



This Week in New York

Covering New York State and City Government

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In the News – New York State



Senate Majority 2018 Affordability Agenda

- ✓ ***Lower Income Taxes***
- ✓ ***Lower Property Taxes***
- ✓ ***Lower Energy Taxes***
- ✓ ***Lower Taxes on Retirement***

The New York State Senate Majority this week released its “Affordability Agenda” designed to help individuals, families, and seniors continue to live, work, and succeed in New York.

“Whether you are a New Yorker looking to begin a career, a young family working hard to make ends meet, or an older New Yorker looking to stay in your community, our state’s high cost of living is forcing thousands of New Yorkers to flee to other parts of the country,” Majority Leader John Flanagan explained. “The Senate Majority is taking action to stop this outmigration and make our state more affordable by delivering \$4.2 billion in middle class income tax cuts this year, proposing hundreds of millions of dollars in new tax relief, and ensuring long-term fiscal responsibility in government.

The Affordability blueprint includes:

Lower Income Taxes:

Beginning January 1st, New Yorkers will begin to see the savings from the previously-enacted Middle Class Income Tax Cut which will reduce middle class tax rates by 20 percent for employees and small businesses. The Senate Majority Conference will also advance measures to help all New Yorkers negatively impacted by Federal income tax changes that were recently approved in Washington D.C.

“Hardworking New Yorkers are overtaxed, over-ticketed, and over-fined” Senator Simcha Felder said, “Our bill will cut taxes and hold New Yorkers harmless from the elimination of state and local tax deductions.”

Lower Property Taxes For Every Homeowner

With the enactment of the State's two-percent property tax cap in 2011, New Yorkers have seen greater stability with their property taxes. However, adherence to the cap is not guaranteed. The Senate will be acting on legislation that makes the state's property tax cap permanent.

In addition, the Senate Majority will propose a new freeze on school property taxes at current levels for seniors and propose completely eliminating school property taxes for seniors over the next ten years.

Lower Energy Taxes - \$280 Million in New Tax Relief

The Senate Majority plan would eliminate the two-percent Gross Receipts Tax on utility bills, resulting in \$190 million in savings.

Lower Taxes on Retirement - \$275 Million in New Tax Relief

The Senate Majority proposes to double the current exemption on pension income and save senior citizens \$275 million.



Assembly Speaker Lays Out Legislative Priorities

- ✓ *Criminal Justice Reform*
- ✓ *State Support for Education*
- ✓ *The Dream Act*
- ✓ *Gun Control*

Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie opened the 2018 Legislative Session this week and announced the Assembly's legislative priorities and "shared commitment to measures that bring progress and opportunity to the people of New York State."

Criminal Justice Reform

In the months ahead, the Assembly will take up legislation to address the outstanding issues in its criminal justice reform agenda, including:

- Bail reform so that eligible defendants are not caught up in a modern day debtor's prison.
- Discovery of evidence and speedy trial reforms so that defendants are treated fairly.
- Ending the overuse of solitary confinement.

State Support for Education

Speaker Heastie asserted that “public education remains a top priority here in New York despite attacks from Washington.” He noted that he is “proud of the headway” the State has made in relation to Foundation Aid and called for the Legislature to build up that success.

“...this funding formula, although not perfect, is an equalizer for opportunity,” Speaker Heastie said.

The Dream Act

“Put simply, we will never allow our hard fought gains in education to be rolled back by a misdirected federal administration,” Speaker Heastie said. “Children of immigrants are also under attack by Washington. Legal protections allowing them to remain in the US, learn at our schools and contribute to our economies are being held hostage in exchange for a southern border wall.”

The Speaker reiterated the Assembly support for the Dream Act, and pledged “we will support these New Yorkers without condition or reservation.”

Gun Control

The Assembly will take up legislation to make it a crime in New York to sell, possess, manufacture or transport devices that modify firearms in ways that effectively make them an automatic weapon.

In the News – New York City



Pedestrian Fatalities Dropped 32% Last Year

New York City saw the fewest traffic fatalities on record last year with a 32 percent drop in pedestrian fatalities, according to a de Blasio Administration report on the Vision Zone program.

According to Mayor de Blasio, this marks the fourth consecutive year of declining traffic deaths under Vision Zero. Since 2013, fatalities have dropped 28 percent. Pedestrian deaths have decreased by 45 percent.

In 2017, 214 people, 101 pedestrians, died in traffic crashes. This compares to 231 total fatalities and 148 pedestrians in 2016.

Traffic Fatalities by Year

	Pedestrian	Bicyclist	Motorcyclist	Motor Vehicle	TOTAL
2017*	101	23	33	57	214
2016	148	18	19	46	231
2015	139	14	22	59	234
2014	140	20	37	62	259
2013	184	12	42	61	299

* The October 31, 2017 vehicle-ramming terrorist attack which killed 8 are not included in these numbers

Mayor de Blasio noted that these reductions “buck” the national trend. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), traffic fatalities nationwide have increased more than 13 percent from 2013-2016.

“Thanks to the incredible work of everyone at DOT, the NYPD, and our agency partners, the first four years of Vision Zero have been the safest ever on our city streets. Vision Zero has truly saved lives — of family members, friends, neighbors and fellow New Yorkers,” said DOT Commissioner Polly Trottenberg. “In 2017, under the Mayor’s leadership, DOT’s work helped fuel a historic drop in pedestrian fatalities, including through a record number of street safety redesigns and turning treatments, and by reprogramming a record number of traffic signals to give pedestrians a head start in crosswalks. However, the number of lives lost on our streets is still too high, including the increases in fatalities we saw this year among cyclists, drivers and motorcyclists. We know we have much more work to do to fully achieve Vision Zero.”

The Administration noted the following:

A Single Fatality Among School-Aged Pedestrian Children (aged 5-17): There was one school aged pedestrian fatality in 2017. The previous five years had seen an average of 7 schoolchildren killed per year. As recently as 2004, 17 children were killed.

Fewest Ever Fatalities in Queens: Traffic fatalities were down in all boroughs except Brooklyn, with Queens leading with a new record low in traffic deaths. In Queens, 2017 saw 59 fatalities compared to 65 in 2016, a 9 percent decline. The previous record low in Queens was 63 fatalities in 2011.

Continued Strong Traffic Enforcement: As part of ongoing Vision Zero enforcement, NYPD Traffic officers issued more than 50,000 summonses to drivers who failed to yield to pedestrians or cyclists in 2017. Over the same period, officers issued nearly 150,000 speeding summonses, and automated speed cameras issued nearly 1.2 million Notices of Liability in 2017, with more than 50% issued at Vision Zero Priority Locations.

Dusk and Darkness Initiative: Before the first campaign launched in October of 2016, severe crashes involving pedestrians increased by nearly 40 percent in the early evening hours compared to crashes outside the fall and winter. Over the first two months of the current Dusk and Darkness initiative, pedestrian fatalities have decreased to 17 from 30 over the same period in 2016, which in turn was a decrease from 41 over the same pre-initiative period in 2015.

Safer For-Hire Vehicles: In October, the Taxi & Limousine Commission (TLC) honored 420 drivers and 25 businesses for their exemplary safety records. In February the TLC also approved the final version of its fatigued driving prevention rules, which set daily and weekly hour limits for drivers to help keep tired drivers off the road. TLC continued to hold driver outreach meetings at licensed For-Hire Vehicle (FHV) bases and taxi garages throughout the city, highlighting protected bike lanes, high-risk driving behavior that can lead to crashes, and the crucial role that professional drivers play in promoting a culture of safe driving.

Safety Improvement Projects: The City completed 114 street safety engineering projects in 2017, with 76 projects at Priority Locations. More than 350 safety engineering projects have been completed since the start of Vision Zero, with more than 250 at Priority Locations.

Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPIs): As has been [reported](#), DOT this year installed 832 new LPIs to give pedestrians a “head start” in crosswalks and protect them from turning vehicles. More than half of the new LPIs are in Senior Pedestrian Focus Areas. The City has now installed 2,334 LPIs, increasing their number by seven-fold since the start of Vision Zero.

Turning Safety Improvements: In 2016, Mayor de Blasio had announced the use of new left-turn safety treatments as part of Vision Zero. In 2017, 110 intersections received improvements to reduce the speed of left-turning drivers, with nearly 220 intersections since the start of Vision Zero. 53 locations received Turning Safety Signal Treatments last year, including Split Phases to give pedestrians, cyclists and drivers dedicated times to proceed through intersections. Since the start of Vision Zero, DOT has installed more than 150 new Turning Safety Signal Treatments.

Traffic Signal Retiming: DOT adjusted traffic signal phases around the city to discourage speeding and align with the safer 25MPH citywide speed limit. When signals are retimed, drivers exceeding speed limits encounter more red lights. DOT retimed signals along more than 135 miles of streets in 2017, and has retimed them on more than 400 miles of City streets since the start of Vision Zero.

Transforming Queens Boulevard and Woodhaven/Cross Bay Boulevard: This year, DOT completed its third phase of street redesign along Queens Boulevard in Rego Park and Forest Hills with numerous safety improvements, including 2.6 protected bike lane miles. Once known as “the Boulevard of Death,” Queens Boulevard in 2017 had a third consecutive year without a single pedestrian or cyclist fatality. Meanwhile, in November, DOT and the MTA unveiled Select Bus Service along Woodhaven and Cross Bay Boulevards; in addition to faster and more reliable bus commutes, the transformation of one of Queens’ most crash-prone streets includes dramatic pedestrian safety improvements.

“These year-end Vision Zero statistics show that, since the initiative began, our combined efforts have significantly reduced traffic-related fatalities. We’ve made the streets of our City safer, and that has saved lives,” said NYPD Commissioner James P. O’Neill. “But the stats also show us that there’s more for the members of the Vision Zero Task Force to do, and we will – together.”

Comptroller Stringer Announces New Audit of NYCHA Heating Systems

Following reports from tenants of heating outages at NYCHA developments and an initial review which showed a high rate of boiler deficiencies, New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer this week announced his office will launch a new audit of NYCHA heating systems.

“Across the city, tenants are suffering without heat and hot water. That’s not an inconvenience – it’s a crisis. NYCHA tenants are being left in the cold, in their own homes, by their own government. It’s unacceptable,” said Comptroller Stringer. “We cannot be a city in which those with luxury towers are living in comfort, while those across the street in NYCHA complexes are deprived of heat and hot water. Unfortunately, heating breakdowns happen year after year – and the bureaucracy continues to play whack-a-mole with short-term fixes instead of permanent solutions. We need to address this maintenance mess now, because our seniors, children, and families are struggling. That’s why we’re going to be looking under the hood at NYCHA. This is about safety – and equity.”

The Comptroller’s Office’s initial review of the Buildings Department’s annual compliance filings for high and low pressure boilers shows that, since July of last year, inspection data has shown that NYCHA has a reported rate of defective boilers that is five times the citywide average – 39.5 percent of NYCHA inspections reported defects compared to 7.9 percent citywide.

The new audit comes after Comptroller Stringer sent a letter to NYCHA Chairwoman Shola Olatoye seeking data because tenants are facing inadequate or nonexistent heat and hot water. It also comes after a 2015 audit on NYCHA maintenance that showed problems with maintenance of boilers and heating systems.

De Blasio Administration Appointments

Jon Paul Lupo has been promoted to Director of the Mayor’s Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, where he will be responsible for coordinating the City’s interaction with the City, State and Federal Legislative Affairs Offices, as well as coordinating with the offices of the City Comptroller, Public Advocate and Borough Presidents. Lupo was previously Director of City Legislative Affairs and was responsible for managing the Administration’s interactions with the City Council and coordinating legislative priorities. Prior to his time in the Mayor’s Office, Mr. Lupo served as Chief of Staff to Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz and in senior positions on the campaigns of Senator Jim Webb in Virginia and Senator Tim Johnson in South Dakota.

Sherif Soliman was named Senior Advisor to the First Deputy Mayor, where he will advise the First Deputy Mayor on policy, program implementation and special projects. His work will include but not be limited to labor, pensions, tax policy and public authorities. Mr. Soliman previously served as Director of State Legislative Affairs, where he was responsible for coordinating legislative priorities and the team that serves as a liaison between the Administration and the State Senate and Assembly.

Simonia Brown was named Director of State Legislative Affairs and will coordinate legislative priorities and manage the team that liaises with the State Legislature. Simonia Brown currently serves as an Associate Director at the Office of Management and Budget and worked in the New York State Assembly, serving as Senior Assistant Secretary for Program & Policy to the Speaker and Assembly Leadership.

Jeff Lynch will now serve as Director of City Legislative Affairs. Lynch was previously First Deputy Commission of the Community Affairs Unit and served as Assistant Commissioner of Intergovernmental Affairs at Department of Transportation, and Chief of Staff to Council Member James Vacca.

Samir Saini was appointed Commissioner of the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications. Commissioner Saini was previously the IT Commissioner and Chief Information Officer for the City of Atlanta.

Dominic Williams was named Chief Policy Advisor and will oversee the Mayor's Office of Policy and Planning. He will report to the First Deputy Mayor and provide coordination across all the Deputy Mayor teams. Dominic Williams previously served as Chief of Staff to the First Deputy Mayor and as Chief of Staff in the Public Advocate's Office.

Debbie Rosen was named Chief of Staff to First Deputy Mayor Dean Fuleihan. She was previously Chief of Staff at the Office of Management and Budget, where she advised the Budget Director on key issues, represented the Budget Director within City government and outside entities, supervised key staff and managed OMB's day-to-day operations. Ms. Rosen also has extensive experience in New York City and State government.

Avi Fink was named Chief of Staff at the Office of Management and Budget. Previously, Mr. Fink served as Deputy Chief of Staff to the Mayor, and worked in the Public Advocate's Office and on the 2013 de Blasio campaign.

Briefs

Deployment of First State Police Aerial Drone Systems

The New York State Police this week launched its Unmanned Aerial System program, which will be used to support law enforcement missions, including disaster response and traffic safety.

The first four State Police aerial drones will be put into service this month in Troop A, which serves eight counties in Western New York, Troop D, which serves seven counties in the Central New York region, Troop F, which serves five southern counties west of the Hudson River, and Troop G, which serves ten counties in the Capital Region. By April 2018, an additional 14 aerial drones will be deployed throughout the state.

PSC Proceeding to Return Utility Income Tax Windfall to Customers

The New York State Public Service Commission is taking steps to ensure that any financial benefits that might be received by New York's utilities as a result of the federal government's decision to cut corporate federal income taxes is returned to the more than 10 million utility customers in New York who indirectly pay the taxes.

According to Governor Andrew Cuomo, with the federal tax cut passage, PSC accounting and finance experts estimate utilities in New York stand to receive a financial windfall of hundreds of millions of dollars. While a portion of the potential financial benefits would be captured in future rate cases, others could be lost absent immediate PSC action. Rather than allow the utilities to keep those financial savings for their shareholders, the PSC's plan will capture those tax savings for the benefit of customers.

PSC staff will immediately gather information from the relevant utilities in the state, perform an in-depth analysis, and create a comprehensive plan to ensure tax benefits go to ratepayers. The PSC will schedule a technical conference with utilities and stakeholders to quantify the impact of the tax cuts and to ensure the preservation of resulting benefits. The PSC expects its recommendations will be finalized by mid-2018.

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Investigation Into Possible Misconduct By Propane Suppliers Across New York

New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman this week announced an investigation into possible misconduct by propane suppliers across New York. The investigation follows dozens of complaints received by his office during the recent record cold front regarding major delays in delivery, possible price gouging, and other issues.

According to the Attorney General, many New Yorkers complained that they called their propane company for days and couldn't get a timely response, or any response at all. Some people who received a weekend delivery, but had been calling since early in the week, were forced to pay a weekend delivery fee, upwards of \$150 or \$200. In other instances, companies refused to fill another company's tank and suggested that consumers buy a new tank from their company. New Yorkers also complained about high prices and sharp price increases.

New Yorkers can contact the Attorney General's hotline at 518-776-2000 or file a complaint online. The Attorney General is announcing this investigation publicly in order to encourage New Yorkers to file complaints – so that his office can continue to help resolve individual issues, and to aid in the ongoing investigation.

Mayor de Blasio Signs Legislation Promoting Sustainability and Construction of Affordable Housing

Mayor Bill de Blasio this week signed seven pieces of legislation into law aimed at making New York City greener and creating even more affordable housing:

Introduction 54-A, sponsored by Council Member Constantinides, requires DOT to study the feasibility of using alternative fuels for the City's ferries.

Introduction 880-A, sponsored by Council Member Rosenthal, requires a review of the use of biodiesel for school buses.

Introduction 1036-A, sponsored by Council Member Rodriguez, relates to a census on vacant properties.

Introduction 1039-A, sponsored by Council Member Williams, requires HPD to provide an aggregate annual report on vacant sites under its jurisdiction.

Introduction 1465-A, sponsored by Council Member Torres, expedites the phasing out of higher grade oil in city power plants.

Introduction 1629-A, sponsored by Council Member Constantinides, requires periodic recommendations on energy efficiency requirements for certain buildings.

Introduction 1632-A, sponsored by Council Member Garodnick, relates to energy efficiency scores.

New York City Council Chairs & Memberships

Speaker Corey Johnson announced the New York City Council committee chairs and leadership today, citing an inclusive and democratic process to structure the City's legislative body. In addition, the Speaker announced the Chairs of task forces and members of the Budget Negotiating Team.

In a statement, Speaker Johnson said: "After many active conversations with Council Members, stakeholders, city leaders and advocates, we are proud to appoint the leadership and committee chairs that reflect the diversity and priorities of New York City. These committees will be critical to strengthening oversight, negotiating the City budget, examining and debating legislation, engaging the public and asserting the Council's independence. Our commitment is to empower committees and members to ensure all voices are heard within the Council."

A link to the appointments follows:

<http://legistar.council.nyc.gov/View.ashx?M=F&ID=5728742&GUID=6D15235E-3247-4124-9C75-7CA022C82B01>

Coming Up

New York State

State Legislature is in session Tuesday, January 16th through Wednesday, January 17th.

Executive Budget, Governor Andrew Cuomo, NYS Museum, Clark Auditorium, Albany, 1 p.m.

Tuesday January 16th

Budget oversight hearing for the Assembly Committees on Local Governments and Cities
Roosevelt Haring Room C, Legislative Office Building, 2nd Floor, Albany, 10:00 a.m.

New York City

There are no meetings scheduled next week for the City Council

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120 Broadway, 28th Floor
New York, New York 10271
Telephone (212) 652-3890
Facsimile (212) 652-3891

111 Washington Avenue, St. 401
Albany, New York 12210
Telephone (518) 449-3320
Facsimile (518) 449-5812

25 Hyatt Street, St. 202
Staten Island, New York 10301
Telephone (718) 943-1050
Facsimile (718) 943-1051