NEW YORK STATE SENATE

THE STENOGRAPHIC RECORD

ALBANY, NEW YORK

April 2, 2020

9:57 a.m.

REGULAR SESSION

SENATOR BRIAN A. BENJAMIN, Acting President

ALEJANDRA N. PAULINO, ESQ., Secretary

P R O C E E D I N G S

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The Senate will come to order.

I ask everyone present to please rise and repeat with me the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: 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 BENJAMIN: The reading of the Journal.

THE SECRETARY: In Senate, Wednesday, April 1, 2020, the Senate met pursuant to adjournment. The Journal of Tuesday, March 31, 2020, was read and approved. On motion, Senate adjourned.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: 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 morning, Mr. President.

We will start today's work with an immediate meeting of the Finance Committee in Room 332.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: There will be an immediate meeting of the Finance Committee in Room 332.

SENATOR GIANARIS: The Senate stands at ease.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The Senate stands at ease.

(Whereupon, the Senate stood at ease at 9:58 a.m.)

(Whereupon, the Senate reconvened at 10:21 a.m.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The Senate will return to order.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Is there a

report of the Finance Committee at the desk?

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: There is a report of the Finance Committee at the desk.

The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Senator Krueger, from the Committee on Finance, reports the following bills:

Senate Print 7506B, Senate Budget Bill, an act to amend the Education Law;

Senate Print 7501, Senate Budget Bill, an act making appropriations for the support of government: LEGISLATURE AND JUDICIARY BUDGET.

All bills reported direct to third reading.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Move to accept the Finance Committee report.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: All in favor of accepting the Committee on Finance report signify by saying aye.

(Response of "Aye.")

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Opposed?

(No response.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The

Committee on Finance report is accepted and before the house.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Can we now take up the reading of the supplemental calendar, please.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 636, Senate Print 7506B, Senate Budget Bill, an act to amend the Education Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Is there a message of necessity at the desk?

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: There is a message of necessity at the desk.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Move to accept the message of necessity.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: All in favor of accepting the message of necessity signify by saying aye.

(Response of "Aye.")

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Opposed?

(No response.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The message of necessity is accepted, and the bill is before the house.

Read the last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Senator Borrello to explain his vote.

SENATOR BORRELLO: Thank you, Mr. President.

These are obviously challenging times. And as I said before, my first budget. Again, my thoughts and prayers go out to all those on the front lines in this fight, our healthcare workers.

But in this case we have others on the front lines that have continued to be ignored by this body, and those are the members of law enforcement.

We heard from them, when this bail reform bill passed last year, how devastating it would be, and unfortunately they were correct.

And now, under the same process of the budget, hidden away and not discussed -- not with law enforcement, not on a wide scale -- we're seeing the same sledgehammer that destroyed our judicial system try to be used again to fix it. And that's just not how it should work.

The fallout was a major increase in crime. And we heard in the hearings that we held what the fixes should be. First and foremost, judicial discretion, which is not in here. You cut open a gushing wound in our judicial system that has impacted victims of crime and the people on the front lines of law enforcement, and you've handed them a Band-Aid now to try and fix it. It's simply not enough.

And it should be done in an open process outside the budget so we can discuss it openly and let the people decide what's best for the judicial system of New York State.

So as a result of that and many other reasons, I'll be voting no.

Thank you, Mr. President.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Senator Borrello to be recorded in the negative.

Senator Lanza to explain his vote.

Senator Lanza not to explain his vote.

Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar Number 636, those Senators voting in the negative are Senators Akshar, Amedore, Biaggi, Borrello, Boyle, Flanagan, Funke, Gallivan, Griffo, Helming, Jacobs, Jordan, Lanza, LaValle, Little, O'Mara, Ortt, Ramos, Ranzenhofer, Ritchie, Rivera, Robach, Salazar, Serino and Tedisco.

Ayes, 36. Nays, 25.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 637, Senate Print 7501, Senate Budget Bill, an act making appropriations for the support of government: LEGISLATURE AND JUDICIARY BUDGET.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 5. This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN:

Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 40. Nays, 21.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The bill is passed.

Oh, sorry, please read the negatives.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar Number 637, those Senators voting in the negative are Senators Akshar, Amedore, Borrello, Boyle, Flanagan, Funke, Gallivan, Griffo, Helming, Jacobs, Jordan, Lanza, LaValle, Little, O'Mara, Ortt, Ranzenhofer, Ritchie, Robach, Serino and Tedisco.

Ayes, 40. Nays, 21.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The bill is passed.

Senator Gianaris, that completes the reading of the supplemental calendar.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President, at this time we are awaiting the final budget bill, on state operations, so we will stand at ease until that is ready.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The Senate will stand at ease.

(Whereupon, the Senate stood at ease at 10:25 a.m.)

(Whereupon, the Senate reconvened at 2:02 p.m.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The Senate will return to order.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President, there will be an immediate meeting of the Finance Committee in Room 332.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: There will be an immediate meeting of the Finance Committee in Room 332.

SENATOR GIANARIS: The Senate will stand at ease.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The Senate will stand at ease.

(Whereupon, the Senate stood at ease at 2:02 p.m.)

(Whereupon, the Senate reconvened at 2:25 p.m.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The Senate will return to order.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Is there a

report of the Finance Committee at the desk?

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: There is a report of the Finance Committee at the desk.

The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Senator Krueger, from the Committee on Finance, reports the following bill:

Senate Print 7500C, Senate Budget Bill, an act making appropriations for the support of government: STATE OPERATIONS BUDGET.

All bills reported direct to third reading.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Move to accept the Finance Committee report.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: All in favor of accepting the Committee on Finance report signify by saying aye.

(Response of "Aye.")

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Opposed?

(No response.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The Committee on Finance report is accepted and before the house.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Can we now take

up the reading of the supplemental calendar.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 638, Senate Print 7500C, Senate Budget Bill, an act making appropriations for the support of government: STATE OPERATIONS BUDGET.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Is there a message of necessity at the desk?

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: There is a message of necessity at the desk.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Move to accept the message of necessity.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: All in favor of accepting the message of necessity signify by saying aye.

(Response of "Aye.")

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Opposed?

(No response.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The message of necessity is accepted and the bill is before the house.

The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 638, Senate Print 7500C, Senate Budget Bill, an act making appropriations for the support of government: STATE OPERATIONS BUDGET.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 5. This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar Number 638, those Senators voting in the negative are Senators Akshar, Amedore, Borrello, Boyle, Flanagan, Funke, Gallivan, Griffo, Helming, Jacobs, Jordan, Lanza, LaValle, Little, O'Mara, Ortt, Ranzenhofer, Ritchie, Robach, Serino and Tedisco.

Ayes, 40. Nays, 21.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: The bill is passed.

Senator Gianaris, that completes the

reading of today's supplemental calendar.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President, at this time can you recognize Senator Flanagan for remarks.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Senator Flanagan for remarks.

SENATOR FLANAGAN: Thank you, Mr. President.

Thank you to Senator Gianaris, Senator Krueger, Senator Lanza, and Senator Stewart-Cousins.

I've been thinking a lot throughout the morning, and I was talking with Senator Lanza before we came in. You know, there are times I would come up here on a Sunday night and come over to the Capitol, and there was a tranquility and a serenity, in part because it was night and no one was really here. And I got a chance to walk around and reflect, truly reflect on how magnificent this building is, and this place.

So today there's a calmness, but it's not serene. And it's not really tranquil. And I live my life as a very positive person. So I come in here today with my colleagues with an open heart but a heavy heart. And I just think

about how incredibly important the work that we do is.

So I want to say thank you at large for the opportunity to be part of this august body. I want to say thank you to everyone who's here -- properly spaced. Properly spaced, I might add. But we are doing the people's business.

So I say thank you to everyone, God bless you all of you. And that includes every single person who is in and around the halls of this chamber and this Capitol. Because this place still has to operate. And thank God we have the people that we do to take care of us.

But you know what, this is about the human experience. And however one approaches their life and seeks good in others and for others, I would from the bottom of my heart ask that people find time to contemplate and to think well of Senator Jim Seward.

Senator Seward tested positive. So did his wife. And he's having a tough time. So when I think of him, I think of our colleagues who have had the same type of issue in the Assembly. And no matter what our differences

are, part of the insanity of this place is that it becomes like a family. It just does.

Mr. President, I look at you and I think of your little girl. I look at Senator Lanza, I think of his three children and how we talk about that all the time. And then I think of my own family, and I think about how anxious they are and the fear that they have, real fear -- the nervousness, the anxiety -- when less than a month ago people were starting to pay attention, but nowhere near the way they are now.

I look at my colleague and friend Senator Gianaris. A couple of weeks ago he and I had a debate. We banged elbows a little bit on a debate, and the world has radically changed just in those few weeks. Radically changed. And nowhere has it changed more significantly than in the State of New York.

I have been blessed to have three children. And my daughter, who is the apple of my eye, is an actress. So I pay attention to some music, Broadway shows, can't wait for them to open back up. And there's a song from a play called Rent: "Seasons of Love." And it talks about 525,600 minutes. And that's the number of

minutes in a year: 525,600 minutes. It's a fabulous song.

So how do you measure a year? In daylight, in sunsets, in midnights, in cups of coffee, in inches and miles, in laughter and strife. And now we measure it in life and death, in a way that I don't think any one of us could have predicted.

I look at our Majority Leader, she's trying to do everything humanly possible within her power to do the right thing. And yet the scope of what she's looking at is unalterably changed, from St. Patrick's Day forward.

So now I think of a wide variety of groups -- our first responders, our EMTs, our police, our doctors, our nurses, our volunteers. People who drop everything. And one of my hospital CEOs gave me a good description, talking about nurses in particular. They're like -- yeah, they run in. They don't walk in, they run in. And thank God we have people that do that. We are all immeasurably blessed because of that.

And I think of basic things too. We're all eating. You know, we all get to go to the food store and things like that. Somebody's

out there doing the work so that we can do our jobs. And yet people are walking around nervous. And it's understandable.

In terms of our colleagues, Senator Stewart-Cousins and I had spoken -- and this is not a time to debate. And certainly we're not engaging in a debate. But I was dubious about -- as to whether or not I should even get up and speak. Because arguably we're talking not to an empty chamber per se, but this will be memorialized in the record and the transcript of the New York State Senate.

And my colleagues, out of deference to the process and to the leader and to the Majority, we didn't engage in debate. Maybe a very little bit. But in reality, I'm standing before you as a representative of our conference.

So when I see our new colleague Senator Borrello get up and offer heartfelt comments, I know where he's coming from. When I hear Senator Amedore talk about what it means to be a businessperson, I understand where he's coming from.

And I could speak to every single person in our conference as to their qualities,

as to their temperament, as to their disposition, and to the gut-wrenching feeling that each and every one of us have. I know I feel it. I know I should be here, but oh, man, I am like jonesing to be home. And I also know I have to be incredibly careful when I get that opportunity to go home.

Senator Gianaris and I were talking about our mothers. Right? Senator Lanza, we were talking about his father. You want to go and knock on that door in the morning, give that big hug? You can't do it. So we have to do it metaphorically. We have to find some way to continue the human existence and make people feel good about where we are.

Yesterday we got the daily update. And Morgan, who works right here, has helped us out. There were roughly 83,000 cases yesterday. Now there's over 92,000. Yesterday there were about -- there were 1941 deaths in the State of New York. This morning's report was 2,373. Twenty-four hours, that's the difference we've seen.

So when we get involved in the discussions on this budget, I want to make a few

brief comments as to approach. I respect very deeply the work of my colleagues in the Majority and their efforts to bring forth the blueprint for New York as they see it, working with the Assembly and working with the Governor.

Our conference would have taken a slightly different tack. I think we would have been more focused on let's handle what is before us, the public health crisis, the pandemic, in lead of a lot of other things that are worthy of consideration, but at a different time and under different circumstances.

Simple things. Public financing of campaigns. I don't think the public is worried about that right now, I really don't. Banning polystyrene. Maybe a laudable goal, but frankly that's the stuff that everyone's using to get takeout food right now. Things like that.

I actually have been a strong supporter of prevailing wage for working men and women. I just don't know or think that this is the right time given the gravity of what we're facing in our economy.

Two other quick things. There's a bond act that's in this budget. And I've always

been a pretty strong supporter of bond acts for this reason -- because the public decides. In my opinion and a lot of the opinion of my colleagues, now is not the time. I don't know how we can go out and ask somebody to support an environmental bond act when unemployment claims are rising at a meteoric pace.

And even legislation on sick leave or bail, whatever it may be -- but sick leave in particular, changing significantly a law where people are more worried about their jobs as opposed to whether or not they're going to have the appropriate sick leave.

But as I said, we want to get into the rough and tumble on that, we just don't think the time is now. And we do have to pass our budget, and we do have to meet our obligations. We just think it should have been done in a different way.

And I respect the fact that the Majority will take a different approach, and that's why they're in the Majority. And they have that right and prerogative.

So now, too, I'm thinking about the Governor and the federal government. When I

looked at what was in this budget, I picked out one thing. There's over a billion dollars in funding for education. There's about $800 million in higher education. There's $25 billion in authority for things that may come.

But the thing that I saw that my constituents are going to want to know about -- and they're going to want to thank the federal government, the president, Senator Schumer, Senator Gillibrand, all of our delegation from New York -- they're not only going to want to thank them for that additional unemployment benefit, they're going to want to thank them for that check that otherwise would not have come. But they're also going to want to thank them for almost -- and I want to repeat this number -- almost $40 billion in relation to unemployment insurance.

So when the Department of Labor gets 50,000 calls a week, and last week they got over 8 million inquiries, that shows you what people are focusing on. That shows you where people's heads are at.

So when I go home, I don't really

want to talk about polystyrene. I want to be able to say to somebody, you know what, the Department of Labor, they took a huge shift and brought in 1500 new people -- whatever the number may be -- to process your claim, to make sure your family is well taken care of.

And with all the things the Governor has done, I have to say I'm a little surprised that we haven't seen something much more forthright in that area. It will probably come. Maybe it will come after this debate and maybe after this conversation. But we're at a time where I think that's what people are really looking at.

Now, having just said what I did, I want to be clear -- I said it before -- the Governor deserves tremendous praise for his yeomanlike efforts, 24 hours a day, on behalf of everyone in the State of New York. The calm, the repose, the occasional humor and making people feel better, trying to make people feel better, giving them a sense of purpose, giving them a sense of hope. Showing them accomplishments. Showing how many more people have gotten tested. Showing how many more people are getting better.

Those are all good signs. And you all know we're not even close, we're not even close to being finished.

But as I said before, I live my life as a very positive person. We are absolutely going to get through this. Absolutely. And it's because we know how to stick together. We'll have our differences, but we know how to stick together.

I want to support Senator Stewart-Cousins in those types of efforts. I want to support my colleagues because it's good for the people that we represent. Our obligation is fundamental, it's basic, but it's strong, too.

And there are two people who are not here that I want to just speak to very briefly because I think they are characteristic of every member in this house.

Senator LaValle sits right there, 44 years in the Senate, the dean of the Senate. I looked at his chair the other day, it's got tattered edges. That's based on his longevity.

Senator Montgomery is not here today, but she's the dean of your conference and

the longest-serving member in your conference.

They represent what is good about every member in this chamber -- their longevity, their service, their passion, their dedication and their devotion. And God knows they will be missed.

And it's kind of weird because Senator Borrello came in -- right? Newest member? If anyone had ever said this is what your first budget is going to be like, he probably wouldn't have signed his oath of office. But he's here.

And I've never seen anything like this. And I never thought, my God, today being the closure of the budget, that every one of us, this may be our last day here for session. I mean, I hope not. I don't. But if that's what it is, that's what it is. But I know we're meeting our obligation today.

So as I said, with humility and respect, we would have taken a different tack. I know there's good things in here to help people; I'm not going to dismiss that. But there are things that should have been debated outside of the budget, and there will be time for those

things.

So again, I am honored and privileged to be standing here. The fact that anyone would take the time to listen to my comments makes me a very grateful person. And as I said, I feel like I am being representative of the people of the Senate Republican Conference.

So I kind of said this at the beginning. This is about being a human being, trying to be a good person. As we pray for the people that we read about, I would ask again, in sincerity, please think of Jim Seward. I can't think of a finer public servant. And my heart breaks as I speak about him, because there's tens of thousands of Jim Sewards in New York at this very moment who need our love, our service, our devotion, our prayers and our support.

I thank the Governor. I thank the Majority Leader and all of my colleagues for the work that they do. Mr. President, you're a good man, and it's been a pleasure to watch you serve up there. God bless this chamber, God bless the New York State Senate, the great Empire State of New York, and the United States of America.

Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President, let me thank Senator Flanagan as well for his words and his service to New York State. He has left a legacy to be proud of.

Thank you, Senator.

Can you please now recognize Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins for comments.

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Thank you so much.

I said I'm socially distanced, but I'm not distanced from anyone, so I think I'll be at my desk.

So again, I wanted to thank you, Mr. President, too. Because, again, none of this is familiar to any of us. And so I really thank you for the work that you've done throughout this and, you know, through all of our opportunities to be together.

And to follow up on Senator Flanagan, I -- it wasn't until your final remarks that I realize that maybe this is, you know, the

last time that we might be together in this chamber. And I certainly hope not. Because, you know, we have so many colleagues -- of course Senator LaValle, as you mentioned, your longest-serving member, and Senator Montgomery -- and I don't want to go through the list because it's a very, very long list -- Senator Seward and yourself. So many who don't plan to come back.

And so I hope this is not the last time we get a chance. But I will say it's certainly been a privilege to serve in this body with public servants like you and certainly all of my colleagues.

And I know that all of us join you in prayers for Senator Seward and for his recovery. And, you know, it reminds us all that nothing is promised, and we have to value, as you said, the opportunities that we have, not only to be together here but to serve the people of New York. So again, we all pray for Senator Seward.

And, you know, I listened to your remarks, and there's so much like my remarks, but -- and you did something different, you spoke extemporaneously, which I usually do. But

because your remarks are so similar, I'm going to read my remarks.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: And so, you know, like you, as I look around the chamber, this nearly empty chamber, it really is surreal. You know, actually, for me, it's chilling. In many ways, it's upsetting. But it's a testament to this great institution and the work that continues here.

As you said, it's been a month since we stood on this floor and we voted to provide $40 million to combat this pandemic. It's a month ago today. And I think back to that night because it was the first time, as leader, that I called us back into session. And everybody came, everybody was here. And so there was a sense of urgency that we all had. But even with that sense of urgency, nobody, nobody could have imagined what was going to unfold in the following weeks.

And here we are just one month later. And I'll remind you, that day that we were -- that we passed that $40 million, that was an evening, and the next day we woke up to the

first coronavirus case in the State of New York. And it happened to be in my home county, in the city that I represent.

And now, as you were saying earlier, a month later, 92,000 of our fellow New Yorkers have been infected with coronavirus; 2,373 have lost their lives. And today we learned that 10 million Americans have applied for unemployment, 10 million. These numbers are even beyond chilling and upsetting. These numbers are painful.

We all see the terrifying growing curve. We hear these words that we sort of knew but we didn't listen to every day, and certainly not in this context: Apex, social distancing, ICU, intubate, hospitalization rates, death rates. That's our new normal. That's the words of today.

And yet as you said, Senator Flanagan, we are in awe of the doctors, of the nurses, of the hospital workers, of the first responders -- of all of the people who are on the front lines, these essential workers, and what they've done. And as we continue to make sure government functions, we are really inspired by

those people and their commitment to the greater good.

We're all here to do a job. And yes, we are scared for our families, for our constituents, for each other. For our staff. For our nation. But we're here because we have a job to do. And that's really what we're doing, albeit it looks very, very different.

As you said, usually on budget day this chamber is filled, the hallways are teeming, and depending upon where you are, what side of the aisle, you know, that's what we're doing -- we're debating, we're deciding what should have been done, what shouldn't have been done, everybody's got an opinion.

And for many there's a sense of expectation, and then for most of us -- probably all of us -- there's just a sense of relief that we were able to get it done.

But that is not what it feels like now. Today it really is a job, but it's a job that we do with a very, very heavy weight on all of us.

And I, like you and all of our colleagues and the people of this great state,

really do want to thank Governor Cuomo. We want to thank him because of the outstanding leadership he has provided during this crisis. New York is New York, and we are New York tough. And Governor Cuomo has shown what that looks like and what that means, the difference it makes when we're facing a crisis like this.

And of course like all of us he too has been touched by someone very close to him with corona. So we want to of course wish his brother Chris a full and speedy recovery.

And because, again, none of this happens alone, I want to thank Speaker Heastie and his staff for our partnership during these tough times. Obviously, again, Senator Flanagan, you and I have had many phone calls, all hours of the day and night, you know, telling him what I thought, and it was always knocked back. But I really thank you for your, you know, professionalism, your forthrightness and cooperation, and your members', during this time.

I want to thank my great Finance chair, Liz Krueger. Liz, dear, there are no questions about your readiness. There never, ever, ever has been. I do want to thank you, as

a friend and as a great colleague, for always meeting the occasion and going above and beyond. Thank you very, very much.

And my wonderful deputy, Deputy Mike Gianaris, for leading us during this, again, unprecedented time with flexibility, with skill, with just, you know, the agility that we need in order to get through this. I know your buddy Senator Griffo isn't here. But, you know, Senator Lanza, you had to stand in for that. But it was -- you know, even though it was different, the stability of what went on in this chamber and how you ran it made all the difference.

I also want to thank my counsel and Finance staff. Words cannot express what they do and how well they've done it, and certainly on both sides of the aisle. Thank you for all of your hard work and your perseverance and the long days and the long nights.

And of course I especially want to thank my extraordinary chief of staff and counsel, Shontell Smith. Again, words do not express. And not only Shontell, but in these past few days, to really push the ball forward with her, her deputy, Eric Katz. I want to thank

my hardworking Finance secretary, Todd Scheuermann; my communications director, Mike Murphy; and my entire team for making this look a lot easier than it's been.

And I also want to thank the Secretary of the Senate, Ale Paulino, for not only making sure all this works, but also our remote access, creating the opportunities for us to conduct our business. Thank you.

To my Senate Majority, I do wish that every single person that each of you serve were able to witness firsthand how hard you fight for each and every New Yorker. And how you fight for them and, even in this time of uncertainty, you put your constituents and the people of New York first.

So to my conference, your unyielding commitment to advocating for the needs of your communities -- again, another inspiration. And so I thank you for being the most incredible people possible to lead. It is a privilege.

And of course to all the members, all my colleagues in the chamber who persevered in these extremely tough times, I appreciate every single one of you. Obviously we

disagree -- what we should have done, how we could have done it. It doesn't matter. At the end of the day, we understand why we're here.

I think, despite all the back and forth, we can all agree that the budget that we are passing is not the budget any of us had hoped to pass at the beginning of this session. It's not even the budget we envisioned a month ago. Our state's financial situation has been thrust into true economic crisis, and I know everyone understands that.

On a normal budget day, I would go through the document, I would highlight all the victories and all the great things we were able to do and to accomplish by marshaling our own resources. But again, this was not a normal budget.

And yes, even in the crisis, however, we did manage to achieve victories for the people of New York. We held the line on education funding in the face of unprecedented revenue loss. And in that context and beyond, it's already been said, but I do want to give a special thank you to Senator Schumer for all of his help and the help especially provided during

this crisis, where he was able to direct billions of dollars to state and local government, things that hadn't happened before. And you listed the unemployment insurance that Senators Schumer and Gillibrand and our congressional delegation brought to us.

We were able also to protect funding for our healthcare system, for our most vulnerable citizens in the face of a global pandemic. We were able to help small businesses. We stood up for farmers. We've helped stock food banks. We've provided resources to those New Yorkers facing an uncertain future. We provided protection and resources for our first responders, and we continue to improve public safety.

The coronavirus has put New York in a position, however, that we never want to be in, in a position in which our state cannot meet the challenges in front of us alone. New York has to have a balanced budget. We can't run deficits. So that's an answer to, you know, what we could and could not do. Our state's residents cannot bear the burden in this critical time of making us whole on their own.

So as I thank our Senators, Senator Schumer and Senator Gillibrand, and our congressional delegation for the unprecedented infusion of funding that they fought so hard for, I must also say that we need more, and we need it quickly. We stand ready to help you and do whatever it takes to make the case for this great state.

But, however, it's also important to note that when this crisis passes -- and it will pass -- that we as leaders of this state need to take a hard look at how we got here. The coronavirus amplified our fiscal challenges beyond a scope we could ever have imagined, but it did not create those challenges. When we get to the other side of this, we need to challenge our assumptions about how we fund our government and who in our state bears that burden.

We need to continue to look to how we fund our schools. We need to look at how we prioritize our spending and why our health system, especially programs for our poorest residents who cannot afford quality healthcare on their own, get hit the hardest whenever a crisis arises. We need to have a serious conversation

about shared sacrifices and make sure that everyone is paying their fair share towards creating a sustainable economy that can thrive in good times and withstand bad times.

But in the meantime, all of us and all New Yorkers need to rise together to meet this pandemic head-on. On an individual level, that means what we've talked about -- social distancing, washing our hands, checking in on our loved ones who find themselves alone or struggling. And as a government, it means setting an example and following strict social distance even as we do our work. It means standing here in a nearly empty chamber. It means passing a responsible balanced budget that empowers those working so hard to defeat this virus and, as much as possible, blunts the impact of the financial instability all of our families are currently facing.

So that's what we're doing today as we pass this budget. It's not the budget we wanted to pass, but it's the budget we needed to pass to keep New York moving, to secure our foundation, and to help to lead our state, our great state through this crisis.

Thank you, Mr. President.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President, allow me just to give a word of thanks to our great Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins. She is not only a historic figure in this chamber, but I like to say that she is the -- no offense to other former Majority Leaders who might be in the room -- but is the best Majority Leader to ever serve in this chamber.

And she has proven it these last several weeks, taking on an unprecedented burden of guiding the Senate through this difficult time.

And also let me just add, to the 56 of our colleagues who are not in the room with us right now, thanks to them as well. This is a group of people that is used to a slap on the back and a shake of the hand, and they've had to learn how to get by without that and how to govern without being physically all together in this room. We've all learned how to use Zoom and other technologies to get us to this point, and I'm sure it won't be the last time.

So a thank you to all my colleagues as well for their indulgence and their flexibility in getting us to this point.

With that, Mr. President, is there any further business at the desk?

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

SENATOR GIANARIS: I move to adjourn, subject to the call of the Temporary President, with intervening days being legislative days.

ACTING PRESIDENT BENJAMIN: On motion, the Senate stands adjourned, subject to the call of the Temporary President, intervening days being legislative days.

(Whereupon, at 3:05 p.m., the Senate adjourned.)