



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-*

In the News – New York State



State and City Crack Down on Illegal Cannabis Sales



Governor Unveils NYS Licensed Cannabis Dispensary Verification Tool

NYC Pilot Program Nets 6,000 Pounds of “Gray Market” Marijuana.

As New York readies for the first legal sales of adult use cannabis, State and local officials are taking steps to crack down on the proliferation of illegal shops which have sprung up since the State decriminalized marijuana usage in March 2021.

Governor Kathy Hochul this week unveiled a "New York State Licensed Cannabis Dispensary" verification tool that will be posted in the windows of legally licensed retail dispensaries across the State. The designation will ensure consumers know they are buying from a dispensary regulated by New York State. A universal symbol on each product sold will also show that it is up to standards set by the state.

Meanwhile, New York City Mayor Eric Adams yesterday announced that \$4 million worth of illegal marijuana--100,000 packages--was seized as part of a pilot program to crack down on the City’s “gray market.”

New York City Sheriff’s Office Cannabis Task Force conducted inspections at 53 locations of suspected unlicensed cannabis operators. They issued 500 civil violations as well as 66 criminal court summonses. The effort involved the sheriff’s office, the NYPD, and the state’s Office of Cannabis Management, uncovering more than 100,000 illegal products, including 6,000 pounds of marijuana.

“There are those who believe that this is going to become the Wild Wild West of cannabis selling,” Mayor Eric Adams said at a press conference Thursday. “We are saying, clearly and loudly: No it is not. We are going to take steps to stop the unlicensed areas, stores that sell cannabis/illegal products.”

Mayor Adams said he aims to tweak state laws around marijuana in order to make it easier to crack down on unlicensed storefronts, according to published reports.



"We will use every tool available to strengthen the equitable, legal adult-use cannabis market we're building and the dispensary verification tool ... is one step in that process," Chris Alexander, Executive Director of the Office of Cannabis Management, said. "Our enforcement team has been growing its partnerships and ramping up activity from Buffalo to New York City and will continue to do so until these illicit stores and trucks are shutdown."

The dispensary verification tool will be posted in the front windows of each legally licensed dispensary. It will include a QR code that can be scanned by consumers and local community members. Additionally, a similar version will be available for licensees who start sales through delivery.

"It's critical for New York's cannabis consumers to understand the risks of buying untested, illicit products and to have the tools to guide them to the safer, legal market that's poised to open," Governor Hochul said. "These tools will help to protect public health and strengthen our ability to deliver the equitable cannabis market our law envisions. We will continue to work with our partners in municipalities across the state to enforce the law and shutdown illicit operators who are selling products that put New Yorkers at risk."

Every product sold will also include a "universal symbol" designating it as a tested, regulated product. Consumers should check both the storefront for the dispensary verification tool and the product label to ensure they are purchasing a safer product. Examples of this "universal symbol" can be found here, under "Packaging and Labeling."

According to a recent report commissioned by the New York Medical Cannabis Industry Association, some products sold at unlicensed shops in New York City are also tainted with contaminants such as E. coli and salmonella bacteria and may not contain the amount of THC indicated on the label.



Chapters of the Laws of 2022

Chapter 662—Sponsored by AM Lunsford/Senator Skoufis—Enhance the current a pandemic emergency plans required of nursing homes by adding notice to all residents and their families or guardians within 12 hours of an infection being detected; and to prepare separate accommodations for residents at risk of infecting others.

Chapter 664—Sponsored by Senator Cleare/AM Burgos—Places restrictions on the sale of electric space heaters including requiring space heaters to contain a thermostat; have an automatic shutoff; and have been certified by an approved body.

Chapter 665—Sponsored by Senator Gounardes/AM Cruz—Hospital Equity and Affordability Legislation (HEAL Act), aims to improve market access and increase transparency of health insurance contracts by banning certain anti-competitive provisions.

Chapter 668—Sponsored by AM Joyner/Senator Ramos—Establishes light duty during pregnancy and parental leave for certain commuter rail employees.

Chapter 669—Sponsored by Rules Committee (at the request of AM Davila)/Senator Ramos—Replaces the terms "alien" and "illegal alien" with the terms "noncitizen" and "undocumented noncitizen."

Chapter 672—Sponsored by Senator Biaggi/AM Paulin—Expands accommodations for nursing employees in the workplace.

Chapter 673—Sponsored by Senator Bailey/AM Epstein—Increases oversight of the immigration bond industry.

Chapter 676—Sponsored by AM Eichenstein/Senator Kaplan—Relates to insurance for victims of a hate crime.

Chapter 677—Sponsored by AM McDonald/Senator Ryan—Allows court-appointed receivers to collect rents to address hazardous conditions at properties outside of New York City and several downstate counties.

Chapter 681—Sponsored by Senator Gianaris/AM Rosenthal— Bans the sale of dogs, cats, and rabbits at retail pet stores.

Chapter 684—Sponsored by Senator Kavanagh/AM Glick— Expands eligibility for SCRIE and DRIE in New York City to tenants of former Mitchell-Lama rental buildings whose landlords have entered into voluntary agreements to base future rent increases on affordability provisions deemed sufficient by the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Developments (HPD).

Chapter 685—Sponsored by Senator Kavanagh/AM Cymbrowitz—Allows maximum rental assistance subsidies to be collected for rent regulated housing.

Chapter 686—Sponsored by Senator Kavanagh/AM Niou—Expands eligibility to Battery Park City for SCHE, DHE, SCRIE, DRIE Homeowner and Renter Affordability Programs.

Chapter 687—Sponsored by Senator Kavanagh/AM Glick—Clarifies the eligibility for SCRIE and DRIE in New York City for residents in former Mitchell-Lama rental buildings.

In the News – New York City



Comptroller DiNapoli: Young People in NYC Still Face Double-Digit Unemployment

Report Finds Young Men Have Greatest Challenge in Finding Work, With 24% Unemployed

More than two years after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, young people in New York City continue to face double-digit unemployment, with young men experiencing the greatest challenges in finding work, [according to a report](#) released this week by State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli. Unemployment among 16- to 24-year-olds stands at nearly 18% in the city, as compared to about 9% in the rest of New York state and 8% nationally. In comparison, overall unemployment is currently 5.6% in New York City, and 3.4% in the nation.

“The city must take steps to strengthen career opportunities for young job seekers or the city’s economic recovery will be stifled even further,” Comptroller DiNapoli said. “The recovery is much slower for young workers in New York City when compared to the rest of the state and the country and has had a particularly profound impact on young people of color and young men.”

Comptroller DiNapoli’s report found unemployment rates among young people in the city are recovering at a much slower pace due to the city being the initial epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unemployment in 2020 for 16- to 24-year-olds in the city reached 22%, while in the rest of New York state it was 16.5%, and 15.9% across the United States. The pandemic not only caused staggering job losses in 2020, but devastated industries that employ more young people like restaurants, retail, and recreation, causing more young people to leave the workforce.

There also exist greater disparities among young people of color in the city and across the nation. Currently, the unemployment rates for young Black (18.5%), Hispanic (23.3%) and Asian (23.3%) workers in the city are higher than their white (16.2%) counterparts. However, across the United States, youth unemployment rates have nearly recovered to pre-pandemic levels, including across most racial and ethnic groups.

Comptroller DiNapoli’s report further found that nearly 24% of young men in the city remain unemployed, significantly higher than across other groups, the rest of the state and the country. The report suggested that this increased percentage is due to the greater share of young men employed in the leisure and hospitality sector, which is one of the city’s hardest hit industries. It has yet to fully recover 15% of its pre-pandemic job losses, and there may not be enough openings in the sector to meet current demands.



Speaker Adams Announces Housing Framework to Increase Affordable Housing & Improve Land Use Process

New York City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams this week released her *Housing Agenda to Confront the City's Crisis* and announced plans for the Council to pass legislation establishing a citywide Fair Housing Framework with targeted goals for each community district, ensuring every neighborhood contributes fairly to building affordable housing.

The agenda was accompanied by a [Planning and Land Use Toolkit](#) to improve the City's land use process by establishing principled guidance and tools to advance comprehensive planning.

"It's no secret that New York City is facing a housing crisis that disproportionately burdens those who need affordable housing at the deepest levels," said Speaker Adrienne Adams. "To meet this crisis head-on, we must build more housing with a Fair Housing Framework, focus on deepening affordability, and prioritize preservation of our housing stock. Every district must participate in solving this crisis to ensure that affordable housing development is distributed equitably across our city..."

The Housing Agenda includes the following:

1. Increasing Housing Production with a Fair Housing Framework

- Pass citywide Fair Housing Framework legislation to require more detailed housing production, preservation, voucher, and neighborhood investment goals for each Community District based on factors that include access to opportunity, infrastructure capacity, and displacement risk.
- Shape and enact the Administration's "Zoning for Housing Opportunity" citywide zoning text amendment to remove regulatory barriers to housing production in high-opportunity neighborhoods and address the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development's (HPD's) lack of financing to facilitate subsidized affordable housing in high-opportunity neighborhoods.
- Advocate repeal of New York State's 12 Floor Area Ratio cap on residential development.
- Advocate for HPD to set increased citywide production targets for extremely low-income (30% AMI or less) and very low-income (50% AMI or less) households.

2. Deepening Housing Affordability

- Pursue a new city-state New York/New York agreement to build more supportive housing that helps provide stability for New Yorkers with addiction or mental health challenges, who are formerly homeless, living with HIV/AIDS, or returning from the justice system.
- Expand citywide acceptance and use of rental housing vouchers, increasing number of market-rate units in developments dedicated for New Yorkers with housing vouchers.
- Adjust HPD's *Open Door* Program so that it targets families earning less than \$100,000 per year with expanded down payment assistance.

- Collaboratively advocate with the Congressional Delegation and the Department of Housing and Urban Development to update AMI calculations to account for inflation and rising costs.

3. Preserving Affordable Housing

- Advance legislation and policy changes at the city and state levels to address the problem of vacant affordable housing units, particularly rent-regulated units.
- Advocate for the Administration to prioritize additional resources and solutions to management challenges at the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) that curb delays of needed capital repairs and the deterioration of building conditions.
- Expand funding and improve effectiveness of HPD's "Neighborhood Pillars" and "Landlord Ambassador" preservation programs for renters, and *HomeFix* and the *Homeowner Help Desk* programs that support working-class homeowners at risk of housing instability.
- Advocate and work with the State to advance joint legislation, programs and regulatory changes that will help make basement apartments safe and sustainable as affordable housing.

4. Restoring Capacity for Housing Agencies & Staff

- Advocate and prioritize legislative oversight and accountability to secure adequate support and management changes from the Administration that allows housing agencies to hire and retain staff that resolves understaffing and access adequate resources.
- Continue advocating for the Administration to dedicate increased capital funds for affordable housing, with a combined additional \$1.5 billion each year for a total annual commitment of \$2.5 billion for HPD and \$1.5 billion for NYCHA.

Briefs

Governor Hochul Signs Legislation to End the Puppy Mill Pipeline

Governor Kathy Hochul this week signed legislation (Chapter 681) to ban the sale of dogs, cats, and rabbits at retail pet stores, aiming to end the puppy mill-to-pet store pipeline and stop abusive breeders. Based upon an agreement with the Legislature, this legislation will take effect in 2024 and will also allow pet stores to charge shelters rent to use their space for adoptions.

"Dogs, cats and rabbits across New York deserve loving homes and humane treatment," Governor Hochul said. "I'm proud to sign this legislation, which will make meaningful steps to cut down on harsh treatment and protect the welfare of animals across the state."

According to the Governor, Chapter 681 aims to prevent the buying and selling of animals from large-scale, abusive breeders that lack proper veterinary care, food or socialization. Often these animals have health issues resulting from poor breeding and can cost families thousands of dollars in veterinary care. The legislation will continue to allow pet stores to host adoption services in conjunction with animal shelters or rescue organizations to help connect New Yorkers with animals in need of a home.

The initiative was sponsored by Senator Michael Gianaris and Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal.

Pandora to Relocate North American Headquarters to New York City

Jewelry manufacturer Pandora is relocating its North American headquarters to New York City. The company will operate its North American headquarters in a 27,000 square foot office spanning the 35th floor of 1540 Broadway in Times Square.

Pandora, the largest jewelry brand in the world, designs, manufactures, and markets hand-finished jewelry that is sold in more than 100 countries. According to Governor Kathy Hochul, the \$6 million relocation marks a strategic next chapter for Pandora as it looks to increase its market share and double its revenue in the United States.

Empire State Development is supporting the project with up to \$1.5 million in performance-based Excelsior Jobs Program tax credits. This will support the creation of 133 new full-time employees across various teams, including sales, merchandising, marketing, finance, human resources, digital and e-commerce, real estate, legal and operations. In the coming months, the company plans to add three new stores to its nine current locations across Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx.

Hochul Administration Launches New Hate and Bias Prevention Unit Within the State Division of Human Rights

The New York State Division of Human Rights is launching a statewide Hate and Bias Prevention Unit, which is charged with leading public education and outreach efforts, serving as an early warning detection system in local communities, and quickly mobilizing to support areas and communities in which a bias incident has occurred.

As part of this new Unit's mandate, the Division is organizing 10 regional councils across the state made up of local stakeholders. These councils will provide a place for community members to share concerns, organize educational programming, host hate crime prevention and community healing events, conduct trainings in conflict resolution, and facilitate the filing of complaints with the Division and other relevant agencies. The Unit also will develop a rapid response team to assist communities affected by a bias or hate incident.

The Hate and Bias Prevention Unit also will be responsible for [establishing and implementing a statewide campaign](#) promoting acceptance, inclusion, tolerance, and understanding of diversity, as required by legislation signed last month by Governor Hochul. The campaign will coordinate and cooperate with public and private organizations, including, but not limited to, local governments, community groups, school districts, places of worship, charitable organizations, and foundations and will develop educational materials to be published on the internet, social media, and other platforms to reach the public.

NY Rent Assistance Program to Close January 15th

Due to funding concerns, the State Legal Aid Society and Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance reached an agreement this week to close the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) effective January 15, 2023.

Under ERAP, eligible tenants can apply for funds to help pay rent arrears. The payments, which come from state and federal funds, are provided directly to landlords. Tenants cannot be evicted while their applications are pending.

New Yorkers who have fallen behind on rent since the pandemic began, lost income and are in low- to moderate-income households must [submit their applications](#) to the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance before Jan. 15, 2023.

As part of the agreement signed by state Supreme Court Justice Lynn Kotler, the State will reopen the application process to future tenants if new state or federal money becomes available.

Richard Davis Sworn in as New Local 100 President

Transit Worker Union Local 100 Secretary-Treasurer Richard Davis was unanimously elected President by the Executive Board this week, succeeding Tony Utano who stepped down to spend more time with his family and enable a new generation of leaders to lead.



**TWU Local 100
President**

“Thank you for putting your faith and trust in me to lead our union forward...And that’s exactly what I intend to do - move us forward and make this great union even greater. My mission is to build a better, stronger, more unified, and more effective TWU Local 100 that has an administration that is focused on you, the membership. I promise to work tirelessly on your behalf and put your needs first. I will never stop working to make improvements on multiple key fronts, including safety, job security, your quality of life and your ability to take care of your families.

Davis joined NYC Transit as a Bus Operator at the age of 26. His first union position was chief line steward. He was elected MaBSTOA Division 1 Chair in 2004, then Vice President of the Department in 2014. Davis became Secretary-Treasurer in May.

Utano joined NYC Transit in 1980 as an Electrical Helper at the age of 18. He was elected to his first union position the following year. He never lost an election, serving as Section Vice Chair, Section Chair, Division Chair and Vice President before becoming President in September 2017. Utano will continue to serve as Executive Director.

Coming Up

New York State

Monday, December 19th

Oversight of the State Fiscal Year 2022-2023 State Budget for New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal.

Assembly Standing Committee on Housing

Assembly Hearing Room, 250 Broadway, Room 1923, 19th Floor, New York, 10 a.m.

Tuesday, December 20th

Progress of the New York State Division of Veterans' Services (NYS DVS) Restructuring

Joint – Assembly Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs & Subcommittee on Women Veterans

Roosevelt Hearing Room C, Legislative Office Building, 2nd Floor, Albany, 10 a.m.

Wednesday, December 21st

Review of Qualifications of Lester Chang to Serve as a Member of the New York Assembly

Assembly Standing Committee on Judiciary

Roosevelt Hearing Room B, Legislative Office Building, 2nd Floor, Albany, 9:30 a.m.

Evaluation of the Impact of Mobile Sports Wagering on the New York State Budget

Assembly Standing Committee on Racing and Wagering

Roosevelt Hearing Room C, Legislative Office Building, 2nd Floor, Albany, 11 a.m.

New York City

Monday, December 19th

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

Oversight – Examining the City's Response and Delivery of Services to Migrants.

Tuesday, December 20th

Committee on the Whole, Council Chambers – City Hall, Public Testimony, 10 a.m.

Oversight – Examining the City's Response and Delivery of Services to Migrants.

Wednesday, December 21st

Committee on Finance, Council Chamber - Committee Room - City Hall, 10 a.m.

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

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**120 Broadway, 28th Floor
New York, New York 10271**

Telephone (212) 652-3890

Facsimile (212) 652-3891

**25 Hyatt Street, St. 202
Staten Island, New York 10301**

Telephone (718) 943-1050

Facsimile (718) 943-1051

**111 Washington Avenue, St. 401
Albany, New York 12210**

Telephone (518) 449-3320

Facsimile (518) 449-5812

**1220 19th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20036**

Telephone (202) 964-4753

Facsimile (202) 964-5754