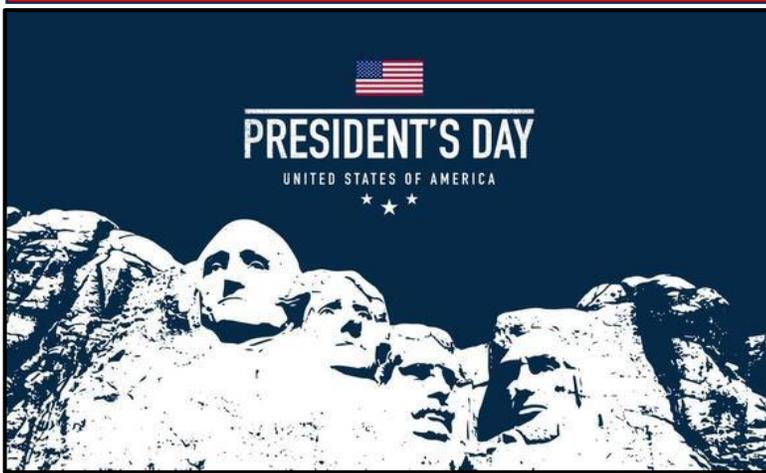




“No Man can be a good citizen unless he has a wage more than sufficient to cover the bare cost of living, and hour of labor short enough so that after his day’s work is done he will have time and energy to bear his share in the management of the community, to help in carrying the general load” Governor Theodore Roosevelt.

In The News-New York State



**President’s Day
February 16th**



Governor Hochul Announces PSC Proceeding to Modernize How Large Energy Users Connect To The Grid & Protect Ratepayers

To attract responsible new businesses and give them the certainty they need to invest in New York, Governor Kathy Hochul this week tapped the Department of Public Service (DPS), the staff arm of the Public Service Commission, to launch a new initiative, Energize NY Development, with the goal of modernizing how large energy users connect to the grid, making it faster and more predictable, but with “strict” conditions to protect ratepayers.

The proceeding will review interconnection processes, cost-allocation mechanisms, and tariff structures relating to the integration of large loads with the State’s transmission and distribution systems. The goal of this initiative, per the Governor, is to support State economic development objectives without adversely impacting ratepayers

According to Governor Hochul, this effort will streamline interconnection rules and improve transparency around grid upgrades while explicitly requiring that projects driving exceptional demand without exceptional job creation or other benefits cover the costs they create. New York, like other states, is experiencing a rapid increase in large load requests, including data centers.

As of January 2026, the New York Independent System Operator or NYISO interconnection queue included 48 projects representing a combined total of over 11 gigawatts of new large load. Many of these requests are related to energy intensive industries such as data centers. These large loads potentially impose costs on rate payers in terms of the upgrades needed for their interconnection and the impact it will have on reliability and electric supply.

Governor Hochul explained that the saturation of these projects in the interconnection queue, without clarity as to which projects will actually proceed to construction, increases uncertainty and complicates electric system planning and investment decisions. The proceeding will explore possible modifications to interconnection rules, cost allocation structures, and tariffs that would address the impacts of large loads on ratepayers. In terms of next steps, DPS staff will solicit stakeholder comments, hold a technical conference, and develop a white paper outlining recommendations for PSC’s consideration.

“The Energize NY initiative couldn’t be more timely,” Assembly Energy Committee Chair Didi Barrett said. “The proliferation of data centers and other large energy users can be seen across the country and are growing in New York State, so we must have policies in place that will protect ratepayers and communities from being saddled with their costs and demands for water and electricity. I hope the PSC will consider a range of options during this proceeding, including creating a new rate class for large energy users to ensure that data centers pay their fair share.”



DMV Reminds New Yorkers of Updated Point Values for Driving Violations

Changes to Point System Effective February 16th

The New York State Department of Motor Vehicles is reminding motorists that beginning Monday, February 16th, many traffic violations will have increased point values, including speeding in a construction zone, over-height vehicle/bridge strike, facilitating aggravated unlicensed operation, and any alcohol or drug-related conviction or incident. Key changes include the following:

Offence	Points for Violations Before 2/16/2026	Points for Violations Beginning 2/16/2026
Any Alcohol- or Drug-Related Conviction or Incident	0	11
Aggravated Unlicensed Operation	0	11
Overtaking/Passing Stopped School Bus	5	8
Speeding in Construction Zone	Based on speed	8
Over-height Vehicle/Bridge Strike	0	8
Leaving Scene of a Personal Injury Crash	3	5
Failure to Exercise Due Care	2	5
Facilitating Aggravated Unlicensed Operation	0	5
Speed Contests and Races	0	5

In addition to the updated points, these regulations adjust the time frame in which DMV can take administrative action, going from an 18-month look back to a 24-month look back. The License Suspension Threshold is also reduced. A license may be suspended if a driver accumulates 10 points within a 24-month period. The current rule is 11 points in 18 months.

In The News-New York City



NYC Office of the Mayor

Mayor Mamdani Comes to Albany, “Calling to End the Drain” of the City’s Resources

Mayor Zohran Mamdani traveled to Albany this week to headline the Legislative Fiscal Committees’ 2027 Executive Budget Local Government Hearing (aka *Tin Cup Day*).

He brought “good news,” detailing that the City’s projected \$12 billion budget gap (announced recently) has been reduced to \$7 billion by “assuming an aggressive posture on savings without compromising city services, incorporating updated revenue and bonus estimates, and using in-year reserves.”

And perhaps there is even better news, as at a post budget press conference First Deputy Mayor Dean Fuleihan indicated that the Wall Street Bonus projection is from December and with bonuses coming in through February, “...There could still be adjustments in the revenue estimates.

Mayor Mamdani also chronicled the systemic problem: New York City contributes 54.5% of state revenue but only receives 40.5% back. In fact, in FY22, New York City contributed \$21 billion more than it received back.

The Mayor explained that “this drain” on the City includes sales tax revenue intercepts totaling over \$1.6 billion since 2021 and over \$300 million annually in cuts to public health programs, foster care and assistance for low-income families.

“Time and again, we have been singled out,” he said. In 2010, the State eliminated AIM revenue-sharing to New York City, depriving the city of at least \$4.8 billion over 16 years. New York City is the only eligible municipality in the state that receives no funding.

“That imbalance has real world consequences: families forced to leave a city they can no longer afford and diminished investments in schools, libraries, parks—our essential services,” Mayor Mamdani said.

The Mayor’s message was well received by some legislators, used by others to express their similar funding disparities, and left others looking to hear the solution.

“I will respectfully say, your time of blaming past mayors and governors has since passed. It’s time to hear the details of your plan,” state Senator John Liu (D-Queens) said.

The Mayor will have that opportunity on February 17th when he releases his Preliminary Budget.



Bills Approved by the New York City Council

Introduction 5-A, sponsored by **Speaker Julie Menin**, would increase penalties for providing false information on the qualifications of any bidder for city contracts. A new violation, punishable by monetary penalties, would also be created for providing false information by a subcontractor. In both instances, the penalties would fall within a \$1,000 to \$25,000 range. The bill requires the Mayor and City Comptroller to keep certain information on the identity of subcontractors who perform work on city contracts, and the information would be compiled into a computerized database.

Introduction 18-A, sponsored by **Majority Leader Shaun Abreu**, would require the New York City Department of Sanitation (DSNY) to implement a pilot program on using power washing machines to clean and remove odors and spills from sidewalk surfaces in commercial corridors by April 1, 2027. DSNY would be required to select a pilot program location in each borough that is 5-blocks long and accessible to mass transit and high pedestrian traffic. The bill also requires DSNY to report on the program by December 1, 2027.

Introduction 437-A, sponsored by **Council Member Lynn Schulman**, would require the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to provide guidance on the Health Code to prospective child care programs applying for a permit. The guidance would include a visual representation of the permitting process and include information relating to any required license, approval, or permit from DOHMH or another agency. The guidance must be posted online and available in designated citywide languages

Introduction 510-A, sponsored by **Council Member Julie Won**, would require the City Chief Procurement Officer (CCPO) to ensure that at least one searchable and publicly accessible online interface provides information about city procurements that exceed the small purchase limits. The information would be required to be published within 30 days of the procurement event, and pre-solicitation information would be required to be published at least 15 days prior to the release of a solicitation document.



Mayor Mamdani Nominates Nadia Shihata as Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI)

Mayor Zohran Mamdani announced his nomination of Former federal prosecutor Nadia Shihata as Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI).

Shihata served more than 11 years as a federal prosecutor at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York (EDNY). As chief of the Organized Crime and Gangs Section, she supervised racketeering and violent crime investigations and prosecutions. She also served as deputy chief of the Office's Public Integrity Section.

Most recently, Nadia was a founding partner at Shihata & Geddes LLP, now known as Corva Law LLP, a woman-owned law firm in New York City focused on civil rights and sexual misconduct matters, internal investigations, wrongful convictions and criminal defense.

The DOI serves as the city's independent oversight agency, investigating corruption, waste, fraud and abuse in city government and promoting transparency and accountability. Its authority extends to any city agency, officer, elected official or employee, as well as individuals and entities that do business with or receive benefits from the city.

Under the City Charter, the City Council must confirm the DOI Commissioner.

Briefs

Comptroller DiNapoli: State Pension Fund Valued at \$297.8 Billion at End of Third Quarter

The estimated value of the New York State Common Retirement Fund (Fund) was \$297.8 billion at the December 31, 2025 end of the third quarter of State Fiscal Year 2025-26, New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli announced yesterday. Fund investments returned an estimated 2.44% for the quarter and 12.50% for the first nine months of the fiscal year. The Fund's long-term expected rate of return is 5.9%.

"The state pension fund continued to grow over the third quarter," Comptroller DiNapoli said. "Drops in the stock market, inflation, slower job growth and broader economic volatility remain risks, however. Fortunately, my team manages the state pension fund prudently, with a diversified portfolio that can weather economic storms and provide retirement security for the pension fund's more than 1.2 million working and retired members and their beneficiaries."

The Fund's audited value was \$273.1 billion as of March 31, 2025, the end of the state's previous fiscal year.

As of December 31, 2025, the Fund had 40.0% of its assets invested in publicly traded equities. The remaining Fund assets by allocation are invested in cash, bonds, and mortgages (23.3%), private equity (13.8%), real estate and real assets (14.0%), and credit, absolute return strategies, and opportunistic alternatives (8.9%).

Governor's Health Adviser to Step Down

Deputy Secretary for Health Angela Profeta, Governor Kathy Hochul's top health care adviser, will step down later this month, according to published reports. Profeta will continue to serve as an adviser to the administration.

Megan Baldwin, chief of staff and senior vice president of government relations for the Westchester Medical Center Health Network, will succeed Profeta as Deputy Secretary of Health.

Baldwin served as Assistant Secretary for Health in former Governor Andrew Cuomo's administration and as a health policy adviser to the SUNY chancellor. She was also an analyst for the state Senate's Finance Committee.

Assemblyman Ed Ra: GOP Leader of New York State Assembly

New York state Assemblyman Ed Ra has been chosen by the conference to be the next Republican leader of the chamber, replacing Will Barclay. Assemblymember Barclay previously announced that he would step down as Assembly Minority Leader and not run for reelection this year.

"I congratulate Ed Ra on his election as the next Assembly Minority Leader. He's been a trusted friend and colleague who represents the best of what it means to be a public servant," Assemblyman Barclay said in a statement. "Ed is among the most respected members of the Legislature, and his track record of hard work, intelligence and commitment to our Conference will serve him well as Minority Leader. I wish him great success in guiding the Conference forward."

Leader Ra currently represents the 19th state Assembly District, which includes parts of the towns of Hempstead, North Hempstead and Oyster Bay in Nassau County. He was first elected to the Assembly in 2010.

He most recently served as ranking member of the Assembly Ways and Means Committee and previously served as Assistant Minority Leader Pro Tempore and as ranking member of the Assembly Education Committee.

New York Candidates Can Now Receive Cryptocurrency Donations

The state Board of Elections this week approved [an advisory opinion](#) which concluded that candidates in New York are allowed to receive contributions in the form of cryptocurrency.

According to the opinion, State law defines contributions as "any gift, subscription, outstanding loan ... advance, or deposit of money or anything of value" given to political committees. Cryptocurrencies "clearly fall within the 'anything of value' portion of the definition," the opinion concludes.

Per the opinion, any crypto donations will be reported as in-kind contributions rather than monetary donations. They will be subject to regular contribution limits "based on the market value of bitcoin at the time the contribution is received," the opinion states. "Due to the volatile nature of cryptocurrencies, there will likely be a discrepancy of value between when the cryptocurrency was received by the committee and when the cryptocurrency is liquidated."

Political committees will be allowed to maintain bitcoin wallets or similar accounts.

Governor Hochul Rallies for *Let Them Build* Agenda

Governor Kathy Hochul traveled the State this week, rallying with local leaders to highlight her "Let Them Build" agenda, a series of reforms to speed up housing and infrastructure development and lower costs as part of her 2026 State of the State.

This initiative centers around reforms to New York's State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and executive actions to expedite projects that have been found to not have significant environmental impacts.

Together, the Governor asserts these actions will make it easier to build the housing and infrastructure. The Governor’s proposal has secured the backing of the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC), the New York State Association of Towns (NYAOT), and the New York State Conference of Mayors (NYCOM).



To speed up the development of housing to create a more affordable and sustainable New York, Governor Hochul has proposed to amend the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) to exempt certain types of housing that have no significant impacts on the environment from additional SEQRA review. Housing exempted from SEQRA will still be required to comply with crucial State regulatory and permit requirements governing water use, air quality, environmental justice, and protection of natural resources. The proposal does not supersede local zoning and other permitting requirements, and exempted housing also must be located outside of flood risk areas in order to qualify.

In addition, the Governor has proposed to adjust SEQRA’s classifications to exempt the following important categories of infrastructure that meet specific criteria from additional SEQRA review to start serving New Yorkers faster:

- Clean Water Infrastructure: Critical water infrastructure that avoids impacts to natural resources
- Green Infrastructure: Nature-based storm water management.
- Parks and Trails: Public parks and recreational bike/pedestrian paths
- Child Care: New or renovated child care centers

Governor Hochul’s proposal would reserve these fast-track environmental review processes for only infrastructure that would be located at previously disturbed areas, protecting our natural resources and undisturbed lands, while strengthening our neighborhoods.

Mamdani Administration Appointments

Mayor Zohran Mamdani this week announced three new appointments to lead agencies and offices across city government. Mayor Mamdani appointed Lisa Gelobter as New York City’s Chief Technology Officer and Commissioner of the Office of Technology and Innovation; Nisha Agarwal as Commissioner of the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities; and Lisa Scott-McKenzie as Commissioner of the New York City Department for the Aging.

Lisa Gelobter will serve as New York City’s Chief Technology Officer (CTO) and Commissioner of the Office of Technology and Innovation (OTI). Most recently, Commissioner Gelobter founded tEquitable, which helps organizations identify and address systemic workplace culture issues and uses technology to make workplaces more equitable. She served in the Obama Administration as Chief Digital Service Officer at the U.S. Department of Education. Commissioner Gelobter also worked as Interim Chief Digital Officer at BET Networks,

Nisha Agarwal will serve as Commissioner of the New York City Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD). Commissioner Agarwal previously served as the Executive Director for Policy and Communications at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Division of Mental Hygiene. Under the de Blasio administration, Commissioner Agarwal led the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and also served as Senior Advisor to the Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives. Before entering city government, Commissioner Agarwal led the Health Justice Program at the New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, served as Deputy Director and Co-Founder of the Center for Popular Democracy, and worked as Executive Director of the Immigrant Justice Corps.

A longtime city employee and community leader, Dr. Lisa Scott-McKenzie will serve as Commissioner of the New York City Department for the Aging (NYC Aging). Dr. Scott-McKenzie has served the North Brooklyn community for nearly four decades, most recently as Chief Operating Officer (COO) at New York City Health + Hospitals/Woodhull.

Coming Up

New York State

There are no committee meetings or legislative sessions during the week of February 16th.

New York City

Wednesday, February 18th

Committee on Civil Service and Labor, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 1, 10 a.m.

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

Thursday, February 19th

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

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

Subcommittee on Senior Centers and Food Security, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 3, 1 p.m.

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

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