NEW YORK STATE SENATE

THE STENOGRAPHIC RECORD

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3:48 p.m.

REGULAR SESSION

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR ANTONIO DELGADO, President

ALEJANDRA N. PAULINO, ESQ., Secretary

P R O C E E D I N G S

THE PRESIDENT: The Senate will come to order.

Everyone please rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

THE PRESIDENT: 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.)

THE PRESIDENT: Reading of the Journal.

THE SECRETARY: In Senate, Tuesday, March 3, 2026, the Senate met pursuant to adjournment. The Journal of Monday, March 2, 2026, was read and approved. On motion, the Senate adjourned.

THE PRESIDENT: 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: Good afternoon, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Let's begin by recognizing Senator Mayer for an introduction.

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Mayer.

SENATOR MAYER: Thank you, Mr. President.

It truly is my honor to introduce a number of guests who are here from the New York Alliance for Early College Pathways, which is a statewide cross-sector coalition focused on expanding high-quality early college opportunities for New York's high school students, something we are working hard to enhance.

Visiting the Capitol today are college students who are alumni of high school early college programs. We had Buffalo and New York City, but our Buffalo person had to

leave.

So I am pleased to recognize those that are here to learn about our government, to get to meet members of the Legislature and tell their stories about how early college really enhanced their lives and allowed them to be very successful in their college careers.

The group is led by Alexandra Wilcox, deputy director of New York Alliance for Early College Pathways, and Claire Byrnes, project operations manager.

And I ask that you recognize these students, distinguished students who are here learning about how government works and about the value of early college and sharing the message to our colleagues in the Legislature.

So I wish you would offer them all the cordialities of the house, and thank you for recognizing them.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Mayer.

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

Please rise and be recognized.

(Standing ovation.)

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Next up, let's recognize Senator Zellner -- Senator Jeremy Zellner --

(Laughter.)

SENATOR GIANARIS: -- for another introduction.

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Zellner.

SENATOR ZELLNER: Mr. President, I rise today with immense pride to recognize the brave men of the Buffalo Professional Firefighters Union Local 282: President John Otto, Vice President Timothy Max, Treasurer Rick Panowicz, and Trustees Michael Pasquale and Otis Stephens.

Before we go any further, I want to take a moment to honor a hero, fallen Buffalo Firefighter Jason Arno.

Jason was a proud member of Local 282 who gave his life in the line of duty three years ago this week. He served the City of Buffalo without hesitation. He ran toward danger to protect us all, and he made the ultimate sacrifice.

May he rest in peace, and may we honor him not just in words, but in how we support all who serve.

And today we remember every firefighter who has paid the ultimate price in service to their community.

To the Buffalo Professional Firefighters, we applaud you. You serve more than a quarter of a million people across 42 square miles of our great city. You don't wait for danger to pass; you run towards it. You answer every alarm with courage, skill and determination.

You represent over 700 men and women who live this mission every single day to provide the highest-quality fire, EMS and specialized services through leadership, action, and partnership.

This is not just your mission, it is a promise, and you keep it every time you step in the line of duty.

To Buffalo's bravest, thank you for what you do, for who you are, and for the sacrifices you make to keep our families, our neighborhoods and our city safe.

And let us honor your courage not only with words, but by supporting you, backing you, and ensuring every firefighter has the resources and respect they deserve.

Mr. President, please join me in welcoming the Buffalo Firefighters.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator.

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

Please rise and be recognized.

(Standing ovation.)

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President, I want to recognize that we have numerous members who wanted to recognize the firefighters, including Senator Gallivan and others, but the house rules only allow one member to speak on an introduction, and that was Senator Zellner.

So the firefighters should know they have a lot of fans here in the chamber.

Now let's move on to previously adopted Resolution 1489, by Senator Sepúlveda. Please read that resolution's title and recognize Senator Sepúlveda.

THE PRESIDENT: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Resolution 1489, by Senator Sepúlveda, commemorating the 182nd Anniversary of the Independence of the Dominican Republic, to be celebrated on February 27, 2026.

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Sepúlveda.

SENATOR SEPÚLVEDA: Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me to present this resolution.

I'm going to begin in Spanish, for the first time in the history of this Senate chamber, and then translate into English.

(In Spanish.)

Dear colleagues, distinguished guests, members of the Dominican community in New York. Today we not only commemorate a date; today we celebrate a people. We celebrate resilience, dignity, and an unwavering faith in freedom.

One hundred eighty-two years ago, under the leadership of Juan Pablo Duarte, the Dominican Republic was born -- a nation founded on principles, sustained by sacrifice, and guided

by the rule of law.

Duarte understood something very profound: Sovereignty is not unlimited power. It is a constitutional responsibility.

And as Foreign Minister Roberto Álvarez has stated: "Sovereignty is not protected by rejecting international commitments, but by negotiating clarity, reciprocity, constitutional compatibility, and preservation of internal decision-making power."

And with historical clarity: "When a state assumes treaty obligations, it does not abdicate its sovereignty; it exercises it."

This vision is not rhetoric. It is reflected in results.

In 2024, the Dominican economy grew by approximately 5 percent, positioning itself among the most dynamic in the Western Hemisphere. Foreign direct investment exceeded $5 billion.

Tourism received more than 10 million visitors, consolidating the country as a regional leader. Free trade zones continue to expand exports and employment. And remittances -- sent largely from New York -- reached approximately $10.75 billion.

By 2025, total projected foreign exchange earnings exceed $46 billion.

Now, that's no coincidence. That's institutional stability. That's macroeconomic discipline. That's confidence in the rule of law.

And behind every number are human stories: The worker in the Bronx who sends support to Santiago, to La Ramona, to Trinidad Sanchez. The young professional building a future in two countries without giving up either.

Here lives the largest Dominican community outside the country. The diaspora doesn't weaken sovereignty. If anything, it amplifies it. It honors it.

Today we celebrate a living independence, a democracy that produces results, a nation that cooperates without losing its identity.

As part of this commemoration and recognition, we have the honor of presenting a Resolution of Independence to the Consul General of the Dominican Republic in New York, the Honorable Jesús Vásquez Martínez.

Vásquez Martínez is a prominent Dominican political leader and public servant with extensive experience in public administration and diplomatic representation.

He began his career as a health inspector in the municipality of Sánchez, Samaná Province, and at the age of 24 was appointed the youngest civil governor in the Dominican Republic, for the province of María Trinidad Sánchez.

Between 1985 and 1986, he served as Consul General of the Dominican Republic in Caracas, Venezuela.

From 1994 to 2010, he served as a senator for María Trinidad Sánchez Province in the Senate of the Dominican Republic, an institution he also was president for, for 2003 to 2004. And during his time in Congress, I know that he championed significant legislative reforms and led committees.

In 2024 he was appointed Consul General of the Dominican Republic in New York, a position that he currently holds.

Today we celebrate the cultural richness that the Dominican community brings to

our city, as well as the enduring independence that has defined us since their historic day of February 27, 1844.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to everyone present and, in a very special way, to Consul General Jesús Vásquez Martínez for his commitment and dedication, and his wife, Deonicia Marte; as well as to those who are accompanying him today, particularly the delegation comprised of Leonel Tangui, Luis Rodriguez, and Jairo Díaz.

Long live the Dominican Republic! Long live the Dominican community in New York! And may the friendship between our two homes always endure!

Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Sepúlveda.

Senator Jackson.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you, Mr. President.

I rise in support of Senate Resolution J1489, which acknowledges Dominican heritage and commemorates the 182nd Anniversary of an independent

Dominican state.

I have the privilege of representing the 31st Senatorial District, home to New York's largest Dominican population, spanning Northern Manhattan and portions of the Bronx. The "Quisqueyanos" who call this district home are not just constituents, they are my long-time neighbors, who have always embraced me with a profound love and respect, underscoring our mutual solidarity and commitment to unity.

Dominican history is rich with remarkable figures who shaped the destiny of their nation. From the founders of the Dominican Republic to the many heroes who struggled for freedom and justice, names such as Gregorio Luperón, Salomé Ureña, Máximo Gómez, Ercilia Pepín, the Mirabal Sisters, Manolo Tavárez Justo, José Francisco Peña Gómez, and Mamá Tingó stand as enduring symbols of courage, resilience, and unwavering determination. Their legacy continues to inspire generations to pursue dignity, liberty, and pride.

Yet among the remarkable names that adorn the annals of history, let us also uplift the everyday heroes who grace our streets and

communities and have contributed so much to our society in New York.

Dominican New Yorkers strengthen our state every single day as entrepreneurs, workers, street vendors, parents, students and public servants. Their presence shapes our neighborhoods, strengthens our economy, and enriches the cultural life of our state.

But that spirit is also present within my own office, where half of my staff proudly trace their roots to the Dominican Republic. Each carries forward a tradition of perseverance, dignity, and dedication that reflects the very best of the Dominican spirit.

Progress is built not only by historic figures, but by everyday people who refuse to surrender their hope, their voice, or their commitment to community. They teach us that in the face of adversity, the strength of community and the resilience of the human spirit will always prevail.

As someone who was made an honorary citizen of Haina in 2010, and as an ally, neighbor, friend and representative, I have the

privilege of witnessing that spirit every single day.

So today, as we commemorate the 182nd Anniversary of Dominican Independence, I proudly rise in support of this resolution -- and welcoming Consul General Jesús Antonio Vásquez Martínez -- honoring the enduring contributions of Dominican New Yorkers in District 31 and across the great State of New York.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Jackson.

Senator Weber.

SENATOR WEBER: Thank you, Mr. President.

I want to thank Senator Sepúlveda for bringing this annual resolution forward recognizing this year as the 182nd Anniversary of the independence of the Dominican Republic.

Now, Mr. President, I have actual ties to the Dominican Republic, both politically and personally. And you may say how does a guy like me have ties to the Dominican Republic. But while I was a teenager, my father married -- got remarried and married a woman from Baní. So I

was able to visit the island of the Dominican Republic many times through my teen years and into my adult life as well.

And it was a wonderful experience to learn the culture and the -- everything that was great about the island.

I also have a stepbrother who is Dominican, too. He's also a police officer in the 41st Precinct in the Bronx.

So great memories of visiting the island and great experiences throughout my life.

Now, politically, I represent the Town of Haverstraw. And in the Town of Haverstraw we have a very large Dominican community, including in the Village of Haverstraw, where I think 70 percent or more of the residents of the Village of Haverstraw are Dominicans or of Dominican descent.

So we have so much -- such a big vibrant Dominican community in my district. And people like Johnny Ortiz, who was the first Town of Haverstraw councilman that was Dominican. We have West Haverstraw Trustees Ramon Lopez and Joel Santana. We have Clerk Raquel Ventura. We have Judges Roselina D'Annucci and Ivonne Santos.

So we have a great, vibrant Dominican community, great members of the political persuasion within that village and in that town as well.

So I'm happy to be a part of this recognition. We had a flag-raising ceremony in the Village of Haverstraw last Friday. We went back to the Quisqueya Sports Club to have a very cold Presidente beer. And it was a great night for all of us to be there.

So thank you again, Senator Sepúlveda, for this resolution.

Mr. President, I proudly vote aye.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Weber.

Senator Bailey.

SENATOR BAILEY: Thank you, Mr. President.

Thank you again to Senator Sepúlveda for introducing this very important resolution.

When we speak about the Dominican diaspora -- Senator Weber speaks of it, but we should look no further than our -- those doors of our chamber {indicating}, where the Secretary of the Senate, Ms. Alejandra Paulino, a proud woman

of Dominican descent, runs the show here.

And so you need look no further than Ale about the aspect and the impact of the Dominican community.

I also proudly represent the Bronx and the City of Mount Vernon. But as Senator Sepúlveda alluded to, the Dominican population is the largest in the Bronx outside of the Dominican Republic. The fastest-growing population in the City of New York, and one where we have so many different heroes and heroines and leaders.

And so I just want to thank the Dominican community for continuing to uplift themselves but uplift all of us.

There is a phrase that my Dominican friends -- which they say de lo me {ph}, "you are" -- more or less loosely translated to "you're one of us." And they have bestowed that honor upon many of us, but it's due to the hard work that we put in and the efforts of collegiality that they put in towards us.

So they're making this country truly great. They continue to impact the lives of every New Yorker. And I say -- I remember this,

Senator Sepúlveda and all of my friends -- Dios, Patria, Libertad.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Bailey.

Senator Fernandez. Senator Fernandez.

SENATOR FERNANDEZ: Oh. Hi. Qué lo que, Mr. President. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this resolution.

And thank you so much, Senator, for introducing it and giving a rightful place in our state history to commemorate this day of independence and heritage of the Dominican community.

I too am proud to represent a beautiful population in the East Bronx. And we see all over this state and this country the amazing contributions they have in food, in talent, in culture, in dance. And it is truly one of our most proudest communities in this state.

So thank you so much for giving us the opportunity and the Dominican opportunity to shine in New York.

Once again, I proudly vote aye.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

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

Please rise to be recognized.

(Standing ovation.)

THE PRESIDENT: The resolution was adopted on January 28th.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President, Senator Sepúlveda would like to open that resolution for cosponsorship.

THE PRESIDENT: The resolution is open for cosponsorship. Should you choose not to be a cosponsor, please notify the desk.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Please take up the reading of the calendar.

THE PRESIDENT: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 117, Senate Print 3590A, by Senator Harckham, an act to amend the Executive Law.

SENATOR LANZA: Lay it aside.

THE PRESIDENT: Lay it aside.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 300, Senate Print 5852, by Senator Skoufis, an act to amend the Insurance Law.

THE PRESIDENT: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 7. This act shall take effect on the first of January.

THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE PRESIDENT: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 300, voting in the negative are Senators Borrello, Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick, Chan, Gallivan, Griffo, Helming, Martins, Mattera, Murray, Oberacker, O'Mara, Ortt, Rhoads, Stec, Walczyk, Weber and Weik. Also Senator Tedisco.

Ayes, 42. Nays, 18.

THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 301, Senate Print 8334A, by Senator Gounardes, an act to amend the Insurance Law.

THE PRESIDENT: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 5. This act shall take effect on the first of January.

THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE PRESIDENT: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 301, voting in the negative are Senators Borrello, Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick, Gallivan, Griffo, Mattera, Oberacker, O'Mara, Ortt, Palumbo, Rhoads, Stec, Walczyk and Weik.

Ayes, 47. Nays, 13.

THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 306, Senate Print 8853, by Senator Mayer, an act to amend the Public Health Law.

THE PRESIDENT: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 4. This act shall take effect immediately.

THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Weik to explain her vote.

SENATOR WEIK: Thank you,

Mr. President. I rise to explain my vote.

If I asked everyone in this room to take an aspirin today, I guarantee you several people would have to decline based on the interaction with current medicine or their health condition -- because there is no such thing as "one size fits all" medicine.

Medicine is as personal as it gets. It should be discussed between a doctor and an individual or parents and their doctors. Mandatory medicine assumes one size fits all, which doesn't exist.

Government can suggest or recommend; that's all. I do not support mandatory medicine because, as we can see, it just doesn't fit.

I don't support this bill, and I vote no and I encourage my colleagues to recognize this truth and vote accordingly.

Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Weik will be recorded in the negative.

Senator Mayer to explain her vote.

SENATOR MAYER: Thank you, Mr. President.

I proudly rise to support this bill,

which is really to ensure that the current and long-standing vaccination requirements for children entering school are in sync with science and are not driven by politics.

This requires the commissioner of Health to create recommendations based on the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American College of Physicians, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices -- which I would point out has been greatly modified and changed and become political under Secretary Kennedy. But they're listed in there.

And this gives the Department of Health the ability to ensure that New York State does the right thing by our kids and provides that the mandatory vaccines that are generally required of all schoolchildren are in line with science.

I am very proud that our conference has this group of bills today that reflect our commitment to a scientifically based immunization schedule.

And I would point out the other part of this bill deals with infant immunization, which of course is up to the parent already and is not required.

So that again defers to science-based, very legitimate organizations and does not exclude anyone in making the Department of Health the determinant of what is best for New York's children.

I feel quite confident that we are doing the right thing by New York's infants and schoolchildren, and I urge my colleagues to vote yes.

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Mayer will be recorded in the affirmative.

Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 306, voting in the negative are Senators Borrello, Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick, Chan, Gallivan, Griffo, Helming, Lanza, Martins, Mattera, Murray, Oberacker, O'Mara, Ortt, Palumbo, Rhoads, Rolison, Stec, Tedisco, Walczyk, Weber and Senator Weik.

Ayes, 39. Nays, 21.

THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 309, Senate Print 610A, by Senator Stavisky, an act to amend the Education Law.

THE PRESIDENT: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This act shall take effect on the 90th day after it shall have become a law.

THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE PRESIDENT: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, Senator Stavisky to explain your vote.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you, Mr. President, real quick.

This legislation simply broadens the scope for the healthcare providers so that more people can administer the vaccine under very significant supervision.

I vote aye.

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Stavisky will be recorded in the affirmative.

Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 311, Senate Print 5340B, by Senator Stavisky, an act to amend the Education Law.

THE PRESIDENT: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 3. This act shall take effect on the 180th day after it shall have become a law.

THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE PRESIDENT: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 311, voting in the negative are Senators Gallivan, Griffo, Lanza, Martinez, Ortt, Palumbo, Walczyk and Weik.

Ayes, 52. Nays, 8.

THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 313, Senate Print 5706A, by Senator Skoufis, an act to amend the Education Law.

THE PRESIDENT: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 6. This act shall take effect immediately.

THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE PRESIDENT: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 313, voting in the negative are Senators Borrello, Chan, Gallivan, Griffo, Walczyk and Weik.

Ayes, 54. Nays, 6.

THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 314, Senate Print 7025B, by Senator Cooney, an act to amend the Education Law.

THE PRESIDENT: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This act shall take effect on the 60th day after it shall have become a law.

THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE PRESIDENT: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to

Calendar 314, voting in the negative:
Senator Martinez.
Ayes, 59. Nays, 1.
THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.
THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 315, Senate Print 8496C, by Senator Hinchey, an act to amend the Education Law.
THE PRESIDENT: Read the last section.
THE SECRETARY: Section 10. This act shall take effect immediately.
THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.
(The Secretary called the roll.)
THE PRESIDENT: Announce the results.
THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 315, voting in the negative are Senators Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick, Chan, Gallivan, Griffo, Helming, Lanza, Martins, Mattera, Murray, Oberacker, O'Mara, Ortt, Palumbo, Rhoads, Stec, Tedisco, Walczyk and Weber.
Ayes, 42. Nays, 18.
THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.
THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 317, Senate Print 3071A, by Senator Sanders, an

act to amend the Education Law.

THE PRESIDENT: Read the last section.

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

THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE PRESIDENT: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 320, Senate Print 3189, by Senator Persaud, an act to amend the Social Services Law.

THE PRESIDENT: Read the last section.

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

THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE PRESIDENT: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number

332, Senate Print 2613, by Senator Addabbo, an act to amend the Tax Law.

THE PRESIDENT: Read the last section.

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

THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE PRESIDENT: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 332, voting in the negative are Senators Griffo and Ortt.

Ayes, 58. Nays, 2.

THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 365, Senate Print 490, by Senator Fernandez, an act to amend the Penal Law.

THE PRESIDENT: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 4. This act shall take effect immediately.

THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE PRESIDENT: Announce the

results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 375, Senate Print 6217, by Senator Fernandez, an act to amend the Workers' Compensation Law.

THE PRESIDENT: Read the last section.

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

THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Fernandez to explain your vote.

SENATOR FERNANDEZ: Thank you, Mr. President.

At its core, our workers' compensation system was created to provide a swift and certain source of benefits to injured workers and to the families of those who lose their lives on the job.

If we truly stand with labor and the hardworking men and women who power our economy, then we must ensure this system works for them and not against them. This bill restores that

promise.

First we update the outdated 1,000 preauthorization limit to $1500. Medical costs have risen, yet the cap has remained stagnant. By adjusting it, it reflects today's realities, we reduce unnecessary delays for routine tests and procedures and ensure injured workers receive timely, appropriate care so they can heal and return to work.

Secondly, we clarify the purpose of the medical treatment guidelines. These guidelines were meant to streamline care, not to function as an automatic denial system.

Yet too often, necessary treatments are rejected simply because they are not on a list, even when prescribed by a medical professional. This has driven providers away from the system and left injured workers waiting.

Finally, this bill restores access to out-of-network providers, allowing injured workers to obtain timely testing and treatment while still controlling costs by requiring providers to accept negotiated rates.

Supporting this legislation means we support labor. It means standing up for workers

when they are at their most vulnerable, and it means ensuring that when someone is hurt on the job, the system responds with care and not red tape.

I proudly vote aye.

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Fernandez will be recorded in the affirmative.

Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

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

SENATOR GIANARIS: Let's take up the one bill on the controversial calendar, please.

THE PRESIDENT: The Secretary will ring the bell.

The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 117, Senate Print 3590A, by Senator Harckham, an act to amend the Executive Law.

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Lanza, why do you rise?

SENATOR LANZA: Mr. President, I believe there's an amendment at the desk. I

waive the reading of that amendment and ask that you recognize Senator Walczyk.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Lanza.

Upon review of the amendment, in accordance with Rule 6, Section 4B, I rule it nongermane and out of order.

SENATOR LANZA: Accordingly, Mr. President, I appeal the ruling of the chair and ask that Senator Walczyk be heard on that appeal.

THE PRESIDENT: The appeal has been made and recognized, and Senator Walczyk will be heard.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Well, I'm disappointed in the ruling, Mr. President, but I thank you for the opportunity.

This amendment is germane, in fact, to the bill-in-chief because the bill-in-chief deals with climate resiliency, and this bill would repeal the statutory requirement for a statewide cap-and-invest program, one of the pillars of New York's Climate Act -- a law which threatens reliability and resiliency throughout our energy sector.

I'm sure you're all aware that last week the Governor released a memo outlining the impact of the CLCPA on New Yorkers' pocketbooks in the next five years. The memo, which was put together by the state's Energy Research and Development Authority -- you know, those experts -- they concluded that absent changes by 2031, the impact of the CLCPA on the price of gas could reach or exceed $2.23 per gallon, on top of whatever you're paying at the pump at the time.

At today's price of gas, that would mean New Yorkers would be paying $5.25 a gallon.

Upstate natural gas and oil households would see a cost increase of $4100 a year, and New York City would see a natural gas household increase annually of $2300 per year per home.

Small and medium commercial businesses could expect utility costs to increase by as much as 46 percent.

New Yorkers are already experiencing skyrocketing utility bills. They cannot afford $350 a month additionally on their household utility bill. New Yorkers cannot afford $5.25 for a gallon of gas.

The memo confirms what our conference, the Senate Republicans, have been saying for years, that the cap-and-invest program's $12 billion a year tax on businesses will be passed on down to consumers, making things even more unaffordable in the State of New York.

While I'm encouraged to see the Governor has finally realized what our conference has been saying about this cost for years, New Yorkers cannot afford the Climate Act's unrealistic and costly green energy mandates.

I hope my colleagues across the aisle will join me in repealing this costly program. This amendment that I offer up, Mr. President, will repeal Section 75-0109 of the Environmental Conservation Law and reverse the unrealistic timelines and goals. It will save New Yorkers $12 billion annually for the price of energy.

In a moment, the president of the Senate will say we're voting on the procedures of the house and not on the amendment that I'm offering up. People do not want technical excuses from any of us. They want affordable

energy. They expect you, as their representatives, to do something about it.

And that's why I offer up this amendment. A couple of weeks ago you failed to send $2 billion that is unspent in the Clean Energy Fund back to ratepayers, providing immediate relief. Don't fail New Yorkers again today.

Overrule the chair, take up this amendment for a vote, and together we can all lower the cost of energy in New York State now.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator.

I want to remind the house that the vote is on the procedures of the house and the ruling of the chair.

Those in favor of overruling the chair signify by saying aye.

(Response of "Aye.")

SENATOR LANZA: Show of hands.

THE PRESIDENT: A show of hands has been requested and so ordered.

Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 21.

THE PRESIDENT: The ruling of the

chair stands, and the bill-in-chief is before the house.

Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This act shall take effect on the 60th day after it shall have become a law.

THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Harckham to explain your vote.

SENATOR HARCKHAM: Thank you very much, Mr. President. Good to see you up there.

I want to thank my colleague for his hostile amendment. I was actually hoping for more Dr. Seuss this week --

(Laughter.)

SENATOR HARCKHAM: -- but perhaps we'll have to wait.

I just want to respond to a few things that we heard.

We keep hearing about the so-called NYSERDA memo, which I would characterize as Governor Hochul's "The Iraqis have weapons of mass destruction" moment. This is a completely fabricated memo. It's a fabricated number,

cherry-picked from the most extreme circumstances.

When the New York State Independent System Operator and members of the Governor's own administration have reported recently that the number-one driving factor of high utility prices in New York State is the price of natural gas. Full stop. No mention of the climate law, no mention of clean energy. The number-one driver is the cost of natural gas.

And when we see what Donald Trump's erratic foreign policy, invading the Middle East -- whatever people think of that, we saw the price of natural gas double on the world markets the other day. Double.

And now the notion that some people on the other side of the aisle want us to double down on those energy policies is really something that should be frightening consumers. When we know that a kilowatt of clean energy -- a kilowatt of wind, a kilowatt of solar -- is far cheaper than a kilowatt of natural gas and a kilowatt of nuclear.

So Mr. President, on the bill regarding the Office of Resilience, for those who

say we can't afford to address climate change, I would point out our taxpayers are paying for this right now. In 2023 American taxpayers spent $800 billion on storm-related damage.

In my district -- I'll give you an example. Last week DOT put out a press release touting a road project called the Annsville Circle in my district, where the town of Cortlandt and the city of Peekskill meet. It's a travel circle. They spent $25 million of taxpayer money to elevate that 8 feet because of climate-driven sea-level rise of the Hudson River.

Several years ago we spent $60 million of taxpayer money to elevate a one-mile section of the Saw Mill River Parkway because of climate-driven storm flooding.

All of our municipalities are dealing with that. These are just two examples in my district.

Mr. President, the Office of Resilience -- on the merits of the bill, the Office of Resilience we definitely need. What we don't need is more rhetoric and false information about natural gas.

I vote aye.

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Harckham to be recorded in the affirmative.

Senator Borrello to explain his vote.

SENATOR BORRELLO: Thank you, Mr. President.

Last year I voted yes on this bill, but then I got to thinking about it this year. This is just one more, I guess, layer of bureaucracy that's going to do the same thing that everyone else has done.

We literally blame everything on climate change. It doesn't matter what it is. If you get into a car accident tomorrow, it was probably because of climate change. I'm not even kidding, that's actually happened.

So we're going to have an entire office, an entire bureaucracy, an entire additional cost so we can blame everything on climate change.

You know, it's funny, the history of climate change as a term came about from the fact that, you know, it used to be global warming. We had to stop saying that because every time

Al Gore would show up somewhere and talk about how the weather was getting warmer, it would snow.

So we had to change it to climate change. You guys keep moving the goalposts on us. You blame it all on climate change.

And this bill is just going to create another bureaucracy to blame everything on what actually isn't the problem, which is bad policy. It's bad policy in Albany that's raising our utility rates. It's bad policy that has allowed our farmland to be eaten up by wind and solar. It's bad policy that is causing the problem, not climate change.

So I'm voting no. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Borrello to be recorded in the negative.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President, I neglected to mention that we've agreed to restore this to the noncontroversial calendar. So let's please record the vote that way.

THE PRESIDENT: The bill is restored.

Senator Krueger.

SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

I would just like to say ibid to Pete Harckham's speech. He's 100 percent right. And anyone who's still walking around this place thinking there is no crisis for us to deal with with climate change doesn't actually read anything that's going on around the world each and every day.

And I just hope that our children and grandchildren -- I hope our children and grandchildren are a lot smarter than we all are so that they can address this real crisis that they will be inheriting and have to deal with.

I vote yes. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Krueger will be recorded in the affirmative.

Senator Lanza to explain his vote.

SENATOR LANZA: Yes, Mr. President, on the bill. Oh, no, we're explaining.

So listening to Governor Hochul and some of her allies talk about the high cost of energy bills and affordability in New York is like watching the arsonist blame the house for

burning down.

If you want to decrease the cost of electricity in the State of New York, you can do it overnight. And that's by ridding the New York State and the New York City tax -- which in New York City is about 30 percent -- on the cost residents pay for electricity.

I heard a Senator, a U.S. Senator from the other side of the aisle the other day talking about how the oil companies and the natural gas companies are gouging, are gouging Americans. The biggest gouger is government. The number-one factor increasing the cost of living in New York is taxes and regulations.

And in terms of the environment, we can have a debate on how it's changing, when it's changing. The fact is, it's always been changing. Not so long ago there was three miles of ice sitting right here and it melted away. Not because people were driving cars. We could talk about it, but you're not allowed to have an honest conversation about the extent to which human activity is either speeding that or slowing that down or what the impact is.

We keep hearing about carbon

emissions. I've asked this question to numerous folks who advance this? How much carbon should we have in the environment? And you can't get an answer. The answer is less.

We all want clean air. We all want clean water. We all want good and clean food. But if anyone thinks that turning on your gas stove in New York City changes the weather, you're just the useful idiot that Governor Hochul is looking to exploit.

I vote no.

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Lanza will be recorded in the negative.

Senator Martins to explain his vote.

SENATOR MARTINS: Thank you, Mr. President.

You know, I'm voting for this bill. I voted for it before. I'll continue to vote for it.

And we can disagree on policy. But, you know, I just -- it's a hard thing for me to understand when we get up here and try and convince, from a public policy standpoint, the residents of our state, telling them that we're not doing enough as a state. We're not doing

enough.

You know, we hear statistics, Mr. President. We are the 13th largest economy in the world. If we were to be our own country, we are an industrial state, tremendous production. Yet we make up 0.4 percent of the carbon footprint of the world here.

And so over at last 20, 30 years we have done more in this state to reduce our carbon footprint than anywhere else in the world. Now if we were a polluter and a net polluter of this -- of the environment, as there are examples throughout the world, sure, we can have this conversation.

But we're asking our residents, who are now paying the highest energy costs in the country if not the world, to pay more because somehow we have to go out there and solve the world's problems when we already have. We've asked our residents, our businesses, to sacrifice for decades in order to protect the environment, and they have.

And yet here we are again somehow claiming that we're not doing enough when every one of our residents is telling us that

they can't afford the energy bills each and every month, that there are spikes in those bills and that they continue to pay more and that enough is enough.

So Mr. President, I would just caution everyone to understand that when we talk about the environment and energy costs, it comes down to policies in this chamber, supported by the Majority in this chamber, by the Governor on the second floor, and the Majority in the other chamber, that have put us in this position, and our constituents deserve better.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Martins will be recorded in the affirmative.

Senator Gianaris to close.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Thank you, Mr. President.

It's always a great moment in this chamber when someone from the Minority gets up, rails about what we do here, and then votes yes on the bill.

And so I want to thank Senator Martins and all my colleagues across the aisle who are voting in favor of this important

legislation that Senator Harckham is advancing, and as we continue to do what the people of this state want in fighting for a responsible environmental policy.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Gianaris to be recorded in the affirmative.

Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 117, voting in the negative are Senators Borrello, Griffo, Lanza, O'Mara, Ortt, Stec and Walczyk. Also Senator Oberacker. Also Senator Weik.

Ayes, 51. Nays, 9.

THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

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

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

THE PRESIDENT: There is no further business at the desk.

SENATOR GIANARIS: I move to adjourn until tomorrow, Thursday, March 5th, at 11:00 a.m.

THE PRESIDENT: On motion, the

Senate stands adjourned until Thursday, March 5th, at 11:00 a.m.

(Whereupon, at 4:43 p.m., the Senate adjourned.)