



*“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.*

## *Martin Luther King Jr. Day Monday, January 19<sup>th</sup>*



# *In The News-New York State*



## **State of the State 2026: Responding to NY Families**

On Tuesday Governor Kathy Hochul set out to answer the question facing New York families, *“Can we afford to build our future here?”* Over the course her 47 minutes and 47 second presentation, she promoted her “clear, actionable plan to meet the challenges families face today, while preparing New York for the road ahead” founded in affordability, public safety, and opportunity.

### **Affordability**

- **Universal Child Care:** Putting New York State on a pathway toward achieving universal, affordable child care by increasing funding by \$1.7 billion to provide care for children around the state. The state would spend an additional \$1.7 billion to expand coverage to 100,000 children in the coming year, bringing the state’s total childcare investment to \$4.5 billion. Cost estimates for a statewide program range from \$12 billion to \$15 billion.
- **Automobile Insurance:** Cracking down on fraud to lower vehicle insurance rates for everyday New Yorkers.

- **Homeowners Insurance**: Addressing rising home insurance costs by increasing accountability and transparency for providers and expanding automatic discounts.
- **Utility Costs**: Introducing the NYS Affordable Utilities Omnibus Legislation, to ensure oversight and accountability for utilities,
- **Income Tax**: Eliminating State income taxes on tips.

## Public Safety

- **Gun Control**: Cracking down on illegal 3D-printed firearms and DIY machine guns conversion
- **ICE Control**: Establishing a right to sue federal officers for Constitutional violations.
- **House of Worship & Health care Protection**: Establishing buffer zones around houses of worship and healthcare facilities while preserving the right to lawful expression
- **Subway Safety**: Continuing police presence on platforms, expanding mental health teams, and protecting riders through platform edge barriers.

## Infrastructure Investments

- **Clean & Safe Drinking Water**: Five-year \$3.75 billion commitment to water infrastructure.
- **NY Kicks**: A World Cup Legacy Investment Fund, to build soccer pitches, as well as investing in community centers, preserving performing arts space, and investing in county fairs.
- **Transit**: \$50 million to advance design phase to reimagine Jamaica Station and beginning preliminary engineering and design to extend the Second Avenue subway tunnel westward across 125 St to Broadway.
- **Housing**: Reforming the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) to speed up the building of zoned and permitted housing.

## Consumers and Workers

- **Digital Safety**: Creating a new Office of Digital Innovation, Governance, Integrity & Trust (DIGIT), to serve as a central, authoritative body for digital safety and technological governance
- **AI Content**: Requiring labeling for AI-generated content, protecting elections from misleading or deceptive AI content, and prohibiting misleading ‘discounts’
- **Children Online Use**: Protecting children from predators, scammers, and harmful AI chatbots on online platforms.

## Innovation and Economic Development

- **Autonomous Vehicles**: Launching the next phase of New York’s Autonomous Vehicle pilot program outside of New York City
- **Regulations**: Eliminating outdated restrictions on dancing and modernizing the Alcoholic Beverage Control Law.

## Energy

- **Data Centers**: Requiring data centers to pay equitable share of energy use.
- **Nuclear**: Investing in nuclear reliability for a zero-emission grid and ensuring New York’s nuclear power future is “built by New Yorkers.”

The Governor detailed her 2026 agenda in her [160 page Message](#), as required by the State Constitution, and noted that funding details will be included in the upcoming Governor’s Executive Budget which is scheduled to be released next week. Then New Yorkers will get the answer to the next question: How are we going to pay for *all* of this? This will lead to the final question: What will the Governor and the Legislature agree upon?

## New York State Legislative Calendar – January 2026

JANUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

*January 20<sup>th</sup>* – Governor’s Budget Release (anticipated – required by the second Tuesday following the first day of the legislative session).

*Legislative Fiscal Committees’ Executive Budget Hearings* – Begin following release of Executive Budget.



### Comptroller DiNapoli: Audit of NYC’s CityFHEPS Program Reveals Weak Oversight and Rising Costs

An **audit** released by State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli of New York City’s largest housing voucher program found that weak oversight and administrative lapses are contributing to rising costs and placing some vulnerable families in unsafe housing.

The program, known as the City Fighting Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement (CityFHEPS) is overseen by the New York City Department of Social Services (DSS), and it is designed to help low-income New Yorkers avoid homelessness. It is projected to cost the city \$1.2 billion in city Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, up from \$176 million in 2019, according to the Comptroller.

“Stronger oversight of the CityFHEPS program is critical to helping individuals and families access safe housing and stay in their communities,” Comptroller DiNapoli said. “Improving how the program operates will better protect tenants and taxpayer dollars.”

According to the Comptroller, DSS contracts with seven nonprofit homebase providers to help those at risk of homelessness avoid entering shelters and apply for rent subsidies, enabling them to remain in the community. Auditors reviewed 75 CityFHEPS cases from a pool of approximately 8,000 from January 2022 to May 2024 and examined \$671 million in contracts across the seven providers. Key audit findings included:

- **Unsafe Apartments:** Families were placed in apartments with serious housing-code violations, including mold, infestations and missing window guards. In some cases, DSS failed to conduct required safety checks, known as pre-clearance inspections, before move-in, including an instance where a family was placed into a unit that had just been vacated by another tenant for habitability issues that had not been fixed. The audit also found landlords who continued to receive rent payments for uninhabitable apartments, increasing costs and forcing families to relocate.

- **Missing Documentation:** Nearly half of the case files reviewed were missing required proof of income or eligibility, undermining the integrity of the program’s qualification process.
- **Weak Landlord Oversight:** DSS has not implemented a system to disqualify landlords with repeated building code violations or poor performance. The audit found landlords in the program on the city’s Public Advocate’s [Worst Landlord Watchlist](#) who continued to receive rent payments.
- **Improper Payments:** DSS paid broker’s fees in direct violation of program rules, in one case \$6,800 to a company affiliated with the landlord. Broker fees are permitted only when the broker is an independent party, not the landlord or anyone affiliated with the landlord. In multiple cases, DSS approved rents above market rates by an average of \$525 per month without documentation of required rent-reasonableness assessments.

Comptroller DiNapoli’s audit recommends DSS strengthen oversight of Homebase providers to ensure required documentation is complete and accurate. In addition, the Comptroller called upon DSS to: expand pre-clearance inspections for all apartments before approving subsidies; create a landlord disqualification list to bar participation by building owners with unresolved safety or habitability issues; verify household income for all adults and ensure rent payments are reported correctly; and improve data tracking so all cases and services are fully documented.

In response to the audit, DSS said it has updated its case management systems to better track cases and plans to launch new teams focused on monitoring landlords and improving oversight of housing safety and conditions by mid-2026.

## *In The News-New York City*



### **Speaker Menin Unveils Leadership Team**

The New York City Council voted to approve new committee assignments and the Speaker’s Leadership Team, which includes representation from all five boroughs.

“...I am proud to announce Council leadership and committees that reflect the urgent need for serious governance, collaboration, and results,” said Speaker Julie Menin. “Each committee is comprised of Members who bring immense drive, knowledge, and lived experience...”

#### **LEADERSHIP**

- Dr. Nantasha Williams - Deputy Speaker
- Shaun Abreu - Majority Leader
- Kamillah Hanks - Majority Whip
- Elsie Encarnacion - Deputy Whip
- Sandra Ung - Deputy Leader
- Chris Banks - Deputy Leader
- Eric Dinowitz - Education Chair
- Linda Lee - Finance Chair
- Kevin C. Riley - Land Use Chair
- Shekar Krishnan - Oversight and Investigations Chair
- David Carr - Minority Leader

## COMMITTEES & MEMBERSHIP

### Committee on Aging

- Subcommittee on Senior Centers and Food Insecurity

### Committee on Children and Youth

### Committee on Civil and Human Rights

### Committee on Civil Service and Labor

### Committee to Combat Hate

### Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection

### Committee on Contracts

### Committee on Criminal Justice

### Committee on Cultural Affairs & Libraries

### Committee on Disabilities

### Committee on Economic Development

### Committee on Education

- Subcommittee on Early Childhood Education

### Committee on Environmental Protection & Waterfronts

### Committee on Finance

### Committee on Fire and Emergency Management

### Committee on General Welfare

### Committee on Governmental Operations, State & Federal Legislation

### Committee on Health

### Committee on Higher Education

### Committee on Hospitals

### Committee on Housing and Buildings

### Committee on Immigration

### Committee on Land Use

- Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings, Resiliency, and Dispositions

- Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises

### Committee on Mental Health and Addiction

### Committee on Oversight and Investigations

### Committee on Parks and Recreation

### Committee on Public Housing

### Committee on Public Safety

### Committee on Rules, Privileges, Standards, Ethics & Elections

### Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

### Committee on Sanitation

### Committee on Small Business

### Committee on Technology

### Committee on Veterans

### Committee on Women & Gender Equity

### Committee on Workforce Development



## Mayor Mamdani Nominates Midori Valdivia as Chair of Taxi and Limousine Commission

Mayor Zohran Mamdani announced the nomination of Midori Valdivia to lead the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) as Chair and Commissioner.

Valdivia is a Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) board member and previously served as Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration at the TLC, as Senior Advisor to the Executive Director at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and as Chief of Staff to the Chair and CEO of the MTA. Valdivia is on the Board of the Regional Plan Association, a Trustee with the Transit Center, and a Board Member of the Shared-Use Mobility Center.

She holds a Master's in Public Affairs and Urban and Regional Planning from Princeton University and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Penn State University. Valdivia lives in Brooklyn with her husband and daughter.

## *Briefs*

### **Governor Proposes to Exempt Housing Projects from SEQRA**

Governor Hochul will propose to amend the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) to exempt certain types of housing projects that have no significant impact on the environment. The project would still be subject to compliance with State regulatory and permit requirements governing water use, air quality, environmental justice, and protection of natural resources, as well as local zoning and other permitting requirements.

According to the Governor, studies have quantified how State-mandated environmental review can slow down housing projects by an average of two years, costing hundreds of thousands of dollars per project..

Projects must also be located outside of flood risk areas in order to qualify. The type of housing project that can be reclassified under SEQRA will differ according to the housing needs and contexts of different parts of the state. In New York City, the State will set caps on the size a building must be to avoid the requirement of additional SEQRA review, with caps varying on the basis of the density of the neighborhoods as determined by the City. In the rest of the state, to avoid additional SEQRA review, housing projects must be on previously disturbed land, connected to existing water and sewer systems, and subject to additional unit caps.

The Governor explained that a review by New York City and New York State Homes and Community Renewal over the last five to ten years of over a thousand housing projects found that virtually none of such projects ultimately were found to have significant environmental impacts but nevertheless were still subject to lengthy reviews. She asserted that these reforms would accelerate the delivery of much needed housing and reduce the cost of building in ways that are consistent with sustainable and environmentally-protective development.

### **State of the State Includes Expansion of Autonomous Vehicle Across NY**

As part of her 2026 State of the State agenda, Governor Kathy Hochul will introduce legislation to advance the next phase of New York State's autonomous vehicle (AV) pilot program by allowing for the limited deployment of commercial for-hire autonomous passenger vehicles outside New York City.

Under the proposal, AV companies interested in piloting services that expand and improve mobility options for communities will be required to submit applications that demonstrate local support for AV deployment and adherence to the highest possible safety standards.

According to the Governor, this initiative builds on years of successful testing demonstrations across the state and reflects growing evidence that autonomous vehicles can improve road safety and transportation options when introduced thoughtfully.

“By pairing innovation with strong oversight and planning by State agencies including the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), Department of Transportation (DOT), and New York State Police (NYSP), New York will help shape the future of transportation while keeping public safety front and center,” the Governor wrote in her Annual Message.

## **NY’s Offshore Wind Project Resumes After Federal Stop Work Order**

The U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia granted a preliminary injunction for Norwegian energy firm Equinor to resume construction on its New York offshore wind project, Empire 1.

The Trump administration issued an order to stop work last year on offshore wind projects, citing unspecified safety and national security concerns. Equinor’s lawsuit against the U.S. Department of the Interior’s work stoppage will proceed.

“Empire Wind will now focus on safely restarting construction activities that were halted during the suspension period,” Equinor spokesperson Carolyn Spector wrote in a statement. “The project will continue to engage with the U.S. government to ensure the safe, secure and responsible execution of its operations.”

The Empire 1 wind Project, located about 14 miles southeast of Long Island, was scheduled to provide power next year with 54 turbines in the Atlantic Ocean. The project would be the first offshore wind power source connected to New York City. Equinor said the project is well over half complete. The stop work order also extended to the Sunrise wind project from Danish energy firm Orsted, which is also seeking a preliminary injunction against the order. That case remains pending. The Sunrise wind project, located about 30 miles east of Montauk, was expected to be operational around the same time. The project is nearly at its halfway point, according to Orsted.

## **Governor Proposed Omnibus Legislation to Improve “Fairness” for Utility Ratepayers**

Governor Kathy Hochul, during Tuesday’s State of the State address, proposed a “sweeping set of reforms to modernize the Public Service Law, demanding strict fiscal discipline from utilities.”

According to her Annual Message, her proposal will protect consumers by:

- Tying executive pay to affordability: requiring all utilities to publicly disclose how CEO salaries compare to the average worker’s pay and benchmarking executive compensation against customer affordability benchmarks.
- Eliminating “gold-plated” rate cases: utilities will be required to present a budget-constrained option that keeps their operating and capital costs below the rate of inflation. This exercise will require utilities to prioritize efficiency and affordability and prove why any spending is truly necessary before asking customers to foot the bill.
- Removing hidden fees: directing DPS to review utility bills to ensure customers do not pay for inappropriate utility spending, including corporate advertising, fines, and certain legal fees.

## **Mayor Mamdani Signs Executive Order to Assist Small Businesses**

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani signed Executive Order 11 to create an inventory and identify ways to cut the fees and fines that small businesses pay in New York City.

Under Executive Order 11, seven City agencies, under the direction of the Deputy Mayor for Economic Justice, must create a full inventory of the fees and civil penalties that they collect and identify whether they can be reduced within 45 days. Within 90 days, these agencies must determine which fees are unnecessary and can be eliminated through a rulemaking process. Within 180 days, city officials will identify even further fees and penalties that require legislative action to be reduced. Lastly, within the next year, city agencies will create a report on the feasibility of an amnesty and relief program for business owners.

## **Mamdani Administration Continues to Take Shape**

*Afua Atta-Mensah Appointed Chief Equity Officer and Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Equity & Racial Justice*

*Rafael Espinal Appointed Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment*

Mayor Zohran Mamdani announced the appointment of nationally recognized organizer and racial justice strategist Afua Atta-Mensah as Chief Equity Officer and Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Equity & Racial Justice (MOERJ). In this role, Atta-Mensah will coordinate the administration's work advancing racial equity across City agencies, including creating and publishing the Preliminary Citywide Racial Equity Plan within the administration's first 100 days in office.

Atta-Mensah has previously held roles including Chief of Programs at Community Change, Executive Director of Community Voices Heard, and Director of Litigation and Policy at the Urban Justice Center.

Rafael Espinal is the current Executive Director of the Freelancers Union. Previously, Espinal served on the New York City Council, representing Bushwick, Brownsville, Cypress Hills, and East New York.

The Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment supports New York City's creative economy through its Film Office, NYC Media, Press Credential Office, and Programs and Initiatives divisions. Together, these offices handle permitting and licensing, workforce development, incentives for creative projects, and oversight of the City's public media outlets.

# ***Coming Up***

## ***New York State***

### ***Tuesday, January 20th***

***Senate Social Services Committee Meeting***, 410 Legislative Office Building, 10:15 a.m.

***Senate Conservation Committee Meeting***, 124 Capital Building, 10:30 a.m.

***Senate Corporations, Authorities and Commissions Committee Meeting***, 912 Legislative Office Building, 10:30 a.m.

***Senate Finance Committee Meeting***, 124 Capital Building, 11 a.m.

***Senate Higher Education Meeting***, 124 Capital Building, 12:30 p.m.

***New York State Assembly Session***, Assembly Chamber, 2 p.m.

***New York State Senate Session***, Senate Chamber, 3 p.m.

### ***Wednesday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>***

***Senate Labor Committee Meeting***, 308 Legislative Office Building, 9:30 a.m.

***Assembly Public Hearing***: The Use and Impact of Electric Bicycles and Electric Scooters, Hamilton Hearing Room B – Legislative Office Building – Albany, 10 a.m.

***Assembly Public Hearing***: Chronic Absenteeism and Low Attendance in K-12 Education, Roosevelt Hearing Room C – Legislative Office Building – Albany, 10 a.m.

***New York State Senate Session***,  
Senate Chamber – New York State Capitol, Albany, 11 a.m.

***New York State Assembly Session***,  
Assembly Chamber – New York State Capitol, Albany

### ***Thursday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>***

***Public Hearing – The Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) Program***, Hamilton Hearing Room B, LOB, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Albany, 9 a.m.

***Public Hearing – Roadway Zero Emission Vehicle Charging Infrastructure***, Roosevelt Hearing Room C, LOB, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Albany, 10 a.m.

## ***New York City***

***\*There are currently no meetings scheduled at the time of this publication\****

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**120 Broadway, 28th Floor  
New York, New York 10271**  
Telephone (212) 652-3890

**111 Washington Avenue, St. 401  
Albany, New York 12210**  
Telephone (518) 449-3320

**1220 19th Street NW, St. 600  
Washington, D.C. 20036**  
Telephone (202) 964-4753

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