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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



New York State Pays Off Multi-Billion Dollar Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund Debt

Governor Kathy Hochul this week rallied with the Hotel and Gaming Trades Council, AFL-CIO to announce New York State has paid off its nearly \$7 billion federal Unemployment Insurance (UI) Trust Fund loan — a move that will bring the fund to solvency, increase benefits for unemployed New Yorkers and cut costs to businesses. The payment was part of the Fiscal Year 2026 Enacted Budget.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 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 allows the state to increase the maximum UI benefit rate so that it better aligns with other states and changes the taxable wage base to help build up reserves and stabilize the UI Trust Fund for the future. The maximum weekly benefit to unemployed workers, which has been frozen because of the debt, will increase from \$504 to \$869 in October.\



“Today, I’m proud to stand with our members in celebrating a victory that will provide real, immediate relief for hardworking New Yorkers and their families,” Hotel and Gaming Trades Council President Rich Maroko said. “Paying off the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund debt will be a lifeline for workers who are laid off or lose their jobs. This policy, along with reducing the benefits delay for striking workers fighting for a fair contract to the lowest in the nation, is crucial as we officially mark one year until the expiration of our industry-wide contract.”

Employers are projected to save an average of \$100 per employee in 2026 and \$250 in 2027. Additionally, the taxable wage base will increase in 2026, strengthening the trust fund over time and helping to maintain affordable tax rates for New York’s employers in the long term.

Hochul Administration Releases First-Ever Master Plan for Aging, Offering a Roadmap for Aging New Yorkers

The Final Report for New York’s first-ever [Master Plan for Aging \(MPA\)](#) was released this week, containing more than 100 proposals directed towards all levels of government, the social sector, and private enterprise aimed at helping individuals age with dignity, independence and the support they need.

“Every New Yorker should be able to age with dignity and independence,” Governor Kathy Hochul said. “The Master Plan for Aging builds on our ongoing efforts to empower older adults and advance New York’s status as an age-friendly state...”

The Master Plan for Aging, led by the New York State Department of Health, the New York State Office for the Aging, and the New York State Department of State, centers on:

- Affordability of Basic Necessities
- Informal Caregiver and Workforce Support and Modernization of Community-Based Aging Network Service
- Modernization and Financial Sustainability of Healthcare, Residential Facilities and Community-Based Aging Network Service Providers
- Prevention, Wellness Promotion and Access
- Housing Access and Community Development
- Access to Services in and Engagement with Historically Underserved Communities

- Social Engagement of Older Adults
- Combatting Elder Abuse, Ageism, Ableism and Stigma
- Technology Access and Development

New York has the fourth-largest population of older adults in the U.S., with 3.2 million individuals – about 16 percent of the population – over age 65. The state’s population of those over the age of 60 is projected to grow to 5.3 million by 2030, with those over 80 years of age exceeding 1.2 million – growing faster than any other age group in some areas of the state. By 2030, older adults will make up 25 to 30 percent of the population in most New York counties.

"The planning process that gave rise to the MPA was truly a grassroots effort and labor of love by those who have dedicated their professional lives to empowering, protecting and prioritizing Older New Yorkers," NYS State Senator Cordell Cleare said. "I look forward to digging into the granular details--but more importantly, I welcome the opportunity to turn this plan into a comprehensive package of legislative solutions backed by permanent and recurring funding."

In The News-New York City



**"Best Budget Ever"
Gets Even Better**



New York City Mayor Eric Adams, New York City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams, and the New York City Council this week enacted New York City’s Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Budget. The on-time and balanced \$115.9 billion spending plan prioritizes public safety, affordability, and improved quality of life for all New Yorkers.

The \$115.9 billion budget protects \$1.4 billion in programs facing “stimulus cliffs”; maintains funding for CUNY, cultural institutions, and libraries; launches the ‘After School for All’ program by investing more money in free universal after-school programming and keeps the City on a path to 35,000 uniformed officers by fall of 2026.

According to Mayor Adams, the \$115.9 billion FY 2026 budget is balanced with a combination of savings and increased revenues. Outyear gaps are \$5 billion, \$6.1 billion, and \$6 billion in Fiscal Years 2027 through 2029, respectively. Growth of about \$815 million in FY 2026 over the Executive Budget is driven by tax revenue and grant funding.

In addition, projected tax revenues were adjusted upward over the Executive Budget by \$617 million across FY 2025 and FY 2026. However, the Mayor explained, the City must remain cautious as tax revenue growth is expected to slow in financial plan outyears.

The FY 2026 Adopted Budget maintains a record level of \$8.5 billion in reserves, including \$1.2 billion in the General Reserve, \$5 billion in the Retiree Health Benefits Trust Fund, \$250 million in the Capital Stabilization Reserve, and a record level of \$2 billion in the Rainy-Day Fund.

In addition to launching a pilot program to provide childcare for infants and toddlers through two-years-of-age and stabilizing school budgets so no school receives less funding despite enrollment drops, the Enacted Budget includes:

- Increasing funding for [programs](#) that provide free legal assistance to immigrants, including representation for those facing deportation and assistance with applications for various immigration benefits (\$41.9 million).
- Funding to increase the operating support for the city's Cultural Institutions Group and provide additional funding for Cultural Development Fund grants (\$30 million).
- Funding to support people experiencing severe mental illness and the city's most vulnerable by investing in programs that meet New Yorkers where they are, such as [Intensive Mobile Treatment teams](#) and [Assertive Community Treatment](#) to create a pilot step-down programs for clients who have progressed in their treatment and require less-intensive services, as well as expand operations at [Crisis Respite Centers](#), which provide community-based support to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis (\$18 million).
- Funding for multiple criminal justice initiatives, including to increase the number of justice-involved supportive housing units, alternatives to incarceration restoration, re-entry restoration, and electronic monitoring (\$14.4 million).
- Funding for pro-bono attorneys that assist unaccompanied minor immigrants in removal proceedings (\$12.5 million).
- Providing the city's district attorneys with funding to support their critical work to keep communities safe. These funds will provide operational support and additional staff to address gang, youth, and domestic violence, as well as improve forensic analysis to support legal proceedings (\$12.1 million).
- Funding for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation to hire more than 170 additional parks enforcement patrol officers, gardeners, and city park workers to help keep parks safe and clean (\$10.2 million).
- Creating the Department of Sustainable Delivery within the New York City Department of Transportation to regulate commercial e-bikes, including 60 positions for regulation and enforcement (\$6.1 million at full ramp-up).
- Funding to help local [Business Improvement Districts](#) purchase sanitation bins with secure lids to assist in Mayor Adams' [Trash Revolution](#), the citywide effort to move trash from black bags on the sidewalk to rat-resistant, closed containers (\$5 million).

Bills Passed by the City Council

Introduction 3-A, sponsored by Council Member Shaun Abreu--Specifies that the Department of Sanitation (DSNY) is the agency responsible for the removal of all derelict vehicles from the street.

Introduction 30-B, sponsored by Council Member Oswald Feliz--Establishes safety requirements for powered bicycles when used by contracted delivery workers. Specifically, the bill requires that any powered bicycle operated by a contracted delivery worker on behalf of a delivery service meet local standards established for the sale of such device, which includes certification by an accredited testing laboratory. Such device may be provided by the delivery service or the worker, but the delivery service could not require that the worker obtain a compliant device as a term of employment. Responsibility for compliance with these provisions would fall on the delivery service.

Introduction 47-B, sponsored by Council Member Shekar Krishnan—Removes all misdemeanor criminal penalties for general vendors and mobile food vendors. Vendors who operate without a license could be subject to a violation and a fine or a civil penalty. Vendors who violate any other street vending laws would be subject to a civil penalty.

Introduction 205-A, sponsored by Council Member Shahana Hanif--Requires the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP) to conduct outreach about common fraudulent schemes committed by providers of immigration legal services and how to avoid them. The bill would also require DCWP to report annually on its outreach and education efforts, as well as complaints and inspections related to providers of immigration assistance services.

Introduction 980-A, sponsored by Council Member Julie Won--Increases civil penalties for immigration assistance service providers that do not comply with applicable regulations, such as the requirements to execute a written contract with customers, include specific language in signage and advertisements, retain documents, and maintain a surety. The bill would also clarify that immigration assistance service providers who advertise services must post, or include with the advertisement, a legally required notice of the services they are not authorized to provide.

Introduction 566-B, sponsored by Council Member Gale A. Brewer--Requires the Department of Education (DOE), in consultation with the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), to create and submit to the Mayor and Speaker an annual report on how to expand public access to school playgrounds.

Introduction 857-B, sponsored by Council Member Rafael Salamanca, Jr.--Requires DSNY to, within 24 hours of receiving a report of an abandoned vehicle, determine whether the vehicle qualifies as derelict under state law.

Introduction 1281-A, sponsored by Council Member Eric Dinowitz --Postpones the natural gas alarm requirement of [Local Law 157 of 2016](#) to no earlier than January 1, 2027. The Department of Buildings (DOB) would also be required to submit to the Mayor and the Council, by July 1, 2026, a determination on whether the Department has been able to identify four distinct manufacturers of battery-powered natural gas alarms. If such determination finds an insufficient number of alarms, DOB would be required to extend the compliance date to January 1, 2029.

Briefs

Albany Appellate Judge Grants Temporary Injunction Against NY DOCCS for Pausing Parts of HALT Act During Prison Strike

Supreme Court Appellate Division Judge Michael Lynch granted a [temporary injunction](#) Tuesday, forcing the state to fully implement the HALT (Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement) Act in prisons and jails. Elements of the law were suspended following the 22-day prison guard strike earlier this year.

The injunction will take effect July 11 to give DOCCS time to take measures to “ensure the safety of its facilities and their inhabitants.” At that point, DOCCS can only suspend the law at certain facilities if it submits new emergency declarations with explanations of why solitary confinement regulations would exacerbate the emergencies. DOCCS must file those emergency declarations publicly with the court, the judge ordered.

Judge Daniel Lynch wrote that the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision violated “the separation of powers” by temporarily suspending the law that sets limitations to the use of solitary confinement.

The lawsuit was filed on behalf of a group of incarcerated individuals.

NY Launches Distraction-Free Schools Website to Help Schools Prepare for Bell-To-Bell Smartphone Restrictions this Fall

Governor Kathy Hochul this week [launched a website](#) that provides resources for New York school districts as they prepare to implement bell-to-bell restrictions on smartphones for the coming school year. The website includes a policy FAQ, toolkit, and examples that school districts can use to design their distraction-free policy, which must be published by August 1st.

New York’s cellphone policy creates a statewide standard for distraction-free schools in New York including:

- Prohibits unsanctioned use of smartphones and other internet-enabled personal devices on school grounds in K-12 schools for the entire school day (from “bell to bell”), 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.
- Secures \$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 when necessary.

The policy clarifies that students will have authorized access to simple cellphones 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.

Additionally, the Governor's policy includes several exemptions to smartphone restrictions, including for students who require access to an internet-enabled device to manage a medical condition, where required by a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), for academic purposes, or for other legitimate purposes, such as translation, family caregiving and emergencies.

Governor Announces More Drones, Staff to Patrol for Sharks on LI Beaches

Beachgoers on Long Island will see increased patrols, enhanced aerial surveillance, and more safety measures starting this weekend as part of the state's effort to protect swimmers and monitor for sharks and other potentially dangerous marine life, Governor Kathy Hochul announced Wednesday.

Ahead of the Fourth of July weekend and in preparation for beach season, Governor Hochul said the state would increase the number of drones patrolling the Long Island State Park beaches and add additional drone operators to patrol the waters for unsafe conditions.

State officials say lifeguards with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) continuously monitor the water from the shore, surfboats, and personal watercraft for signs of dangerous marine life, including sharks.

Last week, a 20-year-old woman was reportedly bitten by "unknown marine life" in the surf at Jones Beach State Park, the OPRHP said Friday. She sustained non-life-threatening lacerations to her left foot and leg and was treated at Nassau County University Medical Center Hospital.

Mayor Adams Signs Bill to Reduce Insurance Requirements for Taxi and For-Hire Vehicle Drivers

New York City Mayor Eric Adams this week signed Introduction 1050 into law, limiting the amount of personal injury insurance coverage that the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) may require for licensed vehicles. This legislation will prohibit TLC from requiring the vehicles it licenses to have personal injury protection liability coverage over 200 percent of the amount required by state law.

Sponsored by New York City Councilmember Carmen De La Rosa, the legislation both keeps high personal injury protection coverage in place, while increasing affordability, the Mayor explained.

"TLC-licensed drivers keep our city moving," said Mayor Adams. "Many of these working-class New Yorkers are immigrants trying to build a better life here in the Big Apple, but for too long, our TLC-Licensed drivers have had to pay higher rates for no fault or personal injury insurance for their vehicles, burdening drivers and owners with thousands of dollars in costs and putting pressure on their monthly bills. Today, we're changing that — by signing this legislation, we are putting money back into the pockets of drivers, limiting the amount of liability coverage they can be required to have, so they can continue to spend their money on the essentials: bills, groceries, rent, and medicine. Our drivers deserve their fair share, and we are giving it to them. I want to thank our partners for their work on this important issue."

Primary Results Updated

Earlier this week, the New York City Board of Elections released its unofficial Ranked Choice Voting results for the 2025 primary elections, providing clarity in the vinal victor in the Democratic primary for mayor, as well as other races.

In the Democratic mayoral primary, **Zohran Mamdani** (56.0%) is expected to win after three rounds of ranking. Write-in candidates were eliminated in the second round, and opponents except for Andrew Cuomo were eliminated in the third round. Mamdani is currently expected to face Curtis Sliwa on the Republican Line, as well as Eric Adams, Andrew Cuomo, and James Walden on independent lines. **Mark Levine** (58.7%) is expected to win the Democratic primary for Comptroller after three rounds of ranking. **Brad Hoylman-Sigal** (54.6%) is expected to win the Democratic Primary for Manhattan Borough President after three rounds of ranking.

Victors in a number of City Council primaries were also revealed after RCV rounds. Starting with Democratic primaries, in the 1st Council District, **Chris Marte** (61.9%) is expected to win after five rounds. In the 2nd Council District, **Harvey Epstein** (56.7%) is projected to win after four rounds. In the 4th Council District, **Virginia Maloney** (53.2%) is projected to win after five rounds. In the 8th Council District, **Elsie Encarnacion** (58.3%) is expected to win after seven rounds. In the 13th Council District, **Shirley Aldebol** (55.6%) is expected to win after six rounds. In the 17th Council District, **Justin Sanchez** (62.2%) is expected to win after four rounds. In the 21st Council District, **Shanel Thomas-Henry** (53.2%) is expected to win after four rounds. In the 30th Council District, **Phil Wong** (51.5%) is expected to win after three rounds. In the 41st Council District, **Darlene Mealy** (65.4%) is expected to win after eight rounds. Moving to Republican Primaries, in the 47th Council District, absentee ballots pushed **George Sarantopoulos**' first-round votes into the majority (50.2%), removing the necessity for subsequent rounds of voting.

In every race mentioned above, the expected winner was the leading candidate in the first round of ranking.

Rent Guidelines Board Releases 2025 Schedule of Increases

The New York City Rent Guidelines Board voted on Monday night to increase rates for rent-stabilized apartments. By a 5-4 count, board members arrived at a 4.5% increase for two-year leases and a 3% hike for one-year leases, after considering raising rents between 3.75% and 7.75%, and 1.75% and 4.75%, respectively.

The board's decision will take effect for leases between October 1, 2025 to September 30, 2026.

Sand-Accessible Wheelchairs Offered at Most City Beaches

Beach wheelchairs are available at almost all city-run beaches, including South Beach, Midland Beach, Orchard Beach, Rockaway Beach, Brighton Beach, Coney Island Beach and Manhattan Beach, according to the Parks Department [website](#).

Reservations can be made [online](#) or by calling 718-885-2275. Users are encouraged to make reservations at least 48 hours in advance. Reservations require name, address, and a photo of a state-issued ID. Wheelchairs are available 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day, from Memorial Day through the Sunday after Labor Day. An individual can use a wheelchair for up to three hours at a time.

Coming Up

New York State

Wednesday, July 9th

Joint Public Hearing: Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program

Senate Committees on Health & Investigations and Government Operations

250 Broadway - Senate Hearing Room, 19th Floor, 10 a.m.

New York City

Tuesday, July 8th

Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings and Dispositions, 250 Broadway – Committee Room, 16th Floor, 10 a.m.

Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises, 250 Broadway – Committee Room, 16th Floor, 11 a.m.

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