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

P R O C E E D I N G S

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The Senate will come to order.

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

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

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

(Laughter.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Thank you, Senator Bailey.

Thank you, Mr. President.

(Laughter.)

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

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

New York.

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

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

(Response of "Amen.")

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Reading of the Journal.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: 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.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Good morning, Senator Gianaris.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The Secretary will read.

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

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 62.

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

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

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

SENATOR GIANARIS: Let's take up the calendar.

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

The Secretary will read.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Substitution so ordered.

The Secretary will read.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Read the

last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Announce the results.

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

Ayes, 61. Nays, 1.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill is passed.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Read the last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Announce the results.

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

Ayes, 61. Nays, 1.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill is passed.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Read the last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 62.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill is passed.

There is a substitution at the desk.

The Secretary will read.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Substitution so ordered.

The Secretary will read.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Read the last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator Kavanagh to explain his vote.

SENATOR KAVANAGH: Thank you, Mr. President.

The hour is late, so I will be

brief, as Senator Liu has instructed me to be. That's a bit of an inside joke.

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

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

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

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

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

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

So with that, I vote aye.

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

Senator Liu to explain his vote.

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

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

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

(Laughter; applause.)

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

Senator Mayer to explain her vote.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Senator Chu to explain her vote.

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

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

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

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

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

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

So I really appreciate all my colleagues, especially State Senator Kavanagh and all the Senators and our leadership who support this one. I really, really appreciate it.

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

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

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

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

Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 62.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill is passed.

There's a substitution at the desk.

The Secretary will read.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The substitution is so ordered.

The Secretary will read.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Read the last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator Addabbo to explain his vote.

SENATOR ADDABBO: Good morning, everyone.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Senator Liu to explain his vote.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Mr. President.

Diwali is the triumph of good over

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

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

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

Thank you, Mr. President.

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

Senator Chu to explain her vote.

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

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

And majorly, usually there's three

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

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

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

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

For all these reasons, I vote aye.

Thank you.

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

Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 62.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 1861, Senate Print Number 7571, by Senator Scarcella-Spanton, an act in relation to authorizing the Silver Lake Foundation Inc. to receive retroactive real property tax exempt status.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Read the last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator Persaud to explain her vote.

Just kidding, Roxie.

Announce the results.

(Laughter.)

THE SECRETARY: In relation to

Calendar Number 1861, voting in the negative: Senator O'Mara.

Ayes, 61. Nays, 1.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: The bill is passed.

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

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

(Laughter.)

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

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: So ordered.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Please recognize Senator Ortt.

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator Ortt.

SENATOR ORTT: Thank you, Mr. President.

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

somewhere in the middle there.

(Laughter.)

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

(Laughter.)

SENATOR ORTT: Great job.

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

we have to do.

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

(Applause.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Laughter.)

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

(Laughter.)

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

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

(Applause.)

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

(Laughter.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

predominantly presidential.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. President, we sleep just fine at night.

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

(Applause.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator Gianaris.

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

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

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Thank you so much.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Applause.)

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

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Very exciting.

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

(Laughter.)

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

SENATOR LANZA: I have that effect.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Yeah. No, no.

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

SENATOR ORTT: No.

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

(Applause.)

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

But it's good working with you, and

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

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

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

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

(Applause.)

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

(Applause.)

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

(Applause.)

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

(Applause.)

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

(Applause.)

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

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

(Applause.)

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

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

Also Big Ben, Ben Sturges.

(Applause.)

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

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

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

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

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

(Applause.)

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Never done. Come on.

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

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

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

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

We used our purse to craft a

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And we're guaranteeing that students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

God bless. Thank you.

(Extended standing ovation.)

ACTING PRESIDENT BAILEY: Senator Gianaris.

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

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

(Laughter.)

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

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

(Cheers; applause.)

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