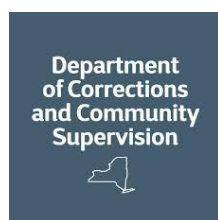




"Obstacles don't define us. Rather, it is the unparalleled courage and character of us that defines us as a people. So my confidence in the future is steeped in our glorious past - in the face of adversity, we always persist. We persevere, we prevail." Governor Kathy Hochul

In The News-New York State



DOCCS: NYS Correction Officer Strike Ends *Over 2,000 Officers Fired*

Daniel Martuscello, the Commissioner of New York's Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), held a press conference on Monday to announce that the strike has officially ended.

Commissioner Martuscello said over 2,000 correction officers who did not return to work by the 6:45 a.m. deadline on Monday have been fired. The strike lasted 22 days and, in total, four deals were offered to striking officers. In the latest deal, staff were required to return to work on Monday, March 10 at 6:45 a.m. According to DOCCS, this agreement was reached alongside the state and the corrections union, NYSCOPBA.

"It's time to recover, rebuild and recruit," Martuscello said during a news conference Monday afternoon. "I want to thank the staff that have worked hard every day of this strike; your being there was critical through this challenging 22 days. I thank the 5,000 security staff that have returned to work."

The terminated employees are being prohibited from trying to get their jobs back or from working for any other state agency. An [executive order](#) signed Monday by Governor Kathy Hochul requires the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision to report those officers to the state Division of Criminal Justice Services as having been removed from their position "for cause," which means their peace officer certification will be terminated.

In addition, the corrections department will provide the governor's Office of Employee Relations a list of the names of those officers so they will be blocked from seeking employment with all other state agencies.

"No New York state agency shall hire or appoint any individual who was previously employed by the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision and thereafter separated from such employment in connection with such individual's participation in the illegal and unlawful strike," the governor's order states. "This prohibition applies to all appointments in the classified service of the state, as well as any hires in the unclassified service where Civil Service Law provisions apply."

The return of more than 5,000 correction officers and sergeants has still left the state prison system short-staffed. Martuscello said thousands of National Guard troops will continue to be deployed in the facilities to augment security and operations as an aggressive campaign to hire new officers is launched.

According to the Governor, despite not meeting the 85 percent return threshold, the State is recognizing components of this agreement as well as the March 6th agreement in full. Components of the agreements that the State will honor include:

- Allowing the Commissioner of DOCCS to exercise his existing discretion under the HALT Act and continue the temporary suspension of the programming elements of the HALT Act for 90 days from the date of the MOA.
- Minimizing and working towards eliminating 24-hour mandatory overtime.
- Establishing a committee to analyze each facility's staffing and operational inefficiencies with the goal of providing more relief to existing staff.
- DOCCS shall not issue notices of discipline under the collective bargaining agreement for an employee who engaged in the strike so long as the employee returned to work by the deadline.
- Reiterating rescission of the 70/30 memo.
- Immediately reinstating the health insurance of any returning employee.
- Continue to pay the 2.5 times overtime rate originally established by mutual agreement on February 20, 2025, for 30 days from the date of the MOA.
- Allowing employees to purchase health insurance covering the full State share and employee share to the first day of AWOL/terminated health insurance.
- Establishing a committee comprised of representatives of NYSCOPBA and DOCCS and other parties to present recommendations to the New York State Legislature regarding changes to the HALT Act.



Budget Season Moves into Final Stages



The State Senate and Assembly this week approved their one-house budget proposals, highlighting the priorities of each house. Starting at a baseline of Governor Kathy Hochul's \$252 billion Executive Budget, the Senate came in at \$259 billion, while the Assembly budget totaled \$256.5 billion.

The legislative budgets advocated for increased aid for schools, housing, health, mental health, and transportation. Both the Senate and Assembly called for the Housing Access Voucher program, seeking to assist New Yorkers find affordable housing while the State and City ramp up construction.

"In the face of economic uncertainty and federal threats to essential programs, our budget serves as a fiscal battle plan, protecting working families, strengthening our communities, and building a more prosperous future," Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart Cousins explained. "The Senate Democratic Majority stands united in putting people first, ensuring that New York remains a national leader in forward-thinking governance, smart investments, and economic opportunity."

Lawmakers pushed for investments in immigrant communities, legal services, and child care. For families, both budgets expand childcare options, with the Assembly plan offering childcare subsidies to create and maintain more affordable slots.

“This proposed budget is an investment in New York’s families and in its future,” Speaker Heastie said. “It will put money back into the pockets of hardworking New Yorkers,

The Senate increases spending in areas like veterans’ services and climate issues (calling for the NY HEAT Act), while the Assembly allocates additional funding to SUNY and CUNY.

Both the Senate and the Assembly removed the Governor’s proposed changes to the State’s discovery laws from their budgets, with the Senate pledging to work toward an agreement and the Assembly sticking to “no policy” in the budget.

The two houses return Monday, with 8 session days remaining until the start of the 2026 fiscal year. Negotiations between the legislative budget conference committees will keep the members busy finalizing areas of consensus and near consensus, while the legislative leaders and Governor try to find common ground on divergent issues.

In The News-New York City



NYC Office of the Mayor

Mayor Adams Announces New Appointments to Rent Guidelines Board

New York City Mayor Eric Adams this week appointed Doug Apple as the new chair of the Rent Guidelines Board, along with Reed Jordan and Alex Armlovich as new members to the board.

Chair Apple currently serves as the president and CEO of 1811Consulting, advising on supportive and transitional housing development projects; commercial real estate sales, leases, acquisitions; and project management services. Previously, Apple served as executive vice president and chief operating officer of Samaritan Daytop Village, overseeing over 50 programs focused on housing, behavioral health, and human services.

Apple spent nearly three decades working in city government. Apple served the city as the former first deputy commissioner for HPD, as general manager and chief operating officer of the New York City Housing Authority and served in the Mayor’s Office of Management and Budget and the Mayor’s Office of Operations. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in economics from Boston University and a Master of Public Administration in urban planning from the New York University Wagner Graduate School of Public Service.

Armlovich is a senior housing policy analyst at the Niskanen Center, Washington DC based public policy institute. He previously covered transportation at the Citizens Budget Commission of New York and was a state and local policy fellow at the Manhattan Institute.

He earned a Bachelor of Arts in economics and political science from the University of Rochester and a Master of Public Policy in social and urban policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

Jordan currently serves as the director of community scholarships at NYC Kids RISE and is an adjunct professor at the New York University Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. Prior to those roles, Jordan served as a program officer at the Wells Fargo Foundation and as a senior policy advisor at HPD. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in political science from Carleton College and a Master of Arts in city planning from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



Bills Passed by the Council

Introduction 216-A, sponsored by Council Member Shahana Hanif, Requires the Department of Social Services (DSS), to implement various changes to improve the IDNYC application process. These changes include:

- Showing appointments for each location for the earliest date and time on any online appointment scheduling system.
- Developing an annual training program for IDNYC workers on the application process.
- Providing for adequate in-person application appointments to match demand for IDNYC.
- Establishing a pilot program to permit same-day and walk-in appointments at certain IDNYC service enrollment centers.
- Providing a process in which a supervisor is available to review documentation that has been declined during an application appointment for an IDNYC.

Introduction 420-A, sponsored by Council Member Carlina Rivera, Requires DOC to establish a child visitor program to improve the experience of children visiting Department facilities.

Introduction 564-A, sponsored by Council Member Gale Brewer, Requires that the Department of Records and Information Services (DORIS) maintain a publicly accessible and searchable online database with every post that any official government account has shared on a social media platform.

Introduction 977-A, sponsored by Council Member Althea Stevens, Increases the frequency of Department of Probation (DOP) reports on programs offered to probationers, compliance with departmental mandates, and recidivism rates.

Introduction 1023-A, sponsored by Council Member Jennifer Gutierrez, Requires the Department of Correction (DOC) to create and operate an online scheduling system to facilitate visits to incarcerated individuals.

Introduction 1026-A, sponsored by Council Member Crystal Hudson, Requires the Department of Corrections (DOC) to report separately on in-person and tele-visits and provide more detailed reporting on the reasons jail visits are not completed.

Introduction 1036-A, sponsored by Council Member Sandy Nurse, Requires DOC to issue quarterly public reports on people in custody who have been ordered to undergo a mental health evaluation to determine if they are competent to stand trial.

Briefs

Governor Hochul Pushes “Bell to Bell” Cell Phone Ban in New York’s Schools

Armed with a [letter](#) of support from Common Sense Media, which represents 80,000 teachers, parents and other supporters in New York, Governor Kathy Hochul this week doubled down on her cell phone ban in schools.

According to Common Sense Media, research in 2024 revealed that smartphone distractions significantly impact academic performance and student well-being. Nearly 70% of teens report that social media distracts them from schoolwork, and other studies have consistently found negative correlations between classroom phone use and academic achievement. Other research shows that teens who spend more than three hours a day on social media double their risk for depression and anxiety, and multiple studies demonstrate that the explosion of social media use has contributed to a rise in the rates of self-harm, anxiety, depression, and suicide among children and teens.

“Families will always play a key role in managing their children’s digital lives but they cannot do it alone,” Common Sense asserted. “Just ask any parent. They need the State of New York on their side.

The Governor’s proposal includes:

- No unsanctioned use of smartphones and other internet-enabled personal devices on school grounds in K-12 schools for the entire school day, including classroom time and other settings like lunch and study hall periods.
- Allows schools to develop their own plans for storing smartphones during the day — giving administrators and teachers the flexibility to do what works best for their buildings and students.
- Proposes \$13.5 million in funding to be made available for schools that need assistance in purchasing storage solutions to help them go distraction-free.
- Requires schools to give parents a way to contact their kids during the day if needed.
- Allows students to have simple cell phones without internet capability, as well as internet-enabled devices officially provided by their school for classroom instruction, such as laptops or tablets used as part of lesson plans.
- Provides sensible exemptions to restrictions, including for a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP), for students who need an internet-enabled device to manage a medical condition, or for other academic purposes such as translation.
- Requires schools to track and report on the enforcement of the ban and any disparities in enforcement.

This new requirement would be in place starting in the 2025-26 academic year, and would apply to all schools in public school districts, as well as charter schools and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).

Governor Hochul Announces Dr. Hazel N. Dukes Civic Leadership Initiative to Honor the Late Civil Rights Legend

Governor Kathy Hochul this week named New York's Office of Service and Civic Engagement in honor of Dr. Hazel N. Dukes, the legendary New York civil rights leader. The longtime president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People died March 1st at the age of 92.

The Dr. Hazel N. Dukes Civic Leadership Initiative will be charged with promoting civic and service opportunities across New York, continuing the focus on public service and civic engagement that Dr. Dukes championed throughout her life. The Governor also announced an expansion of SUNY's Dr. Hazel N. Dukes Fellowship for the Advancement of Civil Rights.

“Dr. Hazel N. Dukes was a giant of the civil rights movement,” Governor Hochul said. “One of the greatest honors of my life was when Hazel presided over my official swearing-in as Governor. She was a trusted friend and key advisor, and we pay tribute to her legacy by continuing our investments in service and civic engagement.”

State’s Empire Building Challenge: Program Supports Demonstration of Pathways to Achieve Electrification Retrofits in Hospitals

Governor Hochul announced that \$30 million is now available through the Empire Building Challenge, a program supporting projects that develop electrification retrofits that can be replicated and scaled at hospitals throughout the state.

The [Empire Building Challenge \(EBC\): Hospitals program](#), administered by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), provides funding to help hospitals overcome cost barriers to energy-saving investments while improving the resiliency of healthcare facilities. NYSERDA will award up to \$5 million to selected hospitals for the construction and installation of scalable, efficient low-carbon solutions, such as electrification of building systems, electrification readiness projects, and comprehensive energy efficiency projects that will achieve significant energy and carbon reductions.

Eligible facilities include licensed, existing in-patient hospitals primarily focused on delivering acute, short-term medical and surgical care for patients, including diagnosis, treatment and inpatient housing.

The [program](#) will prioritize projects at hospitals located in disadvantaged communities to ensure the communities benefit from the positive impacts of the clean energy and resiliency solutions supported by the program.

[Proposals](#) are due by August 14, 2025, by 3:00 p.m. ET. A complete list of all eligibility rules and evaluation criteria can be found in the solicitation summary on [NYSERDA’s website](#).

Comptroller Lander Reports More Than \$9 Million in Recovered Back Wages

Since the start of New York City Comptroller Brad Lander's term in 2022, his Office has settled \$9.1 million for workers to whom companies owe back wages, civil penalties, and interest.

This month, the Office reached settlements with 781 Metropolitan Ave JV LLC, Champion Electrical Mechanical Builder Group Corp., D'onofrio General Contractors Corp., and Rennon Construction Corp. for prevailing wage violations totaling \$525,152.20—including back wages, civil penalties, and interest—for work contracted between 2016-2021. These settlements bring the total recovered by the Bureau of Labor Law since the start of Comptroller Lander's tenure to \$9,100,254.50

Recent settlements reached by the Comptroller include:

- **Champion Electrical Mechanical Builder Group Corp.:** The New York City Comptroller's Office reached a settlement with Champion Electrical Mechanical Builder Group Corp. (Champion Electrical) for failure to pay prevailing wages to six workers on public work construction projects and for falsifying payroll records. The settlement totals \$295,901.08, including interest and civil penalties, and the contractor agreed to a debarment.
- **D'onofrio General Contractors Corp. and Yukon Enterprises, Inc.:** The New York City Comptroller's Office reached a settlement for prevailing wage violations from two workers performing street paving work. The settlement payment totals \$132,163.40, including interest and civil penalty.
- **781 Metropolitan Ave JV LLC:** The New York City Comptroller's Office reached a settlement for failure to pay prevailing wages to two building services workers. The settlement totals \$90,000.00, including interest and civil penalties.
- **Rennon Construction Corp.:** The New York City Comptroller's Office reached a settlement failure to pay prevailing wages to eight workers on public work projects. The settlement payment totals \$7,087.72, including interest and civil penalties.

Coming Up

New York State

Monday, March 17th

Senate Investigations and Government Operations Committee Meeting,
611 Legislative Office Building, 11:30 a.m.

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

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

Tuesday, February 18th

Senate Civil Service and Pensions Committee Meeting, 123 Capitol, 9:30 a.m.

Senate Procurement and Contracts Committee Meeting, 816 Legislative Office Building, 9:30 a.m.

Assembly Judiciary Committee Meeting, 832 Legislative Office Building, 10 a.m.

Assembly Real Property Tax Committee Meeting, 641A Legislative Office Building, 10 a.m.

Senate Local Government Committee Meeting, 904 Legislative Office Building, 10:30 a.m.

Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee Meeting, 124 Capitol, 11 a.m.

Senate Racing, Gaming, and Wagering Committee Meeting, 810 Legislative Office Building, 11 a.m.

Senate Agriculture Committee Meeting, 901 Legislative Office Building, 11:30 a.m.

Senate Transportation Committee Meeting, 801 Legislative Office Building, 12:30 p.m.

Assembly Local Government Committee Meeting, 838 Legislative Office Building, 1 p.m.

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

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

Assembly Ways & Means Committee, Off the Floor.

Wednesday, February 19th

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

New York State Assembly Session, Assembly Chamber

Thursday, March 20^h

New York State Senate Session, Senate Chamber, 11 a.m.

New York State Assembly Session, Assembly Chamber

Cannabis Control Board Meeting, Onondaga Community College, Syracuse, 1 p.m.

New York City

Monday, March 17th

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

Committee on Economic Development, Committee Room – City Hall, 1 p.m.

Tuesday, March 18th

Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.

Committee on Environmental Protection, Resiliency and Waterfronts, Committee Room, 10:30 a.m.

Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings and Dispositions, 250 Broadway, 16th Floor, 12 p.m.

Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises, 250 Broadway – Committee Room, 14th Floor, 1 p.m.

Committee on Land Use, 250 Broadway – Committee Room, 14th Floor, 1:15 p.m.

Wednesday, March 19th

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.

Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection, 250 Broadway – Committee Room, 16th Floor, 1 p.m.

Thursday, March 20th

Committee on Children and Youth, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.

Committee on Parks and Recreation, Committee Room – City Hall, 1 p.m.

Friday, March 21st

Committee on Governmental Operations, State & Federal Legislation,
Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.

Committee on Small Business, Committee Room – City Hall, 10:30 a.m.

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