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NEW YORK STATE SENATE

THE STENOGRAPHIC RECORD

ALBANY, NEW YORK

June 10, 2023

2:37 a.m.

REGULAR SESSION

SENATOR JAMAAL T. BAILEY, Acting President

ALEJANDRA N. PAULINO, ESQ., Secretary

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The  
3 Senate will come to order.

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

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

8 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Today's  
9 clergy will be from Butler Memorial United  
10 Methodist Church, State Senator Jamaal Bailey.

11 (Laughter.)

12 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Thank  
13 you, Senator Bailey.

14 Thank you, Mr. President.

15 (Laughter.)

16 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: In all  
17 seriousness, let us pray.

18 Father God -- whoever you may pray  
19 to, whoever brings you here -- we are all here  
20 for a real reason on a particular path. And that  
21 path is often walked by different people at  
22 different times, but Lord, you know that we're  
23 walking for the same reasons: To bring safety,  
24 equality, justice and fairness to all of our  
25 residents in each county of the great State of

1 New York.

2                   Whether Watertown or Westchester,  
3 Bronx or Broome County, we are all charged with  
4 reasons, and in seasons, to make sure that we are  
5 providing for our constituents in all ways -- not  
6 just in all ways, but always.

7                   In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

8                   (Response of "Amen.")

9                   ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Reading  
10 of the Journal.

11                   THE SECRETARY: In Senate, Friday,  
12 June 9, 2023, the Senate met pursuant to  
13 adjournment. The Journal of Thursday, June 8,  
14 2023, was read and approved. On motion, the  
15 Senate adjourned.

16                   ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Without  
17 objection, the Journal stands approved as read.

18                   Presentation of petitions.

19                   Messages from the Assembly.

20                   Messages from the Governor.

21                   Reports of standing committees.

22                   Reports of select committees.

23                   Communications and reports from  
24 state officers.

25                   Motions and resolutions.

1                   Senator Gianaris.

2                   SENATOR GIANARIS:    Good morning,  
3 Mr. President.

4                   ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:    Good  
5 morning, Senator Gianaris.

6                   SENATOR GIANARIS:    On behalf of  
7 Senator Breslin, I wish to call up Calendar  
8 Number 1189, Assembly Print 4925.

9                   ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:    The  
10 Secretary will read.

11                   THE SECRETARY:    Calendar Number  
12 1189, Assembly Print Number 4925, by  
13 Assemblymember Hunter, an act to amend the  
14 Insurance Law.

15                   SENATOR GIANARIS:    I move to  
16 reconsider the vote by which this Assembly bill  
17 was substituted for the Senate bill, Print 6827,  
18 on June 10th.

19                   ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:    Call the  
20 roll.

21                   (The Secretary called the roll.)

22                   THE SECRETARY:    Ayes, 62.

23                   ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:    The bill  
24 is restored to its place on the Third Reading  
25 Calendar.

1                   SENATOR GIANARIS:    I now move that  
2   Assembly Bill 4925 be committed to the Committee  
3   on Rules and the Senate bill be restored to the  
4   order of Third Reading Calendar.

5                   ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:    The  
6   amendments are received, and the bill will retain  
7   its place on the Third Reading Calendar.

8                   SENATOR GIANARIS:    Let's take up  
9   the calendar.

10                  ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:    There is  
11   a substitution at the desk.

12                  The Secretary will read.

13                  THE SECRETARY:    Senator Cooney  
14   moves to discharge, from the Committee on Rules,  
15   Assembly Bill Number 3301A and substitute it for  
16   the identical Senate Bill 1051A, Third Reading  
17   Calendar 1073.

18                  ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:  
19   Substitution so ordered.

20                  The Secretary will read.

21                  THE SECRETARY:    Calendar Number  
22   1073, Assembly Bill Number 3301A, by  
23   Assemblymember Rajkumar, an act to amend the  
24   Executive Law.

25                  ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:    Read the

1 last section.

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

4 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the  
5 roll.

6 (The Secretary called the roll.)

7 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Announce  
8 the results.

9 THE SECRETARY: In relation to  
10 Calendar Number 1073, voting in the negative:  
11 Senator Tedisco.

12 Ayes, 61. Nays, 1.

13 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill  
14 is passed.

15 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number  
16 1299, Senate Print 6858B, by Senator Rhoads, an  
17 act authorizing the County of Nassau assessor to  
18 accept an application for a real property tax  
19 exemption.

20 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Read the  
21 last section.

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

24 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the  
25 roll.

1 (The Secretary called the roll.)

2 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Announce  
3 the results.

4 THE SECRETARY: In relation to  
5 Calendar Number 1299, voting in the negative:  
6 Senator O'Mara.

7 Ayes, 61. Nays, 1.

8 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill  
9 is passed.

10 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number  
11 1822, Senate Print 7362A, by Senator Cooney, an  
12 act to amend the General Municipal Law.

13 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Read the  
14 last section.

15 THE SECRETARY: Section 3. This  
16 act shall take effect March 1, 2024.

17 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the  
18 roll.

19 (The Secretary called the roll.)

20 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Announce  
21 the results.

22 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 62.

23 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill  
24 is passed.

25 There is a substitution at the desk.

1                   The Secretary will read.

2                   THE SECRETARY:     Senator Kavanagh  
3 moves to discharge, from the Committee on Rules,  
4 Assembly Bill Number 7768 and substitute it for  
5 the identical Senate Bill 7573, Third Reading  
6 Calendar 1840.

7                   ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:  
8 Substitution so ordered.

9                   The Secretary will read.

10                  THE SECRETARY:     Calendar Number  
11 1840, Assembly Bill Number 7768, by  
12 Assemblymember Colton, an act to amend the  
13 Education Law.

14                  ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:     Read the  
15 last section.

16                  THE SECRETARY:     Section 3. This  
17 act shall take effect July 1, 2023.

18                  ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:     Call the  
19 roll.

20                  (The Secretary called the roll.)

21                  ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:     Senator  
22 Kavanagh to explain his vote.

23                  SENATOR KAVANAGH:     Thank you,  
24 Mr. President.

25                  The hour is late, so I will be

1 brief, as Senator Liu has instructed me to be.

2 That's a bit of an inside joke.

3 But no, this is a very significant  
4 thing we're doing. We in fact changed the day to  
5 Saturday just to do this tonight.

6 We are, with this bill, designating  
7 the Asian Lunar New Year as a statewide school  
8 holiday. And we know that across New York one of  
9 the ways we convey the significance of a  
10 particular culture, the inclusiveness of our  
11 state, is to recognize holidays that are  
12 important to the many different people in our  
13 diverse communities across the state.

14 This holiday is a very significant  
15 holiday for many of our Asian-American  
16 New Yorkers and, for many, the most significant  
17 holiday in the year. And we know that the AAPI  
18 community has been growing across the state by  
19 38 percent between the last two census counts by  
20 the U.S. government. But we also know that Asian  
21 representation has been growing right here in our  
22 own Senate chamber and in the Assembly chamber.

23 So this is a very, you know, proud  
24 moment for me to be a sponsor of this bill, as a  
25 representative of Chinatown. I want to thank my

1 colleagues, particularly Senator Liu and  
2 Senator Chu and the leadership of our leader,  
3 Andrea Stewart-Cousins; and in the Assembly,  
4 sponsors Assemblymember Colton and  
5 Assemblymember Lee -- who is here -- and the  
6 Speaker, for working with our leader to get this  
7 across the finish line.

8           And also our -- I should acknowledge  
9 our Education chair, Senator Mayer, who has been  
10 very supportive of this.

11           So with that, I vote aye.

12           ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator  
13 Kavanagh to be recorded in the affirmative.

14           Senator Liu to explain his vote.

15           SENATOR LIU: Mr. President, in the  
16 interests of full disclosure, I'm Asian. I've  
17 been Asian my whole life. And this is pretty  
18 darn important to Asian Americans. With that, I  
19 proudly vote aye.

20           I want to thank Senator Kavanagh for  
21 sponsoring this. And Senator Kavanagh, this is  
22 how you do brief.

23           Thank you. I encourage my  
24 colleagues to do the same.

25           (Laughter; applause.)

1                   ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:    Senator  
2   Liu to be recorded in the affirmative.

3                   Senator Mayer to explain her vote.

4                   SENATOR MAYER:    Thank you,  
5   Mr. President.  I will be brief -- not as brief  
6   as Senator Liu.

7                   But thank you, Senator Kavanagh,  
8   Senator Liu, Senator Chu, all my colleagues for  
9   their leadership in expanding the holidays for  
10  schools throughout the state, and particularly  
11  for making Asian Lunar New Year a school holiday  
12  for every district.

13                  As we do so, we're going to need to  
14  work with the State Education Department, the  
15  Board of Regents, Commissioner Betty Rosa, to  
16  ensure that we have flexibility as our schools  
17  struggle to both diversify the holidays they  
18  celebrate and also deal with the 180-day  
19  requirement that the state imposes on them.

20                  This is going to require flexibility  
21  and creativity.  I look forward to working with  
22  our colleagues across the street at the  
23  State Education Department to find ways to ensure  
24  our kids both celebrate holidays and have all the  
25  requisite learning we need them to do.

1 I proudly vote aye and salute my  
2 colleagues for bringing this to the floor.

3 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator  
4 Mayer to be recorded in the affirmative.

5 Senator Chu to explain her vote.

6 SENATOR CHU: Thank you,  
7 Mr. President. Happy Saturday.

8 I'm very excited to be here to speak  
9 on this bill that still keeps my eyes open at  
10 this hour. Lunar New Year right now, this  
11 holiday is probably one of the most celebrated  
12 holidays in the world. Right now, around the  
13 world there's about 2 billion people, population,  
14 who are celebrating Lunar New Year this holiday.

15 And usually this holiday falls in  
16 late January, early February. And next year it  
17 is February 10, which the night is the eve we  
18 have a big feast, a dinner with our family. And  
19 it is a month-long, 30 days of celebration.

20 So this -- it is absolutely the time  
21 for our family and friends who celebrate and come  
22 together for each other to celebrate for our  
23 culture and our future.

24 As an Asian-American myself, our  
25 expansive cultures and traditions have typically

1 not been recognized in the public domain. I'll  
2 simply state it is about time we do so.

3 So I really appreciate all my  
4 colleagues, especially State Senator Kavanaugh and  
5 all the Senators and our leadership who support  
6 this one. I really, really appreciate it.

7 It means a lot for our AAPI  
8 community because by passing this bill it means  
9 our students, our families who celebrate this  
10 holiday, they no longer need to choose between  
11 their homework, their tasks, their attendance in  
12 their school, their records -- or they can spend  
13 the time to celebrate with their family.

14 And I'm really proud to be a  
15 cosponsor of this bill.

16 For all these reasons, I proudly  
17 vote aye. Thank you.

18 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator  
19 Chu to be recorded in the affirmative.

20 Announce the results.

21 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 62.

22 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill  
23 is passed.

24 There's a substitution at the desk.

25 The Secretary will read.

1                   THE SECRETARY:     Senator Addabbo  
2     moves to discharge, from the Committee on Rules,  
3     Assembly Bill Number 7769 and substitute it for  
4     the identical Senate Bill 7574, Third Reading  
5     Calendar 1859.

6                   ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:     The  
7     substitution is so ordered.

8                   The Secretary will read.

9                   THE SECRETARY:     Calendar Number  
10    1859, Assembly Bill Number 7769, by  
11    Assemblymember Rajkumar, an act to amend the  
12    Education Law.

13                  ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:     Read the  
14    last section.

15                  THE SECRETARY:     Section 3. This  
16    act shall take effect July 1, 2023.

17                  ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:     Call the  
18    roll.

19                  (The Secretary called the roll.)

20                  ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:     Senator  
21    Addabbo to explain his vote.

22                  SENATOR ADDABBO:     Good morning,  
23    everyone.

24                  Light over darkness, good over evil,  
25    the ability to address your challenges. These

1 are the messages of Diwali, and this is the  
2 characteristic of Diwali.

3 And now, because of this bill --  
4 hopefully the Governor signs it -- the residents  
5 of New York City, through the school system, will  
6 realize this as a holiday.

7 It's a positive message that I think  
8 certainly in today's times we need that message  
9 that Diwali brings us. I want to thank you all  
10 for your support. I want to thank our leader, of  
11 course, for bringing this to the floor.

12 But I really want to thank  
13 Eric Katz, my legislative director, and the team.  
14 To deal with the Assembly on this bill, and their  
15 persistence to get it to the floor and to have us  
16 do this bill -- it was an adventure. So I want  
17 to say thank you.

18 And I'll be voting aye. Thank you  
19 very much.

20 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator  
21 Addabbo to be recorded in the affirmative.

22 Senator Liu to explain his vote.

23 SENATOR LIU: Thank you,  
24 Mr. President.

25 Diwali is the triumph of good over

1 evil, of light over darkness, of everything good  
2 over bad. It's very important as well. And I  
3 thank Senator Addabbo for carrying this bill.

4 This is very meaningful to the  
5 growing population of New Yorkers who are of the  
6 Hindu, the Jain, the Sikh and also the Buddhist  
7 faith.

8 So I want to thank Majority Leader  
9 Stewart-Cousins for all of her support in this,  
10 as well as many of our colleagues here, and I  
11 proudly vote aye.

12 Thank you, Mr. President.

13 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator  
14 Liu to be recorded in the affirmative.

15 Senator Chu to explain her vote.

16 SENATOR CHU: Thank you,  
17 Mr. President, again for another reason I still  
18 keep my eyes open for these exciting bills.

19 Diwali means "world of light." It's  
20 a holiday usually to celebrate for five days  
21 long. That's where our people celebrate with  
22 great happiness and joy and symbolize the  
23 spiritual victory of light over darkness, good  
24 over evil, and knowledge over ignorance.

25 And majorly, usually there's three

1 traditional ways to celebrate this holiday. We  
2 dress in colorful traditional clothing, we light  
3 up the inside and outside of our homes with a row  
4 of lights, and probably the last one is the most  
5 universal celebration, is we celebrate with  
6 fireworks.

7                   And with that, by passing this  
8 bill -- sorry, late hours.

9                   Unfortunately for those holidays,  
10 those five days' celebration time, our students,  
11 they're not given any time off of the school to  
12 partake in the festival. However, this bill will  
13 make Diwali a school holiday in New York City and  
14 send a message to our constituents that we  
15 recognize their celebration and encourage their  
16 traditions by allowing them to take home to focus  
17 on their religious obligations.

18                   In my district this bill will allow  
19 my constituents the ability to participate in  
20 Diwali celebrations. And I would like to thank  
21 Senator Addabbo for advancing this important  
22 representation in embracing our diversity. And  
23 I'm a proud cosponsor of this bill.

24                   For all these reasons, I vote aye.

25                   Thank you.

1                   ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:    Senator  
2   Chu to be recorded in the affirmative.  
3                   Announce the results.  
4                   THE SECRETARY:    Ayes, 62.  
5                   ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:    The bill  
6   is passed.  
7                   THE SECRETARY:    Calendar Number  
8   1861, Senate Print Number 7571, by  
9   Senator Scarcella-Spanton, an act in relation to  
10   authorizing the Silver Lake Foundation Inc. to  
11   receive retroactive real property tax exempt  
12   status.  
13                   ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:    Read the  
14   last section.  
15                   THE SECRETARY:    Section 2.  This  
16   act shall take effect immediately.  
17                   ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:    Call the  
18   roll.  
19                   (The Secretary called the roll.)  
20                   ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:    Senator  
21   Persaud to explain her vote.  
22                   Just kidding, Roxie.  
23                   Announce the results.  
24                   (Laughter.)  
25                   THE SECRETARY:    In relation to

1 Calendar Number 1861, voting in the negative:

2 Senator O'Mara.

3 Ayes, 61. Nays, 1.

4 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill  
5 is passed.

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

8 SENATOR GIANARIS: That was like  
9 getting called on when you didn't do the reading  
10 for the day.

11 (Laughter.)

12 SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President, I  
13 move to recommit the calendar of bills to the  
14 Rules Committee.

15 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: So  
16 ordered.

17 SENATOR GIANARIS: Please recognize  
18 Senator Ortt.

19 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator  
20 Ortt.

21 SENATOR ORTT: Thank you,  
22 Mr. President.

23 It is late, and I'd like to say I'll  
24 be brief, but that's a very subjective term. So  
25 I'll be between Senator Liu and Senator Walczyk,

1       somewhere in the middle there.

2                   (Laughter.)

3                   SENATOR ORTT:     You know, as a  
4       leader, you know, whenever you do these closing  
5       comments you think about things you're going to  
6       say on behalf of your conference, you think about  
7       things you should say.  And of course we always  
8       do these at like 4:00 in the morning, right?  
9       So -- and the truth is not only am I not at my  
10      best, it's 4:00 in the morning.  You really don't  
11      feel like doing all the comments you wrote at  
12      10 p.m.  So -- so that was the strategy.  Great  
13      job.

14                   (Laughter.)

15                   SENATOR ORTT:     Great job.

16                   But I just want to -- first of all,  
17      I want to thank -- I think the most important  
18      thing at the end of session is to thank everyone  
19      who helps make the New York State Senate run.  
20      Because there's a lot of folks who don't sit in  
21      these chairs, whose names are never on a ballot,  
22      whose names aren't in the newspaper, probably  
23      much to their appreciation.  But they make this  
24      place run on behalf of the 20 million people who  
25      live in New York State.  And they help us do what

1 we have to do.

2                   So to all of the staff, both in this  
3 room and out there, who help make us look as good  
4 as we can be looked -- look as good as we can,  
5 and who help us do our job, I just want to thank  
6 the staff collectively, Republican and Democrat.  
7 And I would like a round of applause for all of  
8 them.

9                   (Applause.)

10                  SENATOR ORTT: No doubt on both  
11 sides -- and I'm sure Senator Stewart-Cousins  
12 will mention her staff. I do want to thank our  
13 staff, our counsel staff, who's spent a lot of  
14 time working with our counterparts across the  
15 aisle to get bills in, to get changes made so  
16 that these bills can be put on the floor and  
17 hopefully put into law.

18                  And it's a hard process even when we  
19 were in the majority. You don't get all the  
20 bills you want. Things happen. The Assembly  
21 makes a change and screws them up or whatever,  
22 however it goes. But it's tough.

23                  But I want to thank our staff;  
24 again, counsel's office, for the work that they  
25 do working with Majority counsel's office to get

1 these calendars in, make sure we have time to  
2 brief. Much of our staff is briefing these  
3 bills. Certainly in the Minority they're  
4 briefing us at 1:00 in the morning, 2:00 in the  
5 morning, they're briefing us on very little  
6 sleep. Even if they're briefing us at 10:00 in  
7 the morning, they probably didn't sleep much the  
8 night before as they were going through these  
9 bills.

10                   And all the great questions you  
11 heard, most of them were written by staff. Not  
12 all of them, but a lot of them. And so I want to  
13 thank our staff certainly for the work that they  
14 do.

15                   I want to thank our members. It is  
16 a privilege to serve in leadership in this body.  
17 It is certainly a privilege to be a conference  
18 leader. And for me, to be chosen by your  
19 colleagues, by your peers to lead them -- I mean,  
20 we're all Senators. And to be chosen by  
21 Senators -- I'm sure the Majority Leader feels  
22 exactly the same way -- it's really a very high  
23 honor.

24                   And it is not always easy, but it is  
25 certainly an honor and pleasure. And I want to

1 thank my members for how you conducted yourselves  
2 on the floor, for the debate, for the questions,  
3 and for the job that you do.

4           So I want to thank you, of course,  
5 for letting me lead this conference. It is one  
6 of the great honors of my life, Mr. President, to  
7 lead the Republican Conference here in the  
8 State Senate.

9           I want to thank the Majority Leader,  
10 Senator Stewart-Cousins, for her partnership, for  
11 her cooperation, for her understanding, and for  
12 the role she plays as the leader of the body but  
13 also the leader of her conference, and for  
14 working with me as we try to get through what we  
15 have to get through on behalf of the people of  
16 New York State.

17           I want to thank Senator Gianaris for  
18 what he does here on the floor.

19           And of course I'd be remiss if I  
20 didn't thank my deputy leader, Senator Lanza.  
21 Senator Lanza, as you might know, doesn't really  
22 leave the chair a whole lot. Now, I've told him  
23 he can leave to go to the bathroom, get something  
24 to eat, get away from Senator Gianaris for a few  
25 minutes --

1 (Laughter.)

2 SENATOR ORTT: -- whatever it is,  
3 right? But he really doesn't. He sits here --  
4 and I came over here, he's got bottles of water.  
5 It's like he's a hostage out here.

6 (Laughter.)

7 SENATOR ORTT: But he's -- he does  
8 not like to leave because he takes his role,  
9 being a floor leader, being that floor general,  
10 very seriously.

11 And there's a lot of hours spent on  
12 this floor -- not just today, but the whole week  
13 and all session. And certainly on behalf of our  
14 conference, I want to thank Senator Gianaris  
15 {sic} for your leadership here as well.

16 (Applause.)

17 SENATOR ORTT: He thought he was  
18 going to be the most fashionable guy and he wore  
19 the seersucker suit, and then he saw  
20 Senator Walczyk and that was out the window,  
21 so --

22 (Laughter.)

23 SENATOR ORTT: Very, very briefly,  
24 Mr. President.

25 Look, it's no surprise, it's been a

1 long session, there's been a lot of twists and  
2 turns this session from the judicial nominations  
3 to the budget to -- you know, here we are today.  
4 And it's probably no secret that our conference  
5 feels very differently about a lot of  
6 legislation -- not all of it. Not all of it. If  
7 you've probably looked at the number of bills  
8 that were passed, many of them were passed  
9 overwhelmingly or unanimously.

10 But there's a lot of bills that our  
11 conference has very real disagreements about, and  
12 you say that in the debate. And it's a  
13 philosophical difference. I really believe at  
14 our core, and I think it was crystallized in the  
15 elections bill, the changing of the election.  
16 And I was thinking about, you know, what was I  
17 going to talk about, and I wanted to boil it down  
18 because it's late and I wanted to just get to the  
19 one bill. But I think it crystallizes the  
20 difference between our conference and the  
21 Majority.

22 This is a conference that believes  
23 that the smaller the form of government, the  
24 better. The bigger it gets, the worse it gets,  
25 the more divorced from the people. So whether

1 it's your village government, your city  
2 government, your town government, your county  
3 government, I firmly believe that that is the  
4 level of government certainly that's closest to  
5 the people and that produces the best result and  
6 that ensures our principles, which are freedom,  
7 public safety, affordability -- those are our  
8 principles here in this conference.

9           And generally speaking, when we talk  
10 about Albany, I don't believe in my time here,  
11 both Majority and Minority, I haven't seen a ton  
12 of solutions that came out of this place that  
13 made life infinitely better for people on the  
14 ground. And certainly in Washington, D.C., I  
15 think we can all agree that's even more the case.  
16 Because you're just getting bigger.

17           And yet what we did with that  
18 bill -- and I know, we heard things like, you  
19 know, voter turnout. And, you know, so obviously  
20 the argument being that we are against voter  
21 turnout, which means we must be against  
22 democracy. That's -- nothing can be further from  
23 the truth.

24           I've watched over the past several  
25 years as this body has made several Election Law

1 changes. We have made it easier and easier and  
2 easier to vote. Or at least we've said that.  
3 We've said we're making it easier to vote. You  
4 can vote early, you can vote absentee, you can  
5 change your registration very close to the  
6 Election Day. You can register to vote very  
7 close to the Election Day. You can have an  
8 absentee ballot that's not even postmarked.

9 We've made many, many changes, all  
10 in the name of boosting voter turnout, making it  
11 easier to vote. And yet still, apparently that's  
12 not enough. So we've got to condense these  
13 elections.

14 I don't believe it's about turnout.  
15 I firmly believe it's about nationalizing  
16 elections. That's what it's about. And we know  
17 why. We know why. Senator -- the sponsor during  
18 the debate said, you know, turnout, what's the  
19 problem? When you nationalize elections here in  
20 the State of New York, that is going -- if you  
21 look at the numbers, Republican voters turn out  
22 at a higher rate in midterm years. They also  
23 turn out in the even years, but they turn out at  
24 a higher rate in midterm years. Democrat voters  
25 tend to turn out big in national elections,

1 predominantly presidential.

2           Those are the numbers. Despite all  
3 the efforts we've made, those remain the numbers.  
4 So what do we do? Let's merge them. That'll --  
5 that's the ticket. We'll merge the elections,  
6 and then hopefully that addresses the issue of  
7 turnout. But what it really does is it changes  
8 the outcome in local elections. And it  
9 absolutely will drown out local government  
10 elections, campaigns and issues. There's no way  
11 it doesn't. There's no way it doesn't.

12           When you -- when your average  
13 constituent turns on their TV and watches CNN,  
14 MSNBC, Fox News, whatever it is, they're not  
15 talking about the town board or the county  
16 legislature, they're talking about the  
17 presidential politics, Washington, D.C. That's  
18 true for most people. That's the level of  
19 politics they know.

20           And we've seen the nationalization  
21 of politics due to social media and other reasons  
22 across the board. I see people running for  
23 school board talking about the southern border.

24           So we know what it's really about.  
25 And our conference stands opposed to that because

1 we believe in the primacy of local government.  
2 And they should have their own year to talk about  
3 local issues. And we see the results. Democrats  
4 vote for Republicans in those local years. In  
5 national years, Republicans vote for Democrats,  
6 because the issues are different. And that  
7 separation is key, and it's always been that way.

8           And it has worked because everyone  
9 is -- even Senator Martins said everyone in my  
10 district's registered to vote that wants to vote,  
11 and they are free to vote. We've made it easier  
12 for them to vote. And that's not a bad thing.  
13 It's not a bad thing. I served for a year in a  
14 country where they didn't have the right to vote,  
15 and it was only people with guns that allowed  
16 them to go vote. So it is a good thing when  
17 people can turn out, and we should always  
18 encourage that.

19           But to drown out local election  
20 years, to essentially nullify the importance of  
21 local elections in the effort of partisan  
22 politics -- that's what this is. And let's not  
23 pretend that partisan politics don't ever enter  
24 this august chamber, because they do. They did  
25 before, and they do today, and they will in the

1 future. That's a reality. The folks at home  
2 watching, they're smart enough to know -- whether  
3 it's 20 percent or 70 percent, they know that's  
4 what's going on here.

5 So while we were disappointed with  
6 that and other bills, certainly the Clean Slate  
7 legislation and some others, I was proud of the  
8 way this conference has conducted ourselves the  
9 past week.

10 And I would just say this, because I  
11 noticed on the floor, you know, things get a  
12 little tense, Mr. President. They get a little  
13 tense this time of year. People are tired, we're  
14 up late. But how we conduct ourselves I think is  
15 important. And how we conduct ourselves when  
16 we're having passionate debates is important to  
17 me. I know it's important to the  
18 Majority Leader, because I've talked to her and  
19 she's affirmed that. And I know it's important  
20 to our conference.

21 And so I would just remind my  
22 colleagues across the aisle that we do have a  
23 different governing philosophy that is  
24 represented by our constituents. We're not your  
25 bro, we're your colleagues. We're not stupid, we

1 have a different way that we think government  
2 should be run.

3 Mr. President, we sleep just fine at  
4 night.

5 Thank you for your indulgence. I  
6 want to thank the members. God bless.

7 (Applause.)

8 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator  
9 Gianaris.

10 SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President,  
11 please recognize Majority Leader Andrea  
12 Stewart-Cousins.

13 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The  
14 Majority Leader, Andrea Stewart-Cousins.

15 SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Thank you  
16 so much.

17 And I'm not going to say I'm going  
18 to be brief, but I certainly will not bring this  
19 to an extraordinarily long end. But there are  
20 thank-yous, there are sentiments that obviously  
21 need to be expressed.

22 But I think the sentiment overall is  
23 gratitude. Gratitude, again, for the opportunity  
24 to be in these chambers. Gratitude for the  
25 opportunity to share our opinions, to debate our

1 philosophies, and to govern in a way that  
2 reflects, yes, our districts and what we believe  
3 is for the betterment of the state.

4 But as Senator Ortt said, none of  
5 this happens without all of us working together.  
6 And this is, in this night of gratitude, the time  
7 where I too get a chance to thank all of the  
8 people who make this work.

9 And I of course want to say  
10 thank you to my deputy, the guy who keeps it  
11 moving, keeps the decorum. He too is really not  
12 allowed to leave. Every once in a while you do,  
13 and then you're like, okay, let me get back.

14 But I want to thank you,  
15 Senator Gianaris, for really helping to guide the  
16 ship and getting us to the end.

17 (Applause.)

18 SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: I'm going  
19 to tell a secret. He's going to be a daddy!

20 (Applause.)

21 SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Very  
22 exciting.

23 And of course your -- your  
24 counterpart, Senator Lanza. We've been --

25 (Laughter.)

1                   SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS:    You know,  
2    I was going to -- you don't know what you did, do  
3    you?

4                   SENATOR LANZA:        I have that effect.  
5                   (Laughter.)

6                   SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS:    Yeah.  
7    No, no.

8                   (To Senator Ortt.)    You know, I  
9    was -- because when you were thanking him, you  
10   actually said "Gianaris."

11                  SENATOR ORTT:        No.

12                  SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS:    Yes, you  
13   did.  So I was going to do that.  You thanked  
14   him, and then you said -- but I knew we were --  
15   so I will give you -- but thank you also,  
16   Senator Lanza, for what you do.

17                  (Applause.)

18                  SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS:    Senator  
19   Ortt, certainly it is a pleasure.  Even when you  
20   staged a mini-revolt.  Then we're like, okay,  
21   what's going on, you know.  But I found out.  
22   And, you know, we get to talk.  And then  
23   everybody comes back together and we eventually  
24   get to the end.

25                  But it's good working with you, and

1 I will always strive to keep the lines of  
2 communication open.

3 Obviously I want to thank the  
4 incredible staff on both sides of the aisle. I  
5 know my staff has really -- like you said,  
6 there's been so many twists and turns, and so  
7 it's been a perpetual going and going and going.  
8 So I thank each and every one of you for really  
9 creating an environment, no matter how bumpy or  
10 how uncertain, really just -- just even and  
11 really professional.

12 And again, I know we've been on the  
13 Minority side, and staff in the Minority work  
14 just as hard -- and sometimes even harder because  
15 you have to do a lot of catching up.

16 So again, thank you so much to the  
17 staff. Thank you.

18 (Applause.)

19 SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: And when  
20 I talk about staff, I really have to shout out my  
21 senior staff, who really have just been  
22 incredible. My counsel, Eric Katz.

23 (Applause.)

24 SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: The money  
25 man, my Finance director, Dave Friedfel.

1 (Applause.)

2 SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Mike  
3 Murphy, communications director. Where's Mike?  
4 There he is.

5 (Applause.)

6 SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: I want to  
7 thank Jonathan Alvarenga, my director of  
8 operations.

9 (Applause.)

10 SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: And all  
11 of my staff here in the Capitol, 907, in the  
12 district, just thank you so much. I said I know  
13 you have to run a lot because of me.

14 And I also want to thank -- where's  
15 Alejandra, Alejandra Paulino, the Secretary of  
16 the Senate?

17 (Applause.)

18 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: She  
19 thought of getting us all these cool bottles so  
20 that we will stay hydrated during the summer.

21 But thank you, Ale, for always  
22 making sure everything is, again, the way it  
23 should be.

24 Also Big Ben, Ben Sturges.

25 (Applause.)

1                   SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS:    And all  
2   the Sergeant-at-Arms who keep us safe.

3                   I think it's pretty clear that it  
4   takes a village.  And every single one of you,  
5   every single one of us plays an essential role in  
6   this village.

7                   And of course I want to thank my  
8   conference.  Every time I get an opportunity to  
9   say, you know, how incredible you are -- and I  
10  look over there too, and I've got to look back  
11  there.

12                  And thank you.  Thank you for  
13  never -- never being afraid to take on the hard  
14  fights, to do things that were never, ever  
15  entertained before in these chambers because so  
16  many -- so many of us were never in the chamber.  
17  But here we are.  And every day we prove to  
18  New York and to New Yorkers what leadership looks  
19  like.

20                  I also want to thank my first ever,  
21  the first-ever class of all women freshmen  
22  Senators --

23                  (Applause.)

24                  SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS:    Never  
25  done.  Come on.

1                   I was trying to get Patricia over,  
2 but -- you know, Patricia, because you were alone  
3 in the group. I said, Come on over, but she  
4 didn't. She stayed. (Laughing.)

5                   But I want to say to them that they  
6 all brought such unique and diverse perspectives  
7 to our body. And you all have accomplished so  
8 much in your very, very first year in Albany.

9                   When I stood in front of the chamber  
10 at the beginning of the year, it was to lead  
11 New York State's first ever back-to-back  
12 supermajorities in state history. Voters sent us  
13 here once again to continue addressing the most  
14 pressing issues of the day with the same level of  
15 tenacity and resolve that we've demonstrated  
16 since the beginning.

17                   We were tasked with formulating  
18 timely solutions that not only alleviated the  
19 symptoms but rooted out the disease. We spent  
20 this session fighting at every turn for the best  
21 interests of the people we represent, and  
22 certainly for middle- and working-class families.  
23 We opened strong pro-democracy, pro-choice  
24 legislation to counter national rollbacks.

25                   We used our purse to craft a

1 historic budget that funds resources and  
2 opportunities from the middle out and from the  
3 bottom up, creating a more affordable New York  
4 for all. And now we're closing with robust  
5 policies that carry this year's momentum to  
6 unlock our greatest potential for generations to  
7 come.

8           The rest of the nation looks to us  
9 to set an example. That's why the work we do  
10 here carries enormous weight, because the path we  
11 clear today will be the road that others will  
12 take tomorrow.

13           As some seek to up-end the pillars  
14 of our democracy and claw at the heart of  
15 American values, New York continues to stand as a  
16 breakwater. Per our tradition since taking the  
17 majority, we started this session by advancing a  
18 new spate of voting reforms and election  
19 protections that pay homage to the people who  
20 sent us here and ensure that they always have the  
21 final say in these halls of power. We expanded  
22 ballot access, strengthened anti-suppression  
23 measures. We took steps to join the ERIC  
24 database that will keep voter registration  
25 information up-to-date across state lines.

1                   We also rejected the draconian  
2 attacks on our reproductive freedoms by advancing  
3 the second passage of the Equal Rights Amendment,  
4 which codifies reproductive care and gender  
5 equality in the State of New York.

6                   We further strengthened provider  
7 protections, increased access to services,  
8 solidifying New York as a destination state for  
9 anyone in need of reproductive care.

10                  And we held ourselves accountable by  
11 enacting much-needed judicial reforms, ensuring  
12 the arbiters of justice are beholden solely to  
13 the law.

14                  Our state was founded by those  
15 fleeing oppression in search of the freedom we  
16 hold dear. That's why we took proactive steps in  
17 this year's legislative budget to allocate  
18 \$1.3 billion for asylum-seeker support, and we'll  
19 continue to work with our state and federal  
20 partners in addressing this situation with  
21 humanity and grace.

22                  We also passed the Coverage For All  
23 legislation that will help provide healthcare to  
24 immigrant brothers and sisters without burdening  
25 our state taxpayers.

1                   New York will look to champion the  
2 values we were built upon, but we can only do  
3 that if our own foundation is rock-solid. That  
4 means continuing to make New York an affordable  
5 state where families can settle down and raise  
6 their children without being priced out of their  
7 livelihoods. This session we helped make that a  
8 reality by raising the minimum wage and indexing  
9 it to inflation to make it a true living wage.

10                   We also continued supporting  
11 families by expanding the childcare tax credit  
12 eligibility to kids under five, because no parent  
13 should have to choose between raising their child  
14 and making a living.

15                   We looked to make the everyday costs  
16 of living a lot cheaper by ratepayer protections,  
17 capping the price of insulin, prohibiting  
18 price-gouging of medicine, and this week passing  
19 the New York HEAT Act. With these measures we're  
20 making it more economically possible to stay in  
21 the place you've always known, keeping New York's  
22 excellence right here at home.

23                   Reinvesting in New York communities  
24 is fundamental to the continued growth and  
25 success of our state as a whole. That's why, in

1 addition to supporting households, we've also  
2 taken steps to bolster local resources.

3 We prioritized public transportation  
4 and infrastructure by continuing to fund MTA  
5 services that result in better service, including  
6 a pilot program of five free buses throughout the  
7 city boroughs.

8 We implemented recommendations from  
9 the Task Force on Limo Safety to make commercial  
10 rentals safer and more reliable. We passed the  
11 first-ever railroad safety package in our state's  
12 history to prevent future calamities like the one  
13 in East Palestine, Ohio, from happening right  
14 here in New York.

15 We always invest in the best when it  
16 comes to our communities by creating  
17 opportunities at every turn. For many, it starts  
18 with education. And that's why I'm so proud that  
19 this year, for the first time, we're fully  
20 funding Foundation Aid for our public schools,  
21 finally ensuring that no one is owed money and  
22 looking to make sure that no one is locked out of  
23 a brighter future because of the zip code they  
24 live in.

25 And we're guaranteeing that students

1 will eat at least two free meals during the  
2 school day. In a world where many children  
3 receive the majority of their nourishment at  
4 school, this is important, it's imperative, and  
5 it's groundbreaking.

6 We halted any increases in state  
7 tuition for SUNY and CUNY. We continued our  
8 investment in our public higher education system  
9 by providing \$3 billion in capital investments.

10 We know that in order for people to  
11 make good choices, they need to have good  
12 choices. That's why we've strengthened  
13 after-school programming, expanded investments in  
14 activities dedicated to the arts and youth  
15 athletics. And this week we passed a bill to  
16 enact the School Anti-Violence Education Act,  
17 aimed at reducing gun violence among children.

18 I remain a firm believer that public  
19 safety and justice reform can work together.  
20 This conference has never been a one-and-done  
21 shop. So we clarified the bail law to ensure  
22 that it's working as intended by providing judges  
23 greater discretion, and put greater funding  
24 towards gun violence reduction and mental health  
25 treatment.

1                   And we're prioritizing second  
2 chances. And I'm so proud that today we passed  
3 Clean Slate, which will remove barriers that have  
4 prevented too many from reintegrating into  
5 society after they've fully paid their debt. Now  
6 we can tap into the talent and potential that has  
7 been needlessly withheld from our communities due  
8 to perpetual punishment.

9                   In the same effort, we passed the  
10 landmark Wrongful Convictions Act, which grants  
11 citizens a meaningful review of their case to  
12 redress wrongful convictions, even in guilty  
13 pleas.

14                   We've also begun the process to  
15 fully outlaw forced labor as a punishment for  
16 crime, the well-known 13th Amendment loophole  
17 that has allowed legal slavery to flourish  
18 throughout U.S. prisons. Our bill, "No Slavery  
19 in New York," is a monumental step towards  
20 stamping out our nation's original sin and  
21 accounting for the ways it still permeates our  
22 everyday lives.

23                   Our conference is committed to  
24 correcting the mistakes of the past so they are  
25 no longer the playbook of the future. That's

1 also why we're finally advancing the  
2 Commission on Reparations, which will be tasked  
3 with studying the effects on how New York's  
4 status as an economic and cultural hub of the  
5 world has in many ways been built and shaped by  
6 slavery, and how we as a state, as a nation, can  
7 atone for the generational trauma that's  
8 incurred.

9                   These are crucial steps towards  
10 building a strong and more equitable New York.  
11 But as I so often say, we can't reap the true  
12 reward of these efforts if the earth is  
13 uninhabitable. Just this week New York was the  
14 center of the world's attention as we led the  
15 planet in the worst air quality by hundreds of  
16 points, shattering all records since the EPA  
17 first started keeping track, as a result of the  
18 Canadian wildfires.

19                   We often hear the refrain "It will  
20 never happen in New York." But we as leaders  
21 know better. Whether it be reproductive freedom,  
22 gun control, climate action, we see now that the  
23 only guaranteed protections are the ones that we  
24 secure for ourselves. The stakes have never been  
25 higher. That's why I'm not only so proud of this

1 nation-leading climate action we've enacted in  
2 the past, but of our continued efforts to make  
3 good on climate promises in the CLCPA while  
4 reversing the damage that's been done. Because  
5 we no longer have to imagine how bad the  
6 alternatives can be.

7                   We finished the session strong in  
8 our commitment by getting the Build Public  
9 Renewables Act done and passing the  
10 Climate Superfund Act, which requires our biggest  
11 polluters to pay up on the costs of adapting to  
12 climate change. It also has the teeth necessary  
13 to ensure our clean, green infrastructure of the  
14 future is union-made right here in America.

15                   That's what our conference is all  
16 about: Implementing ground-up reforms that not  
17 only target the urgent needs of our citizens and  
18 our state, but do so in a way that generates  
19 growth and prosperity throughout all levels of  
20 society.

21                   The challenges we face are really  
22 opportunities lying in wait. As this  
23 deliberative body passes common-sense solutions,  
24 we're writing the blueprint for our greatest  
25 potential yet. So as you return to your

1 districts to meet with your hardworking families  
2 and the community, all the people who you  
3 represent, I invite you to consider the ways our  
4 work here will change their circumstances for the  
5 better, and to feel proud of what we've  
6 accomplished on behalf of New Yorkers.

7 I want to thank you all for another  
8 incredible, memorable and historic year. And  
9 when you go back to meet all your hardworking  
10 constituents, don't forget to hang out a little  
11 bit with the people you actually know, love and  
12 that have missed you for so long as you come up  
13 here away from your families.

14 Have some time, enjoy yourself.  
15 Replenish. Travel a little bit. Stay safe. And  
16 I will see you back, happy and healthy, in 2024.

17 God bless. Thank you.

18 (Extended standing ovation.)

19 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator  
20 Gianaris.

21 SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President,  
22 is there any further business at the desk?

23 ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: There is  
24 no further business at the desk.

25 (Laughter.)

1                   SENATOR GIANARIS:    I move to  
2 adjourn to a date and time at the call of the  
3 Temporary President of the Senate, with  
4 intervening days being legislative days.

5                   ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY:    On  
6 motion, the Senate stands adjourned until a date  
7 and time at the call of the Temporary President  
8 of the Senate, intervening days being  
9 legislative.

10   (Cheers; applause.)

11   (Whereupon, at 3:27 a.m., the Senate  
12 adjourned.)

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