NEW YORK STATE SENATE

THE STENOGRAPHIC RECORD

ALBANY, NEW YORK

March 18, 2025

3:53 p.m.

REGULAR SESSION

SENATOR JEREMY COONEY, Acting President

ALEJANDRA N. PAULINO, ESQ., Secretary

P R O C E E D I N G S

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The Senate will come to order.

I ask everyone to please rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Whereupon, the assemblage recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.)

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: In the absence of clergy, let us bow our heads in a moment of silent reflection or prayer.

(Whereupon, the assemblage respected a moment of silence.)

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Reading of the Journal.

THE SECRETARY: In Senate, Monday, March 17, 2025, the Senate met pursuant to adjournment. The Journal of Friday, March 14, 2025, was read and approved. On motion, the Senate adjourned.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Without objection, the Journal stands approved as read.

Presentation of petitions.

Messages from the Assembly.

Messages from the Governor.

Reports of standing committees.

Reports of select committees.

Communications and reports from state officers.

Motions and resolutions.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President, I move to adopt the Resolution Calendar at this time.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: All those in favor of adopting the Resolution Calendar, please signify by saying aye.

(Response of "Aye.")

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Opposed, nay.

(No response.)

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The Resolution Calendar is adopted.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Can we please recognize Senator Chan for an introduction.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Senator Chan for an introduction.

SENATOR CHAN: Thank you, Mr. President.

Thank you, Mr. President, and

esteemed colleagues. I rise today with great pride to introduce a very distinguished guest in the gallery, Miss Universe Israel 2024, Ms. Ofir Natalie Korsia, who has represented Israel on the world stage with grace, beauty, intelligence and resilience.

Born in Rishon LeTzion, she is fluent in Hebrew, Spanish and English, embodying the diverse cultural ties that connect Israel and New York itself.

Beyond her achievements in pageantry, Ms. Korsia has used her platform to advocate for important causes, inspiring young people from around the world. She now resides in Los Angeles, where she continues to pursue her artistic career and represent the values of perseverance, creativity and international understanding.

It is an honor for me to welcome Ms. Korsia to the New York State Senate.

And, by the way, today Ms. Korsia is accompanied by Miss Jerusalem 2024, Ms. Mina Levitis.

And I ask my colleagues to join me in extending a warm and big New York welcome to

Miss Universe Israel 2024, Ofir Korsia, and Ms. Mina Levitis, Miss Jerusalem 2024.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Thank you, Senator Chan.

To our guests, I welcome you on behalf of the Senate. We extend to you the privileges and courtesies of this house.

Please rise and be recognized.

(Standing ovation.)

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President, let's take up the calendar, please.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 235, Senate Print 2000, by Senator Addabbo, an act to amend the Insurance Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 5. This act shall take effect January 1, 2027.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 61.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 418, Senate Print 3352, by Senator Sanders, an act to amend the Insurance Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 61.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 437, Senate Print 4832, by Senator Chris Ryan, an act to amend the Workers' Compensation Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 61.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 452, Senate Print 3071, by Senator Sanders, an act to amend the Education Law.

SENATOR LANZA: Lay it aside.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Lay it aside for the day, please.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill will be laid aside for the day.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 454, Senate Print 3236, by Senator Cooney, an act to amend the Education Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 61.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 481, Senate Print 4162, by Senator Bailey, an act to incentivize the purchase of local produce in supermarkets and grocery stores through the FreshConnect program.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This act shall take effect on the 180th day after it shall have become a law.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 61.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill

is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 482, Senate Print 4754, by Senator Bailey, an act to amend the Agriculture and Markets Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 8. This act shall take effect on the 90th day after it shall have become a law.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 61.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 512, Senate Print 3585, by Senator Ramos, an act to amend the General Business Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This act shall take effect one year after it shall have become a law.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 61.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 526, Senate Print 1609, by Senator Harckham, an act to amend the Environmental Conservation Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 3. This act shall take effect on the first of February.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 61.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 545, Senate Print 1052, by Senator May, an act to

direct the Department of Economic Development to move the Central New York Welcome Center to the Equal Rights Heritage Center in the City of Auburn.

SENATOR LANZA: Lay it aside.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill will be laid aside.

Senator Gianaris, that completes the reading of today's calendar.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Let's move to the controversial calendar, please.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The Secretary will ring the bell.

The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 545, Senate Print 1052, by Senator May, an act to direct the Department of Economic Development to move the Central New York Welcome Center to the Equal Rights Heritage Center in the City of Auburn.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Senator Walczyk, why do you rise?

SENATOR WALCZYK: Mr. President, I hope the sponsor will yield for some questions on this bill.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Senator May, will you yield?

SENATOR MAY: I will.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Senator May yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Through you, Mr. President, so Destiny USA is in the top 20 most visited shopping centers in the nation. Twenty-six million visitors a year go there. It's the largest shopping mall in the State of New York; the ninth largest in the entire country.

I know this mall very well. I grew up in the region and traveled to do Christmas shopping there. But now I know all my Canadian friends are traveling down to Syracuse, at the confluence of Route 81 and Route 90, to go to what I used to call Carousel Mall and is now Destiny USA.

This bill would move the Central New York Welcome Center from Destiny USA, from that mall in Syracuse, to the Heritage Center in the City of Auburn; is that correct?

SENATOR MAY: Through you, Mr. President, that's correct.

SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you, Mr. President, would the sponsor continue to yield.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the sponsor yield?

SENATOR MAY: Yes.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: So with Destiny USA at the confluence of 81 and 90 in Syracuse, in the heart of CNY, why would we move this from the City of Syracuse and Destiny USA to the City of Auburn?

SENATOR MAY: Mr. President, I would ask my colleague how often he has visited the welcome center when he has gone to Destiny Mall.

The reality is -- and Destiny is in my district. Both of these locations are in my district. The welcome center is located in an out-of-the-way place on the second floor of the mall. When I have gone there, I have seen very little activity.

And the Equal Rights Heritage Center in Auburn was actually built to be a welcome

center. And the idea was, because it is located right across from city hall, right next to the Seward House Historic Site, that it would be -- it would get its operating money from the welcome center contract.

But in his wisdom, the former governor built the building but took away the operating money and put it in Destiny Mall.

Destiny Mall will stand without that operating money, but this building risks falling into disrepair right in the middle of Auburn because it does not have a regular source of operating funds.

So this would just go back to the original plan, take the funds for the welcome center and put it into this building that was built for that purpose.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Through you, Mr. President, would the sponsor continue to yield.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the sponsor yield?

SENATOR MAY: I will.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Does the City of Syracuse support this bill?

SENATOR MAY: Through you, Mr. President, I have not spoken to the City of Syracuse.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Through you, Mr. President, would the sponsor continue to yield?

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the sponsor yield?

SENATOR MAY: I will.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Has the Onondaga County Legislature voted on any resolutions supporting this bill or signaled their support for this legislation?

SENATOR MAY: Through you, Mr. President, I haven't presented it to them.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Through you, Mr. President, would the sponsor continue to yield?

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the sponsor yield?

SENATOR MAY: I will.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: How about the legislature from the Oneida County?

SENATOR MAY: Through you, Mr. President, I don't know why the Oneida County Legislature would be involved in any way.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Through you, Mr. President, this bill is about the Central New York Welcome Center, that's why.

How about Madison County, also in Central New York?

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Does the sponsor yield to that question?

SENATOR MAY: Yes.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR MAY: Through you, Mr. President, I -- this is an issue of righting a wrong in the City of Auburn, and I have not taken it up with county after county after county in Central New York.

SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you, Mr. President, would the sponsor continue to yield?

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the sponsor yield?

SENATOR MAY: I will.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Oswego County is also in Central New York. Any support from Oswego County? Did you reach out to Oswego County and ask them where the Central New York Welcome Center should be?

SENATOR MAY: Through you, Mr. President, I did not.

SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you, Mr. President, would the sponsor continue to yield?

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the sponsor yield?

SENATOR MAY: Yes.

SENATOR MURRAY: The Senator yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: How about Cortland County? Have you seen a resolution from the legislature in Cortland County supporting this legislation?

SENATOR MAY: Through you,

Mr. President, I have not.

And I also have not seen people from Cortland County or Oneida County or Oswego County visiting this welcome center.

SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you, Mr. President, would the sponsor continue to yield.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the sponsor yield?

SENATOR MAY: I would.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Since the City of Syracuse and Destiny USA are at the confluence of 81 and 90 right in the heart of Central New York, and you're moving the Central New York Welcome Center, what -- and not hearing from any of the municipalities that I just listed in Central New York, would you tell me what was your process for relocating and how did you site-select a new location for the Central New York Welcome Center?

SENATOR MAY: Through you, Mr. President. This is the old location for the Central New York Welcome Center. It was

originally planned in this place. The building was built for that purpose.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Through you, Mr. President, would the sponsor continue to yield.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the sponsor yield?

SENATOR MAY: I will.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: So parking is free for the public at Destiny USA where the CNY Welcome Center is currently. Is parking also free at the Heritage Center where you're proposing to relocate the Welcome Center for Central New York?

SENATOR MAY: Through you, Mr. President, there is free parking and there is paid parking in the vicinity.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Through you, Mr. President, would the sponsor continue to yield.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the sponsor yield?

SENATOR MAY: I will.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: When you say free parking in the vicinity, does that mean the parking on-site you have to pay for and "in the vicinity" is just the City of Auburn where there's spots to park for the public?

SENATOR MAY: Through you, Mr. President, there is street parking and there is a parking garage directly across the street from the facility. And it has a policy of the first hour or two being free. I don't remember exactly. The parking garage does, but not the street parking.

SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you, Mr. President, if the sponsor would continue to yield.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the sponsor yield?

SENATOR MAY: I would.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The Senator yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: So the CNY Welcome Center, like many welcome centers throughout the State of New York, also have a

Taste NY component to them. This is currently located within a shopping mall that, as I stated earlier, has 26 million visitors a year. Which means that those 26 million visitors a year -- international, I mentioned Canadians come down -- are exposed to those Taste NY products.

Are there 26 million New Yorkers a year that go to the Heritage Center in the City of Auburn?

SENATOR MAY: I will reiterate. The CNY Welcome Center, where it is now, has precious little foot traffic of any kind. The Equal Rights Heritage Center in Auburn, by contrast, has school field trips that come there, lots of people who come there as part of the Harriet Tubman National Historic Park, as part of visiting the Seward House, visiting what we call "History's Hometown," which is Auburn, New York.

There is already a Taste NY site in that building, as well as all kinds of interactive displays about local history, about women's history, the history of the suffrage movement in the area, and the history of the abolition movement in the area.

So there actually is a -- while the

building itself does not get the numbers of people that the mall receives, the actual site where the welcome center would be located would get many more people than visit the welcome center currently.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Mr. President, on the bill.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Senator Walczyk on the bill.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Yeah, while I don't represent the City of Syracuse, Destiny USA or the City of Auburn, constituents from across my district and neighbors north often frequent these areas.

I'm a big believer in the Taste NY program. I think this was one of the savvier things that we did to get agricultural products into areas where visitors to our state could see them and get some exposure to the great agricultural products that we have here.

I've got a lot of pause about the relocation of Central New York's Welcome Center for that reason, as 26 million visits a year come to Destiny USA. That seems like a great place to have a Taste NY thing.

Obviously Destiny USA, that shopping mall has a storied history. We hope they also have a storied future. And I would hate to see them lose a good tenant that's a great partnership with the State of New York.

But on top of all of that, my biggest concern that was illuminated in this debate here, Mr. President, was the process by which we've selected a new site for Central New York's Visitor Center -- not with any feedback from any of the municipalities from across the State of New York.

I didn't receive a call from the sponsor of this legislation. I represent a portion of Oswego County in Central New York. My feedback wasn't sought, and neither was the feedback of the City of Syracuse, Onondaga County, Oneida County, Madison County, Oswego County, Cortland County or Cayuga County in any kind of formal way.

So that gives me a lot of pause, and that will lead me to a no vote today. And I would encourage my colleagues to do the same.

Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Thank

you, Senator.

Are there any other Senators wishing to be heard?

Seeing and hearing none, the debate is closed.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President, we've agreed to restore this bill to the noncontroversial calendar.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Senator May to explain her vote.

SENATOR MAY: Thank you, Mr. President.

Last year and this year in our one-house we have allocated money to the operation of the Equal Rights Heritage Center in the City of Auburn because there is a building there that was meant to have operating funding

and does not have operating funding because it was, with no explanation, taken away from that building and assigned to another location.

We heard that Destiny Mall receives a lot of foot traffic, but the reality is that the welcome center does not. And this is an opportunity to really bring a lot more foot traffic to a welcome center in the heart of a very historic region in Central New York.

The issue about the Taste NY option, that will always be available to Destiny Mall as well. It exists in Auburn; it exists in Destiny now. There is no reason why you couldn't have those amenities available in both places.

But to argue that the welcome center is any kind of a center or is welcoming very many people in the location that it's in now, is truly not -- not in line with reality.

And so I am confident that this would be a move that would both save us money in the long run and actually welcome many more people than it welcomes now.

I vote aye.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Senator May to be recorded in the affirmative.

Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 545, those Senators voting in the negative are Senators Borrello, Rhoads, Walczyk and Weik.

Ayes, 57. Nays, 4.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill is passed.

Senator Gianaris, that completes the reading of today's calendar.

Sorry, go ahead, Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Is there any further business at the desk?

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: There is no further business at the desk.

SENATOR GIANARIS: I move to adjourn until tomorrow, Wednesday, March 19th, at 3:00 p.m.

ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: On motion, the Senate stands adjourned until Wednesday, March 19th, at 3:00 p.m.

(Whereupon, at 4:12 p.m., the Senate adjourned.)