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NEW YORK STATE SENATE

THE STENOGRAPHIC RECORD

ALBANY, NEW YORK

March 18, 2025

3:53 p.m.

REGULAR SESSION

SENATOR JEREMY COONEY, Acting President

ALEJANDRA N. PAULINO, ESQ., Secretary

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

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

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

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

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

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

13 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Reading
14 of the Journal.

15 THE SECRETARY: In Senate, Monday,
16 March 17, 2025, the Senate met pursuant to
17 adjournment. The Journal of Friday, March 14,
18 2025, was read and approved. On motion, the
19 Senate adjourned.

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

22 Presentation of petitions.

23 Messages from the Assembly.

24 Messages from the Governor.

25 Reports of standing committees.

1 Reports of select committees.

2 Communications and reports from
3 state officers.

4 Motions and resolutions.

5 Senator Gianaris.

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

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

12 (Response of "Aye.")

13 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Opposed,
14 nay.

15 (No response.)

16 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The
17 Resolution Calendar is adopted.

18 Senator Gianaris.

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

21 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Senator
22 Chan for an introduction.

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

25 Thank you, Mr. President, and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Thank
4 you, Senator Chan.

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

8 Please rise and be recognized.

9 (Standing ovation.)

10 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Senator
11 Gianaris.

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

14 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The
15 Secretary will read.

16 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
17 235, Senate Print 2000, by Senator Addabbo, an
18 act to amend the Insurance Law.

19 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Read the
20 last section.

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

23 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Call the
24 roll.

25 (The Secretary called the roll.)

1 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Announce
2 the results.

3 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 61.

4 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill
5 is passed.

6 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
7 418, Senate Print 3352, by Senator Sanders, an
8 act to amend the Insurance Law.

9 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Read the
10 last section.

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

13 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Call the
14 roll.

15 (The Secretary called the roll.)

16 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Announce
17 the results.

18 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 61.

19 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill
20 is passed.

21 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
22 437, Senate Print 4832, by Senator Chris Ryan, an
23 act to amend the Workers' Compensation Law.

24 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Read the
25 last section.

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

3 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Call the
4 roll.

5 (The Secretary called the roll.)

6 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Announce
7 the results.

8 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 61.

9 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill
10 is passed.

11 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
12 452, Senate Print 3071, by Senator Sanders, an
13 act to amend the Education Law.

14 SENATOR LANZA: Lay it aside.

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

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

19 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
20 454, Senate Print 3236, by Senator Cooney, an act
21 to amend the Education Law.

22 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Read the
23 last section.

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

1 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Call the
2 roll.

3 (The Secretary called the roll.)

4 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Announce
5 the results.

6 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 61.

7 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill
8 is passed.

9 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
10 481, Senate Print 4162, by Senator Bailey, an act
11 to incentivize the purchase of local produce in
12 supermarkets and grocery stores through the
13 FreshConnect program.

14 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Read the
15 last section.

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

19 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Call the
20 roll.

21 (The Secretary called the roll.)

22 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Announce
23 the results.

24 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 61.

25 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill

1 is passed.

2 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
3 482, Senate Print 4754, by Senator Bailey, an act
4 to amend the Agriculture and Markets Law.

5 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Read the
6 last section.

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

10 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Call the
11 roll.

12 (The Secretary called the roll.)

13 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Announce
14 the results.

15 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 61.

16 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill
17 is passed.

18 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
19 512, Senate Print 3585, by Senator Ramos, an act
20 to amend the General Business Law.

21 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Read the
22 last section.

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

1 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Call the
2 roll.

3 (The Secretary called the roll.)

4 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Announce
5 the results.

6 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 61.

7 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill
8 is passed.

9 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
10 526, Senate Print 1609, by Senator Harckham, an
11 act to amend the Environmental Conservation Law.

12 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Read the
13 last section.

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

16 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Call the
17 roll.

18 (The Secretary called the roll.)

19 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Announce
20 the results.

21 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 61.

22 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill
23 is passed.

24 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
25 545, Senate Print 1052, by Senator May, an act to

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

5 SENATOR LANZA: Lay it aside.

6 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill
7 will be laid aside.

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

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

12 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The
13 Secretary will ring the bell.

14 The Secretary will read.

15 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number
16 545, Senate Print 1052, by Senator May, an act to
17 direct the Department of Economic Development to
18 move the Central New York Welcome Center to the
19 Equal Rights Heritage Center in the City of
20 Auburn.

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

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

1 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Senator
2 May, will you yield?

3 SENATOR MAY: I will.

4 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Senator
5 May yields.

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

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

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

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

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

4 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the
5 sponsor yield?

6 SENATOR MAY: Yes.

7 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The
8 sponsor yields.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

21 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the
22 sponsor yield?

23 SENATOR MAY: I will.

24 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The
25 sponsor yields.

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

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

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

9 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the
10 sponsor yield?

11 SENATOR MAY: I will.

12 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The
13 sponsor yields.

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

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

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

23 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the
24 sponsor yield?

25 SENATOR MAY: I will.

1 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The
2 sponsor yields.

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

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

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

11 How about Madison County, also in
12 Central New York?

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

15 SENATOR MAY: Yes.

16 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The
17 sponsor yields.

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

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

1 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the
2 sponsor yield?

3 SENATOR MAY: I will.

4 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The
5 sponsor yields.

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

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

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

16 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the
17 sponsor yield?

18 SENATOR MAY: Yes.

19 SENATOR MURRAY: The Senator
20 yields.

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

25 SENATOR MAY: Through you,

1 Mr. President, I have not.

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

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

8 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the
9 sponsor yield?

10 SENATOR MAY: I would.

11 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The
12 sponsor yields.

13 SENATOR WALCZYK: Since the City of
14 Syracuse and Destiny USA are at the confluence of
15 81 and 90 right in the heart of Central New York,
16 and you're moving the Central New York Welcome
17 Center, what -- and not hearing from any of the
18 municipalities that I just listed in
19 Central New York, would you tell me what was your
20 process for relocating and how did you
21 site-select a new location for the
22 Central New York Welcome Center?

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

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

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

6 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the
7 sponsor yield?

8 SENATOR MAY: I will.

9 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The
10 sponsor yields.

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

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

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

23 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the
24 sponsor yield?

25 SENATOR MAY: I will.

1 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The
2 sponsor yields.

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

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

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

18 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Will the
19 sponsor yield?

20 SENATOR MAY: I would.

21 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The
22 Senator yields.

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

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

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

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

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

25 So there actually is a -- while the

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

6 SENATOR WALCZYK: Mr. President, on
7 the bill.

8 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Senator
9 Walczyk on the bill.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 Thank you.

25 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Thank

1 you, Senator.

2 Are there any other Senators wishing
3 to be heard?

4 Seeing and hearing none, the debate
5 is closed.

6 Senator Gianaris.

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

10 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Read the
11 last section.

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

14 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Call the
15 roll.

16 (The Secretary called the roll.)

17 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: Senator
18 May to explain her vote.

19 SENATOR MAY: Thank you,
20 Mr. President.

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

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

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

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

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

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

23 I vote aye.

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

1 Announce the results.

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

6 Ayes, 57. Nays, 4.

7 ACTING PRESIDENT COONEY: The bill
8 is passed.

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

11 Sorry, go ahead, Senator Gianaris.

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

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

16 SENATOR GIANARIS: I move to
17 adjourn until tomorrow, Wednesday, March 19th, at
18 3:00 p.m.

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

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

24

25