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THIS WEEK IN NEW YORK

COVERING NEW YORK & CITY GOVERNMENT

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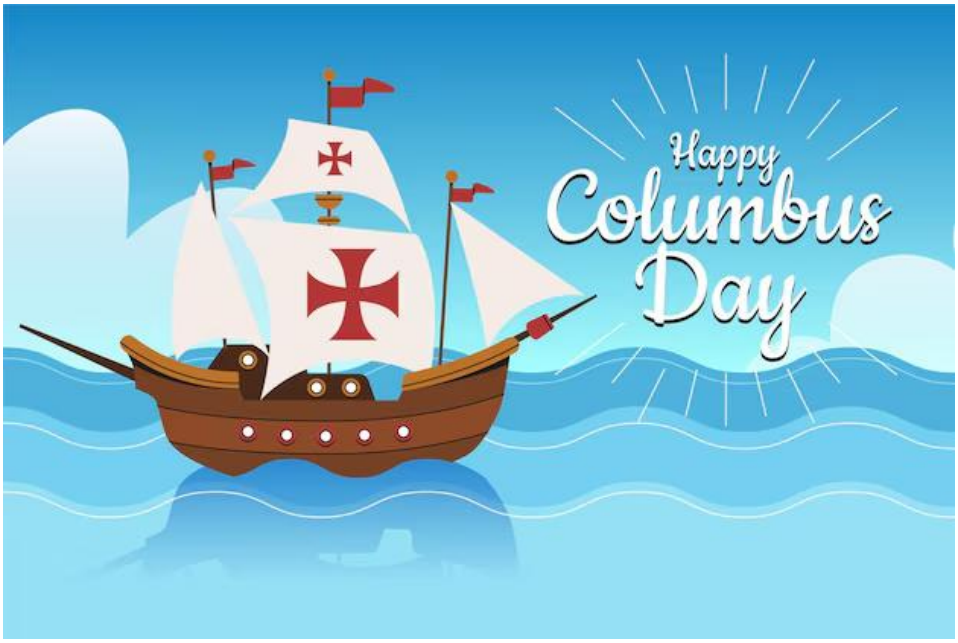


"Obstacles don't define us. Rather, it is the unparalleled courage and character of us that defines us as a people. So my confidence in the future is steeped in our glorious past - in the face of adversity, we always persist. We persevere, we prevail." Governor Kathy Hochul

In The News-New York State

State Budget Director Issues Annual Budget Call Letter

N.Y. Agencies Ordered to Identify 'Obsolete' Regulations, Keep Funding Requests Flat in Anticipation of Difficult State Budget

State Budget Director Blake Washington released the annual call letter Thursday, giving state agencies until October 24th to submit annual budget requests. Agencies were directed to keep funding flat and to find ways to reduce regulatory burdens.

A $7.5 billion budget gap is projected for next year (not including the recent actions from Washington) and the state faces a $34.3 billion cumulative budget gap through 2029. With these looming deficits as a backdrop, Washington called upon the agency heads to show "true leadership and fiscal discipline."

The enacted New York State budget for FY 2026 totaled $254 billion, $11 billion more than FY2025. Washington directed that "moving forward, agency budget requests for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2027 should not exceed the total SFY 2026 Enacted Budget agency funding levels, excluding one-time investments. As always, the effectiveness of all agency functions, programs, and services should be reviewed and all expenditures should be examined. Unnecessary duplication or overlaps should be eliminated."

The flat-lined budget does not provide for inflationary and collective bargaining increases.

"We have an obligation to do more with less by showing true leadership and fiscal discipline," the Budget Director explained. He indicated that although forecasted revenues remain strong this fiscal year, the growth will not overcome the State's structural deficit and federal cuts.

"As we enter the upcoming budget cycle, we face new challenges as we continue to fulfill Governor Hochul's promise to make New York more affordable and safer," Washington said. "Unfortunately, federal assistance crucial for programs supporting New York's most vulnerable have been curtailed, foisting new costs upon New York State. Due to imprudent federal policies, economic headwinds remain as labor markets are cooling and inflation remains elevated. Affordability continues to be a key concern for New Yorkers in every region of our state, creating pressures on the cost of food, healthcare, housing and energy. While revenues remain strong over the first half of the fiscal year, the forecasted growth will not be adequate to address structural gaps exacerbated by H.R. 1."

The Budget Director also asked agency heads to review their operations, agency rules, regulations, and public facing policies and propose for repeal or reform those which are outdated or obsolete. These proposals should be submitted to Counsel's Office for review with their overall budget request on October 24th.

Governor Hochul and Labor Leaders Announce Start of the Maximum Weekly Benefit Increase for Unemployed Workers

Flanked by New York's labor and legislative leaders, Governor Kathy Hochul this week announced that the maximum weekly unemployment insurance (UI) benefit for unemployed workers across the state increases starting the week of October 13th.

As part of the Governor's FY26 Enacted Budget, the State invested nearly $7 billion to pay off the federal UI Trust Fund loan, bringing the fund to solvency and increasing the maximum weekly benefit from $504 to $869.

"Thanks to the leadership of Governor Kathy Hochul, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, New York is increasing its support for unemployed workers and their families," Public Employees Federation President Wayne Spence said. "With the federal government shut down, 115,000 federal workers in our state have been furloughed and left without paychecks...When you're out-of-work, added paycheck protection goes a long way. PEF members at the Department of Labor help administer the unemployment insurance program and will be grateful to deliver the good news to New Yorkers."

Representatives of the following labor organizations were in attendance: Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1181; Consortium for Worker Education; Hotel and Gaming Trades Council; IBEW Local No. 3; Local 14-14B Int'l Union of Operating Engineers; Local 420, NYC Municipal Hospitals Employees Union; New York City District Council of Carpenters; Teamsters Local 282; and the Transport Workers Union Local 100.

The UI Trust Fund had a positive balance of nearly $2.5 billion. However, due to the economic downturn caused by the pandemic, the balance was paid out to New Yorkers, requiring the State to borrow from the federal government to continue paying eligible claims. Paying off the debt and making the fund solvent has allowed the State to increase the maximum UI benefit rate so that it better aligns with other states and changes to the taxable wage base to help build up reserves and stabilize the UI Trust Fund for the future.

According to the Governor, starting with payments issued the week of October 13th, increases are expected for many unemployed New Yorkers even if they are not currently receiving the highest rate. The weekly benefit payment amount is determined by how much a worker earned during a specific base period. New Yorkers can use this tool to estimate their weekly Unemployment Insurance benefit amount.

Bills Delivered to the Governor

A1433A Sponsored by AM Hunter/Senator Bailey. Establishes a comprehensive regulatory framework for the pet insurance industry.

A6556 Sponsored by AM Rosenthal/Senator Hinchey. Includes consideration of evidence of recent acts of aggravated cruelty to animals as a factor to be considered when determining whether grounds for a temporary extreme risk protection order exist.

A6869 Sponsored by AM Alvarez/Senator Kavanagh. Prohibits discriminatory practices by real estate appraisers and furthers fair housing compliance.

A7321A Sponsored by AM Weprin/Senator Bailey. Requires health insurers to provide coverage for speech therapy for stuttering.

A8419 Sponsored by AM Conrad/Senator Hinchey. Provides the Department of Agriculture and Markets (Department) with additional licensing and enforcement in relation to retail food store, food service establishment and food warehouse licensing.

S952B Sponsored by Senator Kavanagh/AM Lasher. Makes rent stabilized dwelling units eligible for protections established by the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act (HSTPA) of 2019 including requirements that landlords return security deposits within fourteen days from the tenant's vacatur, provide an itemized list of any damages beyond wear and tear for which they are deducting any part of the deposit return, and conduct an inspection within two weeks of tenants' vacatur to give tenants time to correct any damages.

S1985A Sponsored by Senator Harckham/AM Paulin. Requires police officers to take temporary custody of firearms when responding to reports of family violence.

S3211 Sponsored by AM Kavanagh/AM Fall. Expands the Battery Park City Authority's Board of Directors by two members and require the appointment of Battery Park City residents until a majority of members of the Board are Battery Park City residents.

S8311A Sponsored by Senator Kavanagh/AM Bichotte Hermelyn. Mandates the New York City Housing Authority to establish clear and fair procedures for succession tenancy.

S8411 Sponsored by Senator Skoufis/AM Romero. Enacts the Civil Litigation Efficacy Omnibus bill to codify the Attorney General's power including providing the Attorney General with a cause of action permitting a lawsuit against a law enforcement agency if there is reasonable cause to believe that agency or its employees have engaged in a pattern or practice of conduct that has deprived persons of their rights, privileges, or immunities under New York or federal law, and clarifying the OAG 's authority to address repeated or persistent discrimination in public elementary and secondary schools, school districts, and educational entities.

In The News-New York City

Final Schedule, Qualified Candidates for NYC's Official Citywide General Election Debates

The New York City Campaign Finance Board, along with its voter engagement initiative *NYC Votes*, is partnering with WNBC and NY1 to broadcast the citywide debates ahead of the general election on November 4th. Participation in these debates is required for candidates who opted into the city's Matching Funds Program and who meet the debate stage criteria. Any potential debate with fewer than two qualified candidates will not go forward.

The official debates program begins on Thursday, October 16, at 7 p.m. with the 1st Mayoral debate, sponsored by WNBC.

General Debate Schedule
Mayoral – 1st General Election Debate (WNBC)
Thursday, October 16, 2025, 7 p.m.
Qualified Candidates:

1. Andrew Cuomo
2. Zohran Mamdani
3. Curtis Sliwa

Mayoral – Leading Contender General Election Debate (NY1)
Wednesday, October 22, 2025, 7 p.m.
Qualified Candidates:

1. Andrew Cuomo
2. Zohran Mamdani
3. Curtis Sliwa

Due to a lack of candidates who met the eligibility threshold, there will not be Campaign Finance Board-sponsored debates for Comptroller and Public Advocate.

Bills Approved by the City Council

Introduction 925-A Sponsored by Council Member Farah Louis. Requires biennial inspections of steam radiators located in apartments where a child under 6 resides and in the common areas of such buildings.

***Introduction 928-B Sponsored by Council Member Sandy Nurse*.** Requires the Department of Transportation, in consultation with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice, to conduct a pilot project on the use of cool pavement.

Introduction 984-A Sponsored by Majority Leader Amanda Farías, Requires a designated agency, in coordination with the Commission on Gender Equity and other relevant agencies, to conduct an annual pay equity study on private employers with 200 or more employees.

Introduction 1247-B Sponsored by Speaker Adrienne Adams. Requires immediate advance payment of 50 percent of the value of a nonprofit's contract with the City as an advance upon registration by the comptroller. The bill excludes emergency contracts, specific contracts processed by the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) for temporary housing assistance, any contracts processed by the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ), and residential foster care and emergency domestic violence contracts.

Introduction 1248-B Sponsored by Speaker Adams. Establishes an Office of Contract Services, the head of which would be the Director of Contract Services, who would serve as the City Chief Procurement Officer. The Office would have the authority to coordinate citywide procurement activities for mayoral agencies, including reviewing contract guidelines, conducting pre-audit and post-audit reviews of contracts, and providing training and technical assistance on procurement matters.

Introduction 1249-A Sponsored by Council Member Justin Brannan. Requires all human services-related city agencies to submit annual reports on contract registration during the previous fiscal year.

Introduction 1372 Sponsored by Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala. Requires that the rent contribution for CityFHEPS recipients not exceed 30 percent of the household's total monthly income, regardless of whether the household receives public assistance or has earned income.

Introduction 1390-A Sponsored by Council Member Lynn Schulman. Amends New York City's cooling tower testing requirements by requiring building owners to test for the presence of microbes at least every month during periods of the year when cooling towers are in use.

Comptroller DiNapoli: NYC Area Is Nation's Second Largest Market for Venture Capital

The New York City metropolitan area is the second largest market for venture capital (VC) funding in the United States, with $28.5 billion in investments, or 13.3% of the national total in 2024. The amount invested in the region has more than doubled since 2015, according to a report released by State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli. The San Jose metropolitan area (Silicon Valley) is ranked first in venture capital funding.

"As the financial capital of the country, New York City is a natural hub for venture capital investing and the latest numbers bear that out," Comptroller DiNapoli said. "State and local officials should look at ways to make New York City's business environment even more attractive to investors and support entrepreneurs that lack access to capital, especially as larger deals divert funds from startups hoping to establish themselves and spur growth in the area's economy."

The strong activity nationally and in New York has been fueled by investment in artificial intelligence (AI), with that sector's share of total investment nationwide increasing nearly three-fold from 16% in 2021 to 45% in 2024. Of the five VC firms making these investments, four were located in California, while the fifth was in Norwalk, Conn., part of the New York City metropolitan area.

The New York City metropolitan area had more transactions in 2024 than the Boston and Los Angeles metropolitan areas combined, and a higher total value of investment than the Boston, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia metropolitan areas put together.

Nationally, total investment in software companies grew $100 billion in 2024, accounting for nearly half of all investment that year. In the first half of 2025, the share jumped to 57.8%, with more than $94 billion invested in software companies.

In New York City, the software and tech services sector accounted for 52.4% of activity in 2024, up from 37.6% in 2019. For 2020 to 2024 combined, software and tech services investment accounted for more than half of all VC investment. This represented over $44 billion in total investment, supporting companies with a total employment of at least 13,000 employees.

As investors have supported AI-related firms in recent years, they have increasingly preferred higher-valued deals. In 2019, deals with a value of $25 million or less accounted for 75.7% of the total number of deals, falling to 59% by 2024. During the same period, deals worth over $50 million increased from 56.9% to 68.7% of the total dollar value.

Total deals by value, including deals for firms that undertook multiple rounds of funding, that exceeded $100 million more than doubled in the first half of 2025 compared to the prior year, reaching the highest level on record at $113.6 billion. The average deal size for these "mega deals" more than doubled from $261 million in the first half of 2024 to $541 million for the same period in 2025.

Briefs

New York Launches Secure Choice Retirement Savings Program

Governor Kathy Hochul this week announced the launch of the New York State Secure Choice Savings Program, a new state-sponsored retirement savings program for private-sector employees who do not have access to a workplace retirement plan.

According to the Governor, over 50 percent of working New Yorkers do not have access to a retirement plan through their employer — now for the first time in State history, those New Yorkers will have an easy way to save for their future.

"With the launch of the New York State Secure Choice Savings Program, we are expanding access to retirement savings and empowering New Yorkers to invest in their future," Governor Hochul said. "The program provides another tool for employees to build long-term financial security and plan for a dignified retirement."

New York Secure Choice is free for employers and allows employees to save automatically through payroll deductions into portable Roth Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs). New York employers with ten or more employees that do not already offer a qualified retirement plan will qualify for the program.

Free College Application Submissions for Third Consecutive Year as NY College Application Month Returns

Governor Kathy Hochul announced that students across the state can apply to nearly 130 colleges and universities for free this October. The announcement comes as the Governor has proclaimed October as New York State College Application Month (CAM), which includes waived application fees at The State University of New York (SUNY), The City University of New York (CUNY), and dozens of private colleges and universities.

Application Waiver Periods

- **SUNY**: Waiving up to five application fees per student from **October 20 through November 3**.
- **CUNY**: Waiving application fees from **October 27 to November 21** for New York City High School students, and from **November 10 to November 21** for students outside of New York City.
- **Private Colleges and Universities**: Participating at various times throughout the month.

A complete list of participating schools can be found on the New York State Application Waiver webpage.

In addition, to help students make the most of this exciting opportunity, the HESC and its partners are hosting over 40 virtual and in-person events throughout October. With the 2026–27 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), New York's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), and NYS Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Incentive Program applications now open, these events offer students and families the one-on-one support they need to complete their financial aid applications.

NYCHA Issues RFQ to Solicit Partners to Assist with Renovations

The New York City Housing Authority this week released a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to solicit partners for the Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT) program.

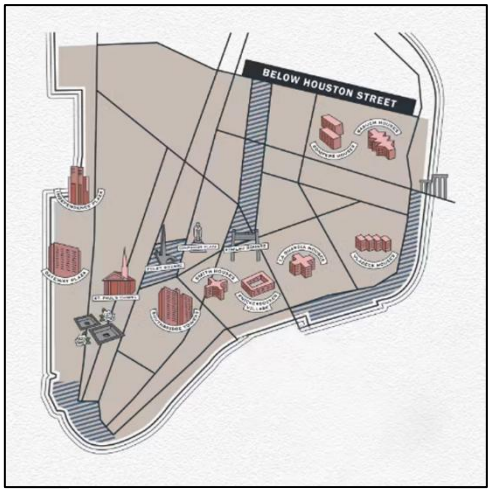
Under PACT, NYCHA establishes public-private partnerships with private developers, property management companies and social service providers to carry out much-needed overhaul renovations of its developments. The program also converts the properties from Section 9 (public housing) to project-based Section 8, the Housing Choice Voucher program.

"We've seen incredible transformations through PACT, largely in part to the partnerships we've forged since the program began in 2016," said NYCHA Chief Executive Officer Lisa Bova-Hiatt. "By opening a rolling RFQ process, NYCHA is able to continuously diversify and deepen the bench of quality, trusted PACT partners, whose core mission aligns with our own: providing residents with comprehensive renovations and enhanced property management, and ultimately, improving the quality of their day-to-day lives."

According to the agency's website, more than 21,000 apartment units have received repairs or are in progress under the PACT program. There are currently 139 active PACT projects.

9/11 Solidarity Network Helps Claimants Obtain Vital Documentation for 9/11 Compensation Fund Claims

It is becoming increasingly difficult for some claimants to find documents to prove their presence at an eligible location so many years after the attacks. In fact, earlier this year, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) went to the State Legislature for assistance in verifying its members' 9/11 service. On September 10th, Governor Kathy Hochul signed chapter 390 of the Laws of 2025 which establishes a presumption that a New York City Police Pension Fund member participated in the rescue, recovery, and clean-up operations at the World Trade Center, unless their employer proves the contrary by competent evidence.



9/11 Exposure Zone

The 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund (VCF) understands this challenge and encourages individuals who were present in the exposure zone to gather and save their proof of presence documents now, even if they aren't currently ill or planning to file a claim.

To help members of the general public verify their 9/11 service, Pitta Bishop & Del Giorno LLC's affiliate Pitta & Baione LLP is developing the 9/11 Solidarity Network, a system where members can act as witnesses for one another in verifying 9/11 service. The network utilizes sworn ***Witness Presence Statements*** from people who can attest to a claimant's presence which are accepted as secondary evidence by the VCF when primary documentation is unavailable.

By participating, individuals can provide the crucial testimony a fellow member might need while also securing potential support for their own future claims. This initiative formalizes the collective memory of its members to help ensure no one is left to prove their presence alone.

For more information regarding the 9/11 Solidarity Network, please contact Pitta & Baione at 844-901-1262.

Coming Up

New York State

There are currently no meetings scheduled at the time of this Publication

New York City

Tuesday, October 15th

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

Wednesday, October 16th

Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises, 250 Broadway – 8th Floor – Hearing Room 3, 10 a.m.

Committee on Parks and Recreation, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.

Committee on General Welfare, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.

Committee on Health, Council Chambers - City Hall, 10 a.m.

Committee on Women and Gender Equity, 250 Broadway – 8th floor – Hearing Room 1, 1 p.m.

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