

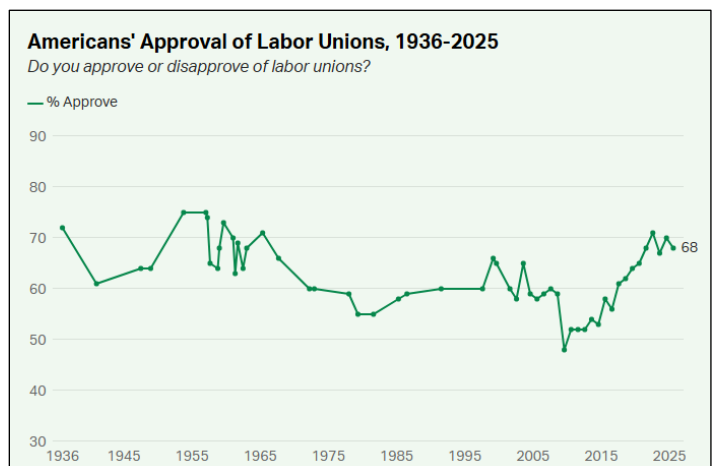


Americans' Support of Unions Remains High, Gallup Survey Finds

As Americans prepare to celebrate Labor Day, 68% of U.S. adults approve of labor unions, according to a Gallup survey conducted August 1-10. This is the fifth consecutive year that approval of organized labor has been in the 67% to 71% range, a level last reached in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

When Gallup first measured Americans' ratings of labor unions in 1936, 72% approved. Approval reached the record high, 75%, in 1953 and 1957 and ranged between 63% and 73% from 1958 through 1967. Then, from 1972 through 2016, approval was lower, with few readings over 60%, including the 48% all-time low recorded in 2009. This was the only time approval fell below the majority level. Since 2017, approval has been above 60%, the longest period at this level since the 1960s.

Household union membership remains within the 14% to 21% range it has been in for 25 years, with 15% of U.S. adults saying they live in a household with at least one resident who is a member of a labor union. This includes 8% who say they are a union member, 6% who say another member of their household is in a union, and 1% who say both they and someone else in their household belong to a union.



"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



Chapters of the Laws of 2025

Chapter 235 – Sponsored by AM Cruz (Senator Scarcella-Spanton) – Extends the effectiveness of the New York Black Car Operators' Injury Compensation Fund, Inc. to 2028.

Chapter 300 – Sponsored by Senator Martins (AM Ra) – Extends the authority for Nassau County to impose certain taxes and fees to 2027.

Chapter 321 – Sponsored by Senator Gianaris (AM Mamdani) – Extends for two years provisions directing State agencies to conduct a public hearing on proposed rules if a petition signed by at least 125 state residents is submitted.

Chapter 342 – Sponsored by AM Stirpe (Senator Gianaris) – Establishes a new liquor license category to allow for-profit clubs to operate solely for recreational, social, patriotic, political, benevolent, communal workspace, corporate dining space, or athletic purpose.

Chapter 354 – Sponsored by AM Rozic (Senator Stavisky) – Requires the appointment of a Title VI coordinator at every college and university in the state.

Chapter 358 – Sponsored by Senator Harckham (AM Woerner) – Clarifies provisions regarding the use of crossbows for hunting, allowing the department of environmental conservation to allow the use of crossbows for the taking of big game in any area long bows are permitted.

Chapter 360 – Sponsored by Senator Kavanagh (AM Mitaynes) – Increases the bonding authority of the New York city housing development corporation from \$19 billion to \$20 billion.



Attorney General James Secures Settlement with MVP Health Plan Over Mental Health Ghost Network

New York Attorney General Letitia James this week announced an agreement with MVP Health Plan (MVP) to overhaul its mental health provider directory, ensure the accuracy of its mental health provider network, and provide restitution to plan members impacted by the directory's inaccurate listings. The settlement follows an investigation by the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) that uncovered systemic issues within MVP's network, including incorrect directory information, that may have left some members unable to access care or required them to pay out-of-pocket for out-of-network treatment.

“New Yorkers seeking mental health care deserve timely, accurate information,” said Attorney General James. “When families turn to their health plans for help, they should be able to trust that the information they are given is reliable, and that they can access care without unnecessary obstacles. Today’s agreement holds MVP accountable for its past failures and ensures that plan members can find and access the help they need.”

The OAG launched its investigation in 2023 and conducted a secret shopper survey of mental health providers listed in MVP’s online directory. The OAG found that 100 percent of the mental health providers it called, all of whom were listed as “accepting new patients,” were either unreachable or not currently accepting new patients, and that MVP had no process in place to routinely verify providers’ availability.

Under the agreement with OAG, MVP must provide financial restitution to eligible members who paid more than they should have for mental health care due to inaccurate provider listings or a lack of available in-network providers since January 1, 2020. An OAG-approved compliance administrator will oversee the restitution process, and MVP is required to notify eligible members and post claim submission information on its website. In addition, MVP will pay \$250,000 in penalties, fees, and costs to the State.

To address the deficiencies, MVP must overhaul its provider directory to ensure all listed mental health providers are actively in-network, accepting new patients, and reachable. The company must update listings within 15 days of receiving updated information and remove providers who fail to respond to verification requests or are not accepting new patients.

Attorney General James is also requiring MVP to implement a verification process. Every 90 days, the company must contact each provider in its network to confirm their participation and availability. MVP must also adopt protocols to ensure timely responses to member inquiries and create a complaint monitoring system to track issues with network access and directory accuracy.

The agreement is the first resolution resulting from Attorney General James’ report, [Inaccurate and Inadequate: Health Plans’ Mental Health Provider Directories](#).

In The News-New York City



New City Health Plan Advances to Municipal Labor Committee For Approval

New York City Mayor Eric Adams and New York City Office of Labor Relations (OLR) Commissioner Renee Campion this week announced that the joint proposal from EmblemHealth and United Healthcare for a new health plan for active city employees, pre-Medicare retirees, and their dependents is being sent to the Municipal Labor Committee (MLC) for ratification.

The city, in collaboration with the MLC, has negotiated directly with Emblem and United since they were selected on June 2, 2025. If approved by the MLC, and finalized through the city’s contracting process, the new plan would be effective on January 1, 2026.

According to the Mayor, under Emblem and United’s proposal, for the first time, New York City would have a self-funded insurance plan. It would support 75 percent of the city’s workforce and their families--750,000 employees, pre-Medicare retirees, and their dependents.

The Mayor and OLR Commissioner indicated the proposed plan would reduce the cost of the city’s primary health plan by more than 10 percent — up to \$1 billion — while simultaneously expanding benefits and coverage. City employees, dependents, and pre-Medicare retirees in the New York City area will have access to more primary care doctors, more specialists, more nurse practitioners and physician assistants, and more mental health providers. Additionally, over 80,000 covered members living outside the New York area will have access to a “broad” national network.

“I am excited to announce that, following intensive negotiations with EmblemHealth and United Healthcare, this proposed plan is being sent to the MLC for approval. This plan will leverage the city’s purchasing power to provide more doctors, more mental health providers, and a broad national network to 750,000 employees, pre-Medicare retirees, and dependents while saving up to \$1 billion per year,” said OLR Commissioner Campion. “Thank you to MLC Executive Board members Harry Nespoli, Henry Garrido, Michael Mulgrew, Gregory Floyd, and Gloria Middleton for working with us during this negotiation, and we look forward to the MLC’s vote.”

The award of the contract is subject to the successful finalization and approval of a contract through the city’s procurement process.



NYC Council Announces Results of Investigation into Out-of-State Ghost Plates

The New York City Council released “[Plate and Switch](#),” a report detailing the Council Oversight & Investigations Division’s (OID) investigation into the ways out-of-state license plates, some of which are “ghost plates,” (any license plate that obscures the true ownership of a vehicle, including fake or improperly registered plates) can be used to skirt enforcement and accountability across the five boroughs.

Between March and April of 2025, OID investigators surveyed more than 3,500 parked vehicles across 50 square blocks in 10 police precincts. These precincts were chosen due to the high percentage of summonses issued to out-of-state license plates.

Out of the over 3,500 vehicles observed, 768 did not have New York State license plates. Among the vehicles lacking New York license plates, one in five either had temporary plates, plates that did not match the vehicle registration, or no plates at all. This issue was most prevalent in the Bronx, followed by Brooklyn and Queens, with Staten Island and Manhattan having the least number of offenders.

The investigation found that vehicles with mismatched or “no hit” plates committed more traffic and parking violations, and owe more in outstanding fines, than vehicles with matching out-of-state plates.

On average, vehicles with mismatched or “no hit” plates owed \$667.68, in comparison to \$268.08 for vehicles with matched plates. Overall, vehicles with ghost plates paid less than 20% of the fines they incurred, underscoring the lack of traceability and accountability that results in the loss of millions of dollars in fees and fines each year.

The research further shows that cars with ghost plates are more likely to commit infractions such as toll evasion, and there are reports of ghost vehicles [fleeing from crash](#) scenes and being used to perpetuate violent crimes, according to the Council. They also accrued, on average, significantly more violations for speeding in school zones and blocking fire hydrants.



NYC Releases Updated Food Standards for Foods and Beverages Served by 11 City Agencies

The New York City Health Department (NYC Health Department) and the Mayor's Office of Food Policy (MOFP) released updates to the [New York City Food Standards for Meals and Snacks Purchased and Served](#) to further strengthen the nutrition of meals and snacks served to New Yorkers through City agencies.

As part of the [Chronic Disease Strategy for New York City](#), the new standards will restrict artificial colors and increase restrictions on low-and no calorie sweeteners as well as increase weekly offerings of minimally processed plant proteins.

Starting July 1, 2026, the updated NYC Food Standards aim to support the health of more than one million New Yorkers, including schoolchildren, older adults, NYC Health + Hospitals patients, and others accessing meals or snacks from city agencies. The Food Standards apply to over 219 million meals and snacks served annually across 11 city agencies.

"I often say, when it comes to your health, it's not just what is in your DNA, it's also what is in your dinner. I've turned my life around from being pre-diabetic to living a plant-based diet, and when we came into office, we committed to ensuring all New Yorkers have access to healthy, fresh foods," said New York City Mayor Eric Adams.

The NYC Food Standards have used evidence-based criteria to promote whole and minimally processed fruits, vegetables, whole grains and healthy proteins and limit highly processed foods with too much sodium, saturated fat and added sugar. Major updates include:

- Expanding the restriction on low- and no-calorie sweeteners in food and beverages served to all ages from a previous limit that applies to children age 18 and younger.
- Establishing new restrictions on all artificial colors and certain flour additives and preservatives.
- Eliminating all processed meats.
- Increasing the requirement for serving whole or minimally processed plant protein foods.
- Strengthening snack requirements to improve variety and nutrition quality.

Eleven City agencies are affected by this executive order, including the: Administration for Children's Services, Department for the Aging, Department of Citywide Administrative Services, Department of Correction, Department of Education, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Homeless Services, Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Youth and Community Development, Health and Hospitals Corporation, and Human Resources Administration.

Following Crack Down on Organized Retail Theft, Governor Hochul Announces Reduction in Retail Theft in New York City

Governor Kathy Hochul spoke to local business leaders in Harlem this week, highlighting the state's progress in combatting organized retail theft in New York City and across the state.

Following a spike in organized retail theft in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Hochul announced new measures to crack down on these crimes. According to the Governor, New Yorkers are seeing results from this approach with retail theft declining more than 12 percent year over year — a decrease of nearly 5,000 instances — in New York City and 5 percent across the rest of the state.

“While today’s numbers represent significant progress in the fight against retail theft, we will not back down,” Governor Hochul said. “I remain committed to supporting our businesses and their workers to restore a sense of security and peace of mind for shoppers and store owners alike.”

The Governor’s retail theft initiative includes:

- Bolstering criminal penalties for anyone who assaults a retail worker by elevating it from a misdemeanor to felony. Any person who causes physical injury to a retail worker performing their job will be subject to this new felony.
- Allowing prosecutors to combine the value of stolen goods when they file larceny charges and allowing retail goods from different stores to be aggregated for the purposes of reaching a higher larceny threshold when stolen under the same criminal scheme.
- Making it illegal to foster the sale of stolen goods to go after third-party sellers. A person will be found guilty if they use any website or physical location to sell stolen goods.
- \$5 million allocated to help alleviate the burden on small businesses for additional security measures. Funding provides a \$3,000 tax credit for any small businesses who spend the threshold amount of money on retail theft prevention measures.

NYS Senate Racing and Wagering Chairman: Downstate Casino Decision May be Delayed

End of Year Decision May be Pushed into 2026

As New York’s timeline for approval of three downstate casinos moves to a close, State Senate Racing and Wagering Chair Joseph Addabbo warned that the downstate casino licenses may not be awarded until the start of next year, according to a report by *Sportsboom*.

In June 2024, the New York State Gaming Commission and the Gaming Facility Location Board established a timeline for awarding up to three downstate commercial casino licenses by the end of 2025. This timeline is not binding and over the course of the process, revisions were made to the schedule. For some projects, state legislation was required (with City home rule messages) for land use. The December 2025 dates remain “expected.”

Downstate Casine Award Timeline

June 27, 2025: The deadline for submission of license applications. The Board received eight applications in response to the RFA for Commercial Casinos by the 4 p.m. June 27, 2025 Return Date. The following are the eight applicants in alphabetical order with their proposed locations in parentheses: The Avenir (Manhattan), Bally's New York Casino (The Bronx), Caesars Palace Times Square (Manhattan), Freedom Plaza (Manhattan), Metropolitan Park (Queens), MGM Empire City (Yonkers), Resorts World New York City (Queens), and The Coney (Brooklyn). Each group selected will have to pay a \$500 million license fee and commit to a minimum \$500 million capital investment in the area of their proposed venue.

Immediately after June 27, 2025: [Community Advisory Committees \(CACs\)](#) were formed to begin evaluating projects and gathering public input. To date, all CACs have held one public hearing regarding the proposal. A second public hearing for 7 of the 8 applicants has been scheduled between September 8th and September 16th. The Coney Island Community Advisory Committee held its first public hearing this week and the second hearing date and location is still to be determined.

September 30, 2025: Deadline for CACs to vote on their respective proposed projects. Proposals that do not receive CAC approval will not advance.

Applicants must complete all entitlement processes (land-use/zoning, [State Environmental Quality Review Act](#), etc.) before September 30, 2025.

Following CAC approval: Applicants who are approved by their CACs will submit additional materials to the Gaming Facility Location Board, including a proposed tax rate.

December 1, 2025: The Board is expected to announce its final licensing decisions.

December 31, 2025: The New York State Gaming Commission is expected to formally issue the casino licenses. According to the Commission, "this ensures that New York State will collect the already-booked casino license fee(s) ahead of schedule."

NYC Election Debate Calendar

Comptroller

1st General Election Debate (NY1, WNYC) - Tuesday, October 14, 2025, 7 p.m.

Leading Contender General Election Debate (PIX11) - Thursday, Oct. 23, 2025, 7 p.m.

Mayor

1st General Election Debate (WNBC) - Thursday, October 16, 2025, 7 p.m.

Leading Contender General Election Debate (NY1, WNYC) - Wednesday, Oct. 22, 2025, 7 p.m.

Public Advocate

1st General Election Debate (NY1, WNYC) - Thursday, October 9, 2025, 7 p.m.

Leading Contender General Election Debate (PIX11) - Tuesday, October 21, 2025, 7 p.m.

Election Day is Tuesday, November 4, 2025. Polls are open from 6am to 9pm.

Early Voting Period is October 25, 2025 - November 2, 2025.

Coming Up

New York State

Thursday, September 4th

Department of Health: The Early Intervention Coordinating Council Meeting,
Meeting Room 5 – Empire State Plaza Convention Center, Albany, 10 a.m.

New York City

****There are no scheduled meetings on the City Level at the time of this publication****

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