefighters and firefighters of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Introduction 519-A, sponsored by Council Member Joann Ariola, would require the FDNY to survey each firehouse to determine the permanent facility upgrades necessary to create a workplace environment that facilitates use by a mixed gender workforce, and employ interim measures, including erecting physical barriers, in locations awaiting such upgrades.

Introduction 552-A, sponsored by Council Member Kevin Riley, would require the FDNY to produce an annual report on the number of firefighters assigned to each fire company and special operations unit, within the Department, disaggregated by the gender and race or ethnicity of such firefighters. Additionally, FDNY will be required to provide demographic information of the population residing in the immediate service area of each fire company in the City.

Introduction 553-A, sponsored by Council Member Kevin Riley, would require the FDNY to develop and implement a plan for providing ongoing training and education to all employees regarding diversity and inclusion, including annual training on the Department's anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies. Additional interactive training would be required at firehouses where incidents of harassment and discrimination take place on multiple occasions.

Introduction 560-A, sponsored by Council Member Nantasha Williams, would require the FDNY to produce an annual report on complaints filed with the Department's Equal Employment Opportunity Office regarding potential violations of the City's Equal Employment Opportunity Policy. The report will include information on the number of complaints that were received and closed during the prior year; information on types of misconduct alleged in such complaints; and case outcomes, including any corrective action taken by the Department.

Briefs

State Board of Elections Releases Updated New York Voter Enrollment Data for 2022 Elections

New York State has gained 424,000 voters since 2018, bringing the total number of registered voters eligible to vote in the November 8th elections to 13.1 million, according to [data](#) released this week by the State Board of Elections.

As of November 1st, the data release date, there are 6.5 million registered Democrats in New York State, 2.9 million Republicans, 3 million party-unaffiliated voters, 163,000 voters registered with the Conservative Party and 51,000 with the Working Families Party. In addition, there are 445,000 "other" registered voters, according to the data, which includes voters who were registered with parties such as The Green Party, Libertarian Party, and Independence Party that lost their ballot status in the 2020 election under new thresholds.

New York City saw a small net gain of 61,000 registered voters, and now accounts for 39% of the State's registered voters and 43% of the State's population.

DOH Announces Grants to Provide Cancer Screenings in Underserved Communities

In an effort to better reach underserved populations, the Department of Health is [soliciting applications](#) for \$41 million in grant funding for organizations to provide breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer screenings in their community. The Cancer Services Program grants will provide between \$210,000 to \$990,000 for these organizations annually over five years. Applications are due December 20, 2022.

The funding opportunity prioritizes reaching individuals who are Black, who identify as LGBTQIA+, or who live in rural areas. The funding will help provide cancer screening, diagnostic follow-up, and treatment referral services for every county and borough in New York State, with a focus on helping individuals who lack health insurance.

Attorney General James Secures \$523 Million from Opioid Manufacturer Teva

Bringing Total Opioid Settlement Funds to More Than \$2 Billion

New York Attorney General Letitia James this week announced that her office has **secured up to \$523 million** from Teva Pharmaceuticals, Ltd., its American subsidiary Teva Pharmaceuticals USA, and its affiliates (Teva) for their role in the opioid crisis. The \$523 million settlement is the largest reached with an individual opioid defendant by Attorney General James and raises the total amount secured from opioid manufacturers and distributors to more than \$2 billion to combat the opioid crisis.

The settlement resolves Attorney General James' claims against Teva, the final remaining defendant not currently in bankruptcy, and concludes the Attorney General's litigation against opioid manufacturers and distributors.

The settlement would additionally resolve lawsuits against Teva by Nassau and Suffolk counties if the county legislatures approve it. In the meantime, Attorney General James plans to make a motion removing Teva from her opioid litigation, concluding New York's opioid trial.

The funds secured by Attorney General James will be paid out over a period of 18 years. The agreement also commits Teva to critical injunctive relief that includes:

- A ban on high-dose opioids (greater than 40mg) and prescription savings programs.
- Prohibitions on marketing opioids and funding third parties that promote opioids.
- Restrictions on political lobbying.
- Monitoring and reporting of off-label use of immediate release fentanyl (TIRF) products.
- Disclosure of Teva opioid product clinical data.

Actor Jim Belushi Opens Marijuana Dispensary on Upstate New York Indian Nation

Belushi Farms, owned by actor and comedian Jim Belushi, has been awarded the latest license to operate a dispensary selling recreational marijuana on Northern New York's Saint Regis (Akwasne) Mohawk Tribe territory, according to a news release from the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council.

The local franchise is majority owned by Saint Regis tribal member Zach Oakes. Fees collected from that and other licensed dispensaries on the Mohawk territory will support tribal programs and services, the Council said. Belushi Farms also has locations in Colorado, Oklahoma, Illinois, and Massachusetts.

The Saint Regis Tribal Council began awarding licenses for marijuana dispensaries in December 2021. There are now a dozen licensed dispensaries on the Akwesasne Mohawk territory.

According to published reports, the Cayuga Nation has a recreational dispensary in Union Springs in Cayuga County and another in Seneca County where it also operates a growing/processing facility in Seneca County. The Seneca Nation of Indians operate 20 retail outlets in the territory in Western New York and the Oneida Indian Nation announced plans to launch a “seed to sale” marijuana business that is expected to open retail outlets in 2023.

The Onondaga Nation, located south of Syracuse, has not, at this time, entered the market.

Eric Ulrich Resigns as NYC DOB Commissioner

Following an inquiry from the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office in relation to illegal gambling, New York City Department of Buildings (DOB) Commissioner Eric Ulrich this week stepped down. First Deputy Commissioner Kazimir Vilenchik, P.E., will serve as Acting Commissioner

Fabien Levy, Press Secretary to New York City Mayor Eric Adams, yesterday issued the following statement:

This morning, Eric Ulrich tendered his resignation as DOB commissioner in an effort to, in his words, avoid ‘unnecessary distraction for the Adams administration.’ We have accepted his resignation, appreciate him taking this step, and wish him well. We have no further knowledge of any investigation and, out of respect for his and his family’s privacy, have nothing further to add.

DOB First Deputy Commissioner Kazimir Vilenchik, P.E. will serve as acting commissioner. We have full confidence in the team at DOB, and the agency remains fully operational. No city services will be impacted.

Acting Commissioner Vilenchik is a New York State licensed professional engineer who attended Belarussian State Polytechnic University in Minsk. He was an inspector, structural engineer, and project manager in the private sector for over 20 years before he joined the Department of Buildings in 2008 as Deputy Borough Commissioner in Staten Island.

The Acting Commissioner served in Queens, Manhattan and Brooklyn, and eventually became Borough Commissioner of Brooklyn in 2018. As Borough Commissioner, his work included improving accountability and efficiency for construction processes in Brooklyn. He has also worked in the implementation of the Universal Pre-K program and worked on flood mitigation efforts after Superstorm Sandy.

Mayor Adams Launches NYC Legal Fellows Program

New York City Mayor Eric Adams this week announced the launch of the New York City Legal Fellows Program, a new citywide initiative designed to enable junior attorneys at law firms across New York City to serve a one-year appointment in the legal department of a city agency. The fellows will continue to be employed by and paid by their firms, but in all other respects, will be full-time city employees and fully integrated into agency legal departments.

The New York City Legal Fellows Program is part of a broader Legal Services Initiative launched by Mayor Adams to enhance the partnership between the city's lawyers and lawyers in private practice. Firms that are planning to participate in the Legal Fellows Program include Paul Weiss; King & Spalding; Kirkland & Ellis LLP; O'Melveny; Ropes & Gray; Shearman & Sterling; Simpson Thatcher; and Wilkie Farr & Gallagher.

Fellowship opportunities exist across a range of agencies within the Adams administration, including the New York City Department of Investigation, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, the New York City Department of Education (DOE), the Mayor's Office of Contract Services, the Mayor's Office of Risk Management and Compliance, the New York City Office of Labor Relations, and the Office of the Chief Counsel.

In addition to the New York City Legal Fellows Program, in the future, the City plans to identify a broad range of pro bono matters to help further expose junior law firm attorneys to the work of the City.

Coming Up

New York State

No Scheduled Hearings

New York City

Monday, November 7th

Joint - Committee on Oversight and Investigations & Finance, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.
Oversight – New York City's Spending of Federal Covid-19 Relief Funds.

Committees on Health & Hospitals and the Subcommittee on Covid Recovery and Resiliency,
Committee Room – City Hall, 1 p.m.

Oversight – COVID-19 in NYC: Evaluating the Present Challenges.

Wednesday, November 9th

Joint - Committee on Youth Services & Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction, City Hall, 1 p.m.
Oversight – Accessing Mental Health Services for NYC Youth.

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