NEW YORK STATE SENATE

THE STENOGRAPHIC RECORD

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REGULAR SESSION

SENATOR ROXANNE J. PERSAUD, Acting President

ALEJANDRA N. PAULINO, ESQ., Secretary

P R O C E E D I N G S

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The Senate will come to order.

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

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

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Chaplain Colonel Davis A. Bowlus, of the United States Corps of Cadets, will deliver's today's invocation.

Chaplain?

CHAPLAIN COLONEL BOWLUS: Good morning. I invite you to pray with me.

Almighty God, we gather before You today, at the opening of this historic day, with thankful hearts, seeking Your wisdom, guidance and care upon the leaders assembled here.

We give You thanks for the great State of New York, the historic fountainhead of America's legacy of democracy, of inspired leadership, patriotism and sacrificial love for our fellow man.

Lord, we also thank You for the support this Legislature provides to West Point,

nurturing the development of leaders of character who will faithfully serve our nation in the U.S. Army.

And so on this day, grant each leader here the wisdom to discern clearly, the compassion to serve justly, and the courage to act decisively.

All of this I ask in the name of the great Friend and Master of all. Amen.

(Response of "Amen.")

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Reading of the Journal.

THE SECRETARY: In Senate, Tuesday, April 8, 2025, the Senate met pursuant to adjournment. The Journal of Monday, April 7, 2025, was read and approved. On motion, the Senate adjourned.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Without objection, the Journal stands approved as read.

Presentation of petitions.

Messages from the Assembly.

Messages from the --

Messages from the Assembly.

The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Senator Krueger

moves to discharge, from the Committee on Health, Assembly Bill Number 565 and substitute it for the identical Senate Bill 3437, Third Reading Calendar 494.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: So ordered.

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, Madam President.

On behalf of Senator Kavanagh, on page 18 I offer the following amendments to Calendar 344, Senate Print 952A, and ask that said bill retain its place on the Third Reading Calendar.

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

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Please take up

previously adopted Resolution 503, by Senator Skoufis, read that resolution's title and recognize Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Resolution 503, by Senator Skoufis, memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim April 9, 2025, as West Point Day in New York State.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Leader Stewart-Cousins on the resolution.

SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Thank you so much, Madam President.

And I want to thank you, Colonel Bowlus, for your beautiful invocation. Thank you so much for blessing our chamber.

Today I have the honor to once again commemorate West Point Day and to celebrate the United States Military Academy, a historic and vital institution that I'm proud to have in our state.

This year marks the 73rd Annual West Point Day. So for over 70 years, the Senate has gathered to recognize the excellence of each year's cadets.

So welcome and congratulations, and thank you for being here. It is their unwavering devotion to tradition and service that is a testimony to your outstanding character.

I also want to thank Colonel Khanh Diep -- thank you so much for being here -- and of course the rest of the West Point leadership team, under whose steady guidance generations of cadets have learned how to lead and live well.

I'd now like to take a moment to reflect on the history and legacy of the United States Military Academy.

For over two centuries, West Point and its graduates have contributed greatly to the defense and development of the United States. The United States Military Academy, the nation's first military academy, was established in 1802 by President Thomas Jefferson.

However, even before then, the West Point region had played a crucial military role during the Revolutionary War. President George Washington chose this area as the site of a strategically valuable fortress, and in 1779 he maintained his headquarters there.

Under the leadership of

General Sylvanus Thayer, father of the military academy, West Point became the first school of engineering in the United States. This school's earliest graduates constructed much of the country's infrastructure in the 19th century, including the Washington Monument.

Many distinguished figures, each of whom have valiantly served our nation in war and peace, number among the over 80,000 graduates of West Point -- Presidents Ulysses S. Grant, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Generals William T. Sherman, John J. Pershing, Douglas MacArthur and Omar Bradley, and Andrea Hollen, who belonged to the first class that included women cadets, which again makes me so happy to see Colonel Diep. A great tradition, thank you.

When I look at the cadets with us today, I see the same spirit of devotion, honor, leadership by which all West Point graduates have lived, now live, and will live.

You are the heirs to a tradition of excellence and service, and I commend you for all of your bravery in answering our nation's highest call. The brilliant example each of you has set will surely inspire others -- if not to

contribute to West Point's tradition, then to serve in some other way.

I'm reminded of my own sources of inspiration whose valor and altruism have profoundly shaped my life. My dad was a decorated World War II veteran, my brother a veteran of the Vietnam War. Their service impressed on me the need to fight for the greater good, the good of all, no matter how difficult or daunting.

That same valorous altruism is present in you as cadets. You've pledged to defend our nation and its citizens. You've courageously placed the good of the many above your own. I wish each of you the continued strength and will to see through this great, laudable undertaking, and I offer you this chamber's support.

Though my father and my brother served in the military, it's always difficult for me and all of us who've not served to really grasp the depth of your passionate and selfless commitment. However, I want you to know that the commitment each of you has made to keep America safe and to uphold our shared values will always

be valued and admired by us.

We will not forget you or what you have done. New York and the United States will forever be in your debt. And though we cannot repay that debt, we will always honor you and your service. We are grateful for everything you do.

I pledge to you now that the Senate will not neglect either your commitment or your service, and we will continue to advocate on your behalf. And we will always strive to back these appreciative words with action.

I thank you again for what you are contributing every day to our safety, to our democracy, to the present and to the future, and wish you God speed.

Thank you so much, Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Leader.

Senator Skoufis on the resolution.

SENATOR SKOUFIS: Thank you very much, Madam President.

I first want to express my gratitude to the Majority Leader for always very warmly welcoming and hosting our cadets and our officers

and our staff on this day each year. It's really a wonderful tradition, and we're so thankful to have all of you with us today.

So on the resolution, Madam President, it's my great honor and privilege to rise today as the Senator from the 42nd Senate District, home to the United States Military Academy at West Point, on this 73rd Annual West Point Day.

It's a cherished tradition here in the halls of the Capitol and a morning of great pride for both Senators present, my current colleagues, as well as Senators past, including my predecessor, Colonel Bill Larkin, who really cherished and enjoyed this day each year.

High places with a broad vantage point have always made strategic sense. This was likely in George Washington's mind when he chose the location of the fort that would become West Point. The views from the academy are sweeping, taking in the Hudson River for miles in both directions. Effective, too, because in spite of concerted efforts during the Revolutionary War, West Point was never captured and is today the oldest continuously occupied

regular Army post in the United States.

British forces were well-trained and well-armed, and it took the vision offered by the garrison's location to hold off that invasion. This vision, the ability to see for miles ahead, continues to shape West Point to this day.

Prior to its establishment, as the Majority Leader mentioned, the U.S. Army employed European engineers and, propelled by the vision of American-trained engineers, West Point was established by Congress in 1802 with the stated aim to do just that.

The success of the academy's education was highlighted during the War of 1812 when the British failed to capture even a single work constructed by a graduate of West Point.

The vision exercised by those at West Point -- seeing not just what was before them, but for miles ahead as well -- kept the garrison safe from enemy forces, gave West Point graduates the skills they needed to meaningfully contribute to American victories, and keeps the academy one of the most respected institutions in the United States and the world.

We need leaders who will make

difficult choices, who will grow and evolve, ready not just to meet this moment but every moment that comes after. The cadets that stand -- or sit -- before us here today are those leaders, and my colleagues and I are honored that you've joined us today.

We are humbled by your dedication to our country's ideals and your willingness to serve, defending, protecting and uplifting the principles of our true democracy.

Thank you for coming today. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the resolution. And last but not least, Madam President: Go Army, beat Navy!

Thank you.

(Laughter.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Senator.

Minority Leader Ortt on the resolution.

SENATOR ORTT: Thank you, Madam President.

I too want to extend my gratitude to all of my colleagues, to the Majority Leader, Andrea Stewart-Cousins, to Senator Skoufis, as

well as all of our colleagues who continue to make this day a day in this chamber -- 73 years, it is a great tradition.

Not just as New York State Senators but I think as New Yorkers, very proud to be a state that hosts the United States Military Academy. I'm sure Senator Skoufis, very proud to be the Senator that represents the United States Military Academy and all the history. You've heard the history from my colleague Senator Stewart-Cousins. It is a storied history.

It is fitting we're here today on April 9th, because it was on this day that one West Point graduate, Robert E. Lee, surrendered to another West Point graduate, Ulysses S. Grant, bringing to a conclusion maybe the worst of calamities, a civil war. And I think that's a reminder of the pivotal role that graduates from the United States Military Academy have played and continue to play in this country's story, in the story of our nation and of our republic.

It is a place where you don't just get an education. There's a lot of places you can get a top-flight education. Maybe not as many today as there was, but there's certainly a

lot of places you can go. But you're being trained to be leaders, to be the future leaders of the United States military, the future leaders of the United States Army, future public servants, future leaders in business. You are being trained to be leaders for this country at a time when this country needs leaders.

Now, maybe it's always been that way, but I think the need and the dearth of leaders is more apparent than ever. And you're going to be asked to be those leaders for this country for this next generation, and it might come upon you faster than you think. So pay attention. Listen to your leaders.

Listen to your leadership at West Point. I want to thank them for their continued service to this country, for their continued service to one of our finest institutions, and for being here today, for also taking part in this. We can't do it, obviously. West Point Day wouldn't be the same without the West Point cadets and the West Point leadership here. So I want to thank them for their continued support of this day.

And again, I want to thank you for

your commitment to serve America and to place all of your hopes and dreams and aspirations -- I think there's something always unique for an 18-year-old or a 19-year-old who has everything in front of them, to place that on the altar of liberty and to say, I'm willing to maybe sacrifice all of that because I believe so strongly in the promise of this country -- the promise of the country is greater than maybe the promise of my own life.

That is a very -- we can talk about it, but fewer people do it. And yet you've all done that by going to West Point. Yes, you're going to get a top-flight education. Yes, you're going to have the distinction of saying, I'm a graduate of West Point, of the United States Military Academy. But there's a commitment that comes along with that, and you're willing to honor that commitment and put a lot on the line, including maybe your life, for this great country of ours.

And so for that I thank you. Certainly as an Army veteran, I thank you. I never went to West Point. If you saw my transcripts, you'd know why.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR ORTT: But I served, I had many drills at Camp Smith, which is right next door there to West Point. I've been at West Point. I've done some combat swimming training in the pool at West Point, which was fun. For anyone who hasn't done that, I encourage you, go over and check it out. It's a great experience.

But certainly I'll leave you with this, more on a lighter note. So there's -- my colleagues here, I have a colleague here who is -- Senator Stec, who's a Navy veteran. And we have a bet every year for the Army-Navy game. Last year I didn't do so well. Right? So this year, if you can talk to the football team --

(Laughter.)

SENATOR ORTT: -- please, it's really important to me that we get a win this coming year because I have to display the Midshipmen flag in our conference room when we don't win. I get to display the Black Knights flag when we do win, for a whole year.

So I would encourage you, whatever you can do to motivate those -- the football team

for next year, if they need any further motivation.

But it is a great honor for me to rise and speak on this resolution. And I wish you all the best. Godspeed. Go Army, beat Navy!

Thank you, Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Senator.

It is now my honor to introduce Colonel Khanh Diep, chief of staff of the United States Military Academy.

Colonel?

(Standing ovation.)

COLONEL DIEP: Ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Minority Leader Ortt -- sir, we will take on that challenge to "Go Army, beat Navy" there -- and members of this distinguished chamber.

On behalf of the 61st Superintendent, Lieutenant General Steve Gilland, we are so grateful for being here. Again, it's the 73rd year of West Point Day. We wouldn't do it without your support and for you hosting us.

Leader Stewart-Cousins, thank you

for the opportunity to address this chamber.

Senator Skoufis, sir, thank you for hosting us today.

And Senator Jessica Scarcella-Spanton, thank you for your committee, for all you do for our veterans and service members in this great state.

Joining me today is our First Captain, Cadet Caroline Robinson. She is the only one not from New York, so please be fair. And then along with her is -- rightly so, thank you.

(Applause.)

COLONEL DIEP: She actually -- she leads over 4400 cadets. She is the -- that's why she's called the Cadet First Captain.

And with her is the Brigade Executive Officer, Shepherd Dzina, from New York City. How about that? There you go.

(Applause.)

COLONEL DIEP: I'm not sure if you got the opportunity to read his bio, but he is a Rhodes Scholar, he's heading off to Oxford this May for graduation, and he's in international politics, right, Shepherd, you mentioned to me

earlier.

So please -- and then along with the team here we have 12 other cadets from throughout the State of New York, representing nearly 300 cadets from this Empire State. So please, again, give them a warm round of applause.

(Applause.)

COLONEL DIEP: As mentioned, this year the United States Army celebrates its 250th birthday -- older than our nation itself. America's Army has a rich history, a legacy of service, sacrifice and dedication, defending our nation and its values at home and around the globe. Throughout the past 250 years, the Empire State has been an important part of that rich history, from its humble beginnings in May of 1775 with the establishment of a handful of infantry regiments. But the New York Line, right, which would distinguish itself in battle through our War of Independence and become one of the most respected fighting forces in the Continental Army.

That legacy also includes a point of land at the west bank of the Hudson just south of Newburgh, where George Washington would call the

key to the continent -- a critical strategic outpost in the defense of this fledgling nation.

Today, as America's oldest continuously occupied military post, West Point plays an important strategic role in the United States Army and our nation, home to the United States Military Academy, charged with developing leaders of character ready to defend the Army and the nation for its mission to win and fight our nation's wars.

As we celebrate the establishment of America's Army, we also celebrate those who have proudly served, whether on active duty or citizen-soldiers of the Army Reserve and National Guard, whose leadership, dedication to duty, and contributions in peacetime and war have shaped our nation's history and the Army's legacy of excellence.

Among them are of course countless proud New Yorkers, including a young clerk from right here in Albany named John Brennan, who volunteered to serve as part of General Pershing's American expeditionary force during World War I. Brennan served in combat in France and Belgium as a saddler in the 27th Infantry

Division, enduring endless mud and rain and shellings and mustard gas attacks.

After the war, he would write about his experiences, beginning his memoir with these words: "This is not the diary of a hero, but one of the many men who enlisted in the Army to serve his country, to carry out whatever job he was assigned to do." He went on to conclude in his memoir with this: "I'm glad I did enlist. We did it to protect our country. It was our duty."

This is the legacy of America's Army. More than the campaigns and battles fought and won, it is the men and women who put on the cloth of our nation and proudly bore the title of American soldier -- all unified by a shared love of country and a dedication to duty and service that John Brennan wrote about more than a century ago.

That love of country and dedication to duty is shared by every son and daughter of the Empire State, and indeed every American who has served in defense of our nation. It is shared by all those who made the ultimate sacrifice. It is shared by all those serving today at home and around the globe. And it is

shared by those who are preparing to assume the mantle of service and leadership like these outstanding young men and women with us here today, preparing to continue the Army's legacy of excellence and make their own mark on the Army's story, unified by the values and ideals of duty, honor, country.

This would not be possible without the tremendous support of our state leaders here in Albany as well as from our neighbors throughout New York, Orange County, and the Hudson Valley region. I would like to recognize the members of this chamber for your enduring dedication to the people of this state and to the principles of democracy. Your work shapes the future of generations to come, and it is a future that we at West Point proudly stand ready to support.

As we look to the future, I ask for your continued support of the United States Military Academy and our cadets. The academy is not only a national asset, but it is also a symbol of the strength of New York: New York State's commitment to producing leaders of character who will guide our nation in times of

peace and war. Your support, whether through infrastructure, funding or recognition, has a profound impact on the education and the development of our future leaders.

Again, we are so honored to be here, and we're proud to be part of New York's legacy of service. We appreciate your continued help and support in inspiring a renewed call to service in our young citizens, to help them see the Army and West Point as unique pathways to service.

On behalf of the United States Military Academy, thank you for your time, your support, and the honor of being here today.

Go Army!

(Standing ovation.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Colonel.

Senator Scarcella-Spanton on the resolution.

SENATOR SCARCELLA-SPANTON: Thank you, Madam President.

And thank you so much for that amazing speech.

It is one of my favorite days of the

year, especially as chair of Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs. I'm proud to join my colleagues in honoring West Point Day right here on the Senate floor. Thank you so much, Senator Skoufis, for hosting us every year.

West Point is an historic institution here in New York, having produced generations of military officers who have served our country with valor. For more than 200 years it has remained one of the top training grounds for military leaders across the world. But West Point is more than just a military school. It teaches its cadets the value of duty, honor and country.

And thank you so much to all of the cadets who are here today. You make us so incredibly proud.

These cadets continue to inspire me. Individuals like Cadet Olivia Raykhman, from my district, who was driven to pursue a path of service after her family's experience. And I want to read a text I got from Olivia today. I had the pleasure of meeting her last year, so I wanted to check in and say hello and just, you know, let her know today is West Point Day.

And she said: "A quick update on my next steps. I'm graduating on May 24th and headed to Stanford for my master's in journalism as a Knight-Hennessy Scholar. Then I'm heading to Destin, Florida, to the Eglin Air Force Base, to be an information operations officer at the 1st Special Operations Wing."

So, West Point, you have produced tremendous individuals. And I am proud to represent Olivia and her family. And it's just so nice to see where everyone is going. It was great to chat with all of you earlier, too, to hear what your next steps are.

Olivia was here for West Point last year, and her fellow cadets represent the brightest in our country. And today we recognize not only the accomplishments of this respected institution, but also the sacrifices made by every cadet who chooses to serve our nation through their education and training.

I'm proud to honor West Point Day alongside its current cadets, the graduates currently serving our country, and the countless veterans who came through its ranks. Thank you for choosing a path of service and leadership,

and Happy West Point Day.

I proudly vote aye. Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Skoufis to speak about his cadet.

SENATOR SKOUFIS: Thank you very much, Madam President.

And thanks for affording some of our colleagues as well some time to introduce their constituent cadets who are here.

Before I get to the introduction, I just want to acknowledge some of the officers and staff who have joined us who take time out of their very busy schedule to be up here on West Point Day.

Certainly first and foremost we heard from Colonel Khanh Diep, chief of staff. Thank you for your words, which were inspirational, and certainly for your service back home as well.

She is joined by Major Kelechi Odocha, who is the G3 operations officer and instructor; Major Michael Oakes, tactical officer for the Corps of Cadets. We heard earlier from

Colonel David Bowlus, the chaplain: Thank you for your invocation, your words earlier today.

Support personnel include Mr. Matthew Hintz, from the Public Affairs and Community Engagement Office; Mr. Eric Bartelt, photographer from Public Affairs; Mr. David Nagel, deputy of the Commander's Action Group; and Ms. Alison Schwartz, G3 operations specialist.

I also want to give particular thanks on the Senate side to, in addition to the Majority Leader, of course, Senator Scarcella-Spanton, who we just heard from and does an incredible job serving on the Veterans Affairs, Homeland Security and Military Affairs Committee as chair.

Shelley Andrews and the floor team; Jordan Jones and the Senate services team -- Shane Jones and the Senate events team; Ale Paulino, Secretary of the Senate. And from my team, or my entire office, but in particular Will Alexander and Michael Dulaney.

A lot goes into this day and putting all these events and activities together, and so thanks to everyone on the Senate team that did

that.

Now, I have two introductions. First, we heard a little bit about him before, but Shepherd Dzina. I'm going to take a little bit of pride of ownership here. Yes, he was born and raised and spent most of his life in New York City, but more recently he is an Orange County resident, let's all be clear, and I'm proud to have him as a constituent currently residing in Tuxedo.

We heard really impressive background and certainly years ahead as a Rhodes Scholar going to Oxford to study economics and international relations. He plans to be posted, after that, in Hawaii, following graduate school, and is in the infantry branch studying, as his major, economics at West Point.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for your leadership among the cadets as well. So please stand.

And then with him I want to introduce Caroline Robinson, who was also mentioned a little bit earlier. She is a little bit of an orphan in terms of introductions as the non-New Yorker here among the cadets, so I'm

going to take the liberty to introduce and acknowledge her as well.

She hails from Mountain Brook, Alabama, daughter of a single mom who has overcome a lot of adversity to get to West Point and be here. Is looking forward to getting posted also to Hawaii, and then at some point after her Army career looks forward to actually coming back to West Point as a history instructor as well.

Thank you both for being here. And Madam President, after the introductions, if you can afford them all the liberties of the floor.

Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Harckham for his introduction.

SENATOR HARCKHAM: Thank you very much, Madam President.

I am proud to introduce Aiden Meza, from the neighboring town of Somers. Aiden, if you could stand and join us.

He is a geospatial information science major. And I say that because when we

spoke earlier, nothing like that existed when I went to college, so that was news to me.

Wants to be in the infantry, participates in mock trial and Frisbee, and this summer will be attending air assault training.

So we thank you for being here with us. We thank you for your commitment to the academy.

And I'll just say very briefly to all of you, I grew up in the footsteps of West Point as a Rockland County resident. We're there frequently for the Parade of Cadets, we go to the museum. And we had season tickets to Army Football. And although you fell short against Navy this year, you're enjoying relative success right now. Back in the -- dare I say the '60s, the '70s and the '80s, Army Football was horrible. And we sat through many a cold afternoon at Michie Stadium watching some really bad football. So please, enjoy what you have right now.

But the other reason why West Point was special to us, my father served in the infantry in World War II in France and Germany, and he said that there was something special

about the officers who were trained at West Point. And I say that to you because you will be recognized as special. And I mention that not out of arrogance, but hopefully out of humility, because with being recognized as special comes a unique responsibility to those who serve under you.

And we are all so proud of you. We thank you for your commitment to service. As was referenced earlier today, we need more people of your generation in public service. You have all stepped up to the challenge.

Thank you, and God bless you.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick for her introduction.

SENATOR CANZONERI-FITZPATRICK: Thank you, Madam President.

I too want to express my thanks to the Majority Leader for continuing this time-honored tradition. As the granddaughter of a World War I vet who served in the Army, I'm always proud to recognize Army. Thank you, Colonel, thank you, Major, for being here and

taking the time and for your input.

I'd like to give a quick shout out to one of my constituents, Johnny Devino, a member of your Men's Lacrosse Team who is graduating this year.

But I'd like to introduce Shafay Ahmed, from Floral Park. Shafay, you are the American dream, having emigrated to the United States when you were just six years old.

He graduated from Floral Park Memorial High School, and upon graduation enlisted for four years as a CBRN specialist -- not the traditional path to get to West Point. He was even deployed overseas prior to attending the academy.

He's now studying engineering management. And also I'm happy to say that you attended my alma mater, St. John's, prior to enlisting and prior to joining the academy.

You're a role model for all youth and certainly a shining star of the 9th Senate District. I proudly congratulate you on being here, wish you well in your time at the academy, and wish you all the best. And know that we're all rooting for your success.

Thank you, Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Weber for his introduction.

SENATOR WEBER: Thank you, Madam President.

I want to also thank the Majority Leader, Andrea Stewart-Cousins, and Senator Skoufis, for both making this day happen, a very important day.

Welcome to the leadership of West Point for being here. This is, as it was said earlier, one of our favorite days as Senators, so we're so happy to have you here as well.

So Rockland County, Senate District 38, is lucky to have two cadets here today.

First I want to introduce Christina Vozzo. Christina is from Clarkstown, Valley Cottage. She is a kinesiology major. She is heading off to the First Brigade of Fort Cavazos, I think, Texas. She would like to eventually attend law school -- and we have a lot of lawyers in here, so we might want to connect you with the lawyers here as well -- upon

retirement from the Army, and wants to obviously transition into hospital administration and run a hospital.

We're happy and thrilled to have you here today as well.

We also have Cadet Steven Trombetta. Steven, please rise. Steven Trombetta is a fellow Suffern Mountie, like my kids, someone who probably was in school with my oldest daughter, Rachel.

You know, when you see movies you see officers and they're older. Right? But, you know, I like to say two things can be true at once. We are all getting old in this chamber, and the cadets look a lot younger every year, don't they?

(Laughter.)

SENATOR WEBER: But it's something that I think is a reminder to our leaders in Washington now and in the future that when we send people to war, it's these younger kids that are going to war fighting for us.

So we're happy to have you here today, Steven, as well.

A little bit about Steven. Steven

will commission as an adjutant general officer. He will post in Fort George Meade, Maryland, and will be working in Intelligence and Security Commander Battalion.

Welcome, Cadet. Good luck to you. Godspeed. Be safe.

And I proudly vote aye on this resolution. Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Weik for her introduction.

SENATOR WEIK: Thank you, Madam President.

I'm so proud that I get to recognize two cadets from my district: Matthew Stueber. Matthew is from West Islip, and he's a mechanical engineering student. I'm so proud that he's here again this year.

We have also Navroop Singh, from Massapequa. These two gentlemen truly make us proud with their service to our country.

I'd like to make sure that we thank West Point leadership for being here today. And I want to thank you all for your service to our great nation. May God bless you and guide you.

Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Tedisco for his introduction.

SENATOR TEDISCO: Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President and my colleagues, I'm often fond of saying to anyone in earshot: All good things emanate from the 44th Senatorial District. And I just happen to be the Senator from the 44th Senatorial District.

And with us today is the best example I can think of, of an outstanding individual who is emanating from that 44th Senatorial District. It's my West Point honoree, Eve Crossett, if she would stand up.

Eve hails from Saratoga Springs. She is a Nordic skier from a big Army family and living out her dream attending the U.S. Military Academy. Eve is majoring in management, and her intended branch is field artillery. Following graduation, she will post to Fort Cavazos, in Texas.

In her free time she enjoys a nice

cup of iced coffee. Now, don't we all, Eve? It's the best. But also she loves attending country music concerts and spending time with family and friends.

Her commitment to the academy will extend beyond her cadet years as she intends to return to West Point to teach PL-300 or work in the Simon Center.

Madam President, I ask you to welcome Eve here to this august body and offer all the cordialities of our house.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Stavisky for her introduction.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you, Madam President.

Thank you, Madam Leader and Senator Skoufis and Senator Scarcella-Spanton and really the folks at West Point and the Legislature.

If you took a look at last year's West Point Day when I introduced the cadet from my district, I could almost do a rerun. It's déjà vu. The previous cadet, her name was

Tracy Chen. And today we're here to honor her twin sister, Tricia Chen.

And I notice that there seems to be a common thread in the Chen family because they have a younger brother who is currently planning, hoping to come to West Point.

Tricia graduated from Cardozo High School and then enlisted in the Army. She trained in Missouri and then was stationed at the Scofield Barracks in Hawaii.

She and her sister live in the College Point, Flushing, area with their parents. Can you imagine how proud those parents are? Not just for what their daughters and their son are accomplishing, not just what's going to happen in the future, but they raised three remarkable young people trained to serve others.

This is I think a remarkable family. We pay tribute to them and, through them, to their children who are living literally the American dream, and that is service to others and to be ready in case we need their special skills.

So Madam President, I congratulate not just the three cadet -- or the two cadet Chen sisters, but also their family and the

family of every other cadet who is here today. We thank you for what you do, and we thank you for what you are going to do to help defend our country.

Thank you, Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Fahy for her introduction.

SENATOR FAHY: Thank you, Madam President.

It's a true honor, especially as a new member of the Senate, to have a cadet to introduce, a hometown one. And her name is Cadet Morgan Lawler. She's from Knox, New York, which is here in Albany County, and a graduate of the Academy of Holy Names, and of course a constituent of the 46th Senate District.

She also comes in a long, long line of those who have also served our country. And I couldn't be more proud. As our leader, Andrea Stewart-Cousins, mentioned earlier, you are trained and you are part of an esteemed institution who is there to fight for our greater good. And that's so much of what this is about.

At a time when leadership is really

something we need now more than ever, it's wonderful to see this younger generation and it gives us so much hope for the future. Not only is she a cadet here, but her intention is to go on to be a medical doctor.

So it is a lifelong service that you are embarking on, and could not be more impressive. The education system that you are a part of is really rooted in character, ethics and service, and it's something that we as public officials also strive to uphold. So I think this is such an important day.

So thank you for the sacrifices that you are already making, and thank you for being a part of our future as military leaders. And I love that part of your training is service before self. And I think that's one of my favorite sayings in the military, is the service before self. We as a nation owe you an undying gratitude, and we wish Cadet Morgan Lawler only the best in all of her future endeavors.

Thank you, Madam President, for this opportunity.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Walczyk for his introduction.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Thank you, Madam President.

Cadet Anthony Tejkl, on your feet.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR WALCZYK: Out of Theresa, New York, and now in Company Foxtrot 3. He enlisted in the United States Army Reserve to serve his nation, went down to Texas Tech, was in the ROTC program, deployed to CENTCOM in OSS, so he understands what the sands of Arabia feel like. He is now serving and leading from the front and looking to go into Cyber Command in the U.S. Army.

We are very grateful for your service thus far, and excited about your future in leadership.

Duty, honor and country. That's a motto that they know well at West Point. Congratulations on joining the Thin Gray Line, for signing a promissory note for this nation up to and including your life, for placing the mission first and the mission of our nation and our Constitution first, for never accepting

defeat, for never quitting, for always moving forward.

And remember, take care of your soldiers. We're very proud of you.

Thank you, Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Webb for her introduction.

SENATOR WEBB: Thank you, Madam President.

And thank you, Majority Leader, and Senator Skoufis and Senator Scarcella-Spanton, for continuing this great tradition.

I'm very excited to stand today for the first time because I have a cadet from Senate District 52: Bryce Sinclair. And I'm going to brag a little bit about Bryce -- well, a lot of bit.

So Bryce hails from Maine-Endwell, New York. And his connection to West Point is a testament to the power of hard work and dedication that he embodies. His story is one of dreams turned into action.

From an early age, Bryce dreamed of becoming an astronaut, and at West Point he

actively sought out opportunities to make that dream a reality. His entrepreneurial spirit led him to cofound West Point's first Model Rocketry Club, a project borne out of his desire to explore the possibilities of space.

This initiative not only provided an outlet for creativity but also demonstrated his leadership and ability to collaborate with his peers. Together they made history by launching a rocket into space, setting a new amateur rocketry altitude record. Bryce's work is a reminder that no dream is too big if you have the drive to pursue it.

Academically, Bryce's commitment is unparalleled. As a mechanical engineering major, Bryce demonstrates his ability to balance the demands of both rigorous coursework and military training. But what stands out even more is his ambition to continue advancing his education. Bryce has been accepted into the Georgia Institute of Technology, where he will pursue a master's in aerospace engineering, an incredibly prestigious program.

His pursuit of further academic excellence is a reflection of his determination

to push the boundaries of what he can achieve, whether it's the design of new technologies or his service to our nation.

Looking beyond his time at West Point, Bryce has clear goals set for his future in the military. He plans to branch into infantry, a field that demands exceptional leadership and courage, and ultimately will serve in special operations.

After completing his service as a lieutenant, Bryce's path will lead him to Fort Bragg, where he will no doubt bring his innovation and strategic thinking to new heights.

I look forward to the continued great work that Bryce will do, not just simply in the Army but beyond. And one of the things that I appreciate about this day, and for all of our cadets that are here, and the entire team that's with them, is that they demonstrate the importance of not only good public service but determination to lift each other up.

Congratulations, everyone, and thank you so much, Bryce.

Thank you, Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank

you, Senator.

Senator Hinchey for her introduction.

SENATOR HINCHEY: Thank you, Madam President.

I too want to thank the leader for so graciously hosting this day every year. It's really one of the best, where we get to see the future, right? It's a really incredible day.

I also want to thank Senator Skoufis for hosting and for being such a wonderful representative for West Point, always advocating on behalf of the institution.

I rise today proudly to introduce a constituent of the 41st District, Cadet Jonah Dohr -- thank you -- who is also a company spirit officer. Jonah hails from Austerlitz, New York, in Columbia County. And he has five sisters, and attended Christian Brothers Academy here in Albany, which is what he credits for inspiring him to apply and go to West Point.

At West Point he's had incredible opportunities, including studying abroad at the Chilean Military Academy, which in this moment I think is so important -- building relationships,

understanding our global world, seeing how we all fit together. Taking that opportunity to study abroad really was a leadership moment, and so I appreciate you taking that opportunity.

At West Point he also is on the Ski and Trap Team. He enjoys fishing. As cochair of the Sportsmen's Caucus, I appreciate both of these activities. And he also enjoys running with his friends.

Upon graduating from West Point, Jonah will attend the Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course at Fort Benning, Georgia. And after that, he plans to attend and graduate from Ranger School, and then returning to New York to serve as an infantry platoon leader in the Second Brigade, 10th Mountain Division.

We could not be more thrilled of your plans to return to New York and continue your service here. We appreciate it.

Jonah, you truly represent an -- and everyone -- but you truly represent the best of us. Having this day where we get to honor you and your service, putting our country, putting our people before yourselves is such an inspiring, inspiring choice. Thank you for your

commitment. Thank you for joining us here today. And I'm so proud to have you from our district.

Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Senator.

To our guests, the cadets and administrators from West Point, I welcome you on behalf of the Senate. We extend to you the privileges and courtesies of this house. Thank you for your service.

Please rise and be recognized.

(Standing ovation.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Thank you, Madam President.

I know our friends from West Point have to get to the Assembly chamber as well, so we'll let them make their exit while we continue our work here.

Please recognize at this time Senator Fahy for an introduction.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Fahy for an introduction.

SENATOR FAHY: It's a busy day of

introductions.

And please allow me, Madam President, to switch gears a little bit as I rise to recognize in the gallery there the University of Albany Women's Basketball Team, which is -- if you'd rise for a moment so we can recognize you.

It's led by Coach Colleen Mullen. And this was not planned, I assure you, but prior to her service as coach to the University at Albany Basketball Team -- Coach Mullen, would you just wave, please -- she coached for seven years at West Point. So make note, folks, you maybe recognize her, some of those with older siblings.

So she understands service and has helped translate that into an amazing team here at UAlbany. Sixty years we've had this basketball team, but they have truly developed a reputation as fierce and formidable opponents as part of the NCAA Division 1 American East Conference.

This year the Great Danes, under Coach Mullen's leadership, have had 26 wins, seven losses, and a conference record of 14 wins and two losses, which has allowed them to also

capture the American East regular season title.

The coach clearly has taught our seniors in particular many skills, but overall has noted -- the coach has noted, and I quote, "the resilience and hard work that the team demonstrates." She particularly calls out the seniors and this winning mindset that now prevails throughout their championship.

I'd like to make special note of Kayla Cooper, who earned and has been named the Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference First Team All-Conference Team. Can you please just wave from our gallery, please, Kayla.

So we're just incredibly proud to have them. And it is that type of strength and service that we've just talked about all morning. Sports I think teaches us leadership, teaches us resiliency, and teaches us a host of character development.

So it is an honor to have them here this morning. And if you would, I urge my colleagues to join in recognizing again the University at Albany Women's Basketball Team.

Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank

you, Senator.

To our guests, the UAlbany Great Danes and your coach, I welcome you on behalf of the Senate. We extend to you the privileges and courtesies of this house.

Please remain standing and be recognized.

(Standing ovation.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Next up is Senator Addabbo's previously adopted Resolution 622. Please read that resolution's title and recognize Senator Addabbo.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Resolution 622, by Senator Addabbo, memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim April 2025 as Sikh Awareness Month in the State of New York.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Addabbo on the resolution.

SENATOR ADDABBO: Thank you, Madam President. Good afternoon, everyone.

April is Sikh Awareness Month, and

we take a moment to recognize the positive contributions of our Sikh residents within the State of New York. Positive contributions in business, economics, the arts, agriculture, education, and on even West Point Day, our U.S. military.

We recognize their contributions because they are part of the fabric of this great state for many years -- over a hundred years. And actually in New York we are second only to California for the most population for our Sikh community. Roughly 78,000 residents of New York are part of the Sikh community, many of which are in my district in Richmond Hill. And I'm proud to represent them.

And so I am proud to introduce this resolution. I vote yes. And Madam President, actually give our guests here all the courtesies of the house. Thank you very much.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Cooney on the resolution.

SENATOR COONEY: Thank you, Madam President.

And thank you, Senator Addabbo, for

bringing forth this resolution. Incredibly important that we recognize and celebrate our Sikh culture in New York. Of course from Richmond Hill to Rochester, we know that the Sikh community is of course a big, vibrant part of our business community, of our civic community, and have been adding many contributions to the State of New York for many years.

I want to highlight one particular constituent of mine who was recently elected as the first Sikh trial judge in New York State, Judge Vikram Singh Vilku, who is serving as the Brighton Town Justice and who is bringing great pride to our Sikh community not just here in New York but across our states.

We know that the continued commitment and spirit and faith of the Sikh tradition will continue to generate a new generation of Sikh-Americans who contribute back to our state in so many ways. And we're so grateful to recognize this during the month of April and during all months of the year.

Thank you, Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Stavisky on the resolution.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, very briefly, Madam President.

I thank Senator Addabbo for his description of the wonderful contributions of the Sikh community. I represent many of them in my district in Queens.

And we welcome you to Albany, and we look forward to working with the entire community in the days ahead.

Thank you, Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Senator.

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

Please rise and be recognized.

(Standing ovation.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The West Point Day resolution was adopted on March 18th, and the Sikh resolution was adopted on April 8th.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Today's

resolutions are open for cosponsorship, Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: At the request of the sponsors, the resolutions are open for cosponsorship. Should you choose not to become a cosponsor, please notify the desk.

SENATOR GIANARIS: At this time, Madam President, there's a report of the Finance Committee at the desk. Let's take that up.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The Secretary will read.

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

As a member of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Blanca Lopez.

As nonvoting members of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority: Christopher Leathers and Edward R. Valenti.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Move to accept the report of the Finance Committee.

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

(Response of "Aye.")

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Opposed, nay.

(Response of "Nay.")

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The report of the Finance Committee is accepted.

Senator Krueger on the nominations.

SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you very much, Madam President.

So yesterday the three committees overlapping jurisdiction held one meeting -- the Finance Committee, the Transportation Committee, and the Corporations Committee. And

We had a very in-depth interview with the Westchester County representative, who is being renewed because of a change in county executive needing to either nominate again someone to serve or choose a new person. And happily the new county exec chose to keep the Westchester County representative, and she did a very fine job answering questions in the committee.

And the other two we are supporting today are actually required representatives from labor, both of whom were extremely supportive.

And we are grateful that all three are willing to serve on the MTA Board, because let's be honest: It's a lot of work and you take a lot of crap for being on the MTA Board. Somebody always has some complaints.

So I am very delighted that all three are willing to continue their roles on the MTA Board and take such important responsibility for a mass transit system that is the largest in the country. It's critically important to the economy, not just of the 12 counties where the MTA provides services, but actually helps ensure that the region of the New York City MTA counties ends up being a bread basket for the economies of multiple states here in the Northeast.

So I am certainly urging a yes vote on everyone, and I again am always appreciative that there are people out there who are talented, skilled, have other jobs, and are still willing to serve the people of New York State through their volunteer commitment to such important boards like the board of the MTA.

Thank you, Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Senator.

The question is on the nominations.

Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Announce the results.

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

Ayes, 37. Nays, 23.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The nominees are confirmed.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: At this time, Madam President, there will be an immediate meeting of the Rules Committee in Room 332.

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

SENATOR GIANARIS: The Senate stands at ease.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The

Senate will stand at ease.

(Whereupon, the Senate stood at ease at 12:23 p.m.)

(Whereupon, the Senate reconvened at 12:32 p.m.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The Senate will return to order.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Madam President, there's a report of the Rules Committee at the desk. Let's take that up, please.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The Secretary will read.

May we have some order in the chamber, please.

THE SECRETARY: Senator Stewart-Cousins, from the Committee on Rules, reports the following bill:

Senate Print 3786, by Senator Felder, an act to amend the Education Law.

Bill ordered direct to third reading.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Move to accept the report of the Rules Committee.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: All those in favor of accepting the Rules Committee report please signify by saying aye.

(Response of "Aye.")

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Opposed, nay.

(No response.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The report of the Rules Committee is accepted.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Please take up the calendar, Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 122, Senate Print 1919, by Senator Skoufis, an act to amend the Environmental Conservation Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Read the last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Announce

the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 141, Senate Print 904A, by Senator Gonzalez, an act to amend the Public Service Law.

SENATOR LANZA: Lay it aside.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Lay it aside.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 268, Senate Print 2071, by Senator Scarcella-Spanton, an act to amend the Labor Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Read the last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 436, Senate Print 4816, by Senator C. Ryan, an act to amend the Workers' Compensation Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 7. This act shall take effect on the 120th after it shall have become a law.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 436, voting in the negative:

Senator Walczyk.

Ayes, 59. Nays, 1.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 494, Assembly Bill 565, by Assemblymember Paulin, an act to amend the Public Health Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This

act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 494, voting in the negative are Senators Borrello, Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick, Chan, Griffo, Lanza, Mattera, Murray, Oberacker, O'Mara, Ortt, Rhoads, Stec and Tedisco.

Ayes, 47. Nays, 13.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 514, Senate Print 5600, by Senator May, an act to amend the Personal Property Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Read the last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Announce

the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 514, voting in the negative: Senator Walczyk.

Ayes, 59. Nays, 1.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 519, Senate Print 5982, by Senator Harckham, an act to amend the Environmental Conservation Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This act shall take effect on the 30th day after it shall have become a law.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 519, voting in the negative are Senators Skoufis and Walczyk.

Ayes, 58. Nays, 2.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The bill

is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 531, Senate Print 4204, by Senator Comrie, an act to amend Chapter 154 of the Laws of 1921.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Read the last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 540, Senate Print 3690, by Senator Sanders, an act to amend the Lien Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Read the last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 540, voting in the negative are Senators Ashby, Borrello, Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick, Chan, Gallivan, Griffo, Helming, Martins, Mattera, Murray, Oberacker, O'Mara, Ortt, Palumbo, Rhoads, Rolison, C. Ryan, Stec, Tedisco, Walczyk, Weber and Weik. Also Senator Lanza.

Ayes, 37. Nays, 23.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 583, Senate Print 4867, by Senator Fahy, an act to amend the Insurance Law.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Lay it aside for the day.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The bill will be laid aside for the day.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 595, Senate Print 5286, by Senator Sepúlveda, an act to amend the Lien Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Read the last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 595, voting in the negative are Senators Ashby, Borrello, Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick, Chan, Gallivan, Griffo, Helming, Lanza, Martins, Mattera, Murray, Oberacker, O'Mara, Ortt, Palumbo, Rhoads, Rolison, Skoufis, Stec, Tedisco, Walczyk, Weber and Weik.

Ayes, 37. Nays, 23.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 611, Senate Print 490, by Senator Fernandez, an act to amend the Penal Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Read the last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Call the

roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Fernandez to explain her vote.

SENATOR FERNANDEZ: Thank you, Madam President.

Under current law, survivors of sexual -- child sexual assault must recall exact dates for every act of violence committed against them, including if abuse occurred over a number of years. Prosecutors are often forced to walk away from credible cases of child sexual abuse when the child is not able to remember the details required under the law to pursue charges.

This bill will exempt children who experience sexual misconduct or predatory sexual assault up until the age of 17 from needing to specify every date abuse occurred as if it happened -- or if it happened over an extended period of time. It will ensure that child survivors are not retraumatized by the mandate of pinpointing specific times of repeated abuse and that prosecutors can hold predators fully accountable.

Our laws must reflect the -- our

laws must reflect the reality of how trauma works, especially with the nuances of child trauma. It's a necessary step to strengthen the protections for vulnerable children and give survivors the justice they deserve.

I thank my colleagues for supporting this bill, and I urge everyone to vote aye.

Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Fernandez to be recorded in the affirmative.

Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 614, Senate Print 2494, by Senator Gounardes, an act to amend the Civil Rights Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Read the last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Announce

the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 616, Senate Print 4389, by Senator May, an act to amend the Executive Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Read the last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator May to explain her vote.

SENATOR MAY: Thank you, Madam President.

This is a bill that we passed last year. It was developed by one of my session assistants a few years ago who had experience with discrimination based on color blindness.

This will allow more people to apply and potentially become police officers and not be just blanket disqualified from that job because

of color blindness.

So I hope this time around the Governor will see her way to signing it into law, and I vote aye.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator May to be recorded in the affirmative.

Senator Oberacker to explain his vote.

SENATOR OBERACKER: Thank you, Madam President.

As one who is color blind, I feel as though I could speak -- I'll use the word intelligently on this bill, and I can tell you that color blindness really doesn't affect my everyday either interactions or the duties of my prestigious job as being a Senator. Although my wife would probably counter that it may have some effect on my hearing. I can unequivocally tell all here that it does not.

Senator May, thank you for bringing this bill forward. It is a great bill. Anything that would increase our ranks or potentially increase our ranks for those in any type of first responder and/or law enforcement is a good bill.

I want to thank you. And I also

want to thank your former staff that brought it forward. It is something that I guess we don't really think about much.

And the only other time I can tell you that it was challenging was a trip one time into Syracuse. Up on Tipperary Hill, there is one stop light that is not in the correct position for those of us of color blindness. Top I stop, bottom I go, middle I go very fast.

This one was inverted. So just -- I would say it was always something that was brought forward.

And I proudly, Madam President, proudly vote aye. Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Oberacker to be recorded in the affirmative.

Senator O'Mara to explain his vote.

Senator Bailey to explain his vote.

SENATOR BAILEY: Thank you, Madam President.

I always applaud Senator May for this bill because it really shows a couple of things that we can do in this Legislature.

First and foremost, as was said, it is allowing individuals who are color blind to be

able to be police officers. And, you know, we need to make sure that people that are willing to serve us in the ranks of law enforcement, that we do anything we can to make sure we open that up and create diversity. And diversity is -- you know, diversity takes shape in many forms, and color blindness is one of them.

But one of the most important things to me is that 21 years ago I started on a journey in a different chamber as an intern myself. I interned for a second-term Assemblymember, a guy from the Bronx, and you -- it's a guy named Carl, and he's the Speaker over there. And what that internship taught me for now Speaker Heastie is that as an intern, not just coming here and doing perfunctory duties, that being a part of something to make your state important is crucial.

And when Liam came from Senator May's office to her and to me with this idea, it was something I was ecstatic about because to everybody listening, especially those who are interning or fellows, you do make a difference. Not you can, you do make a difference. Your presence in this building is a

gift.

So continue to advocate, continue to agitate and continue to come up with great ideas like Liam's law, for lack of a better term. Right? It was vetoed last year. I hope that the Governor will, no pun intended, see the right thing and makes sure she sees to it that it is signed so that folks like Liam and other folks will benefit from this legislation.

I proudly -- and hopefully for the last time because it will be law after this -- vote aye, Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Bailey to be recorded in the affirmative.

Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 616, voting in the negative:

Senator Brisport.

Ayes, 59. Nays, 1.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The bill is passed.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 617, Senate Print 4466, by Senator Mayer, an act to amend the Civil Rights Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Read the

last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This act shall take effect on the 30th day after it shall have become a law.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 617, voting in the negative:

Senator Walczyk.

Ayes, 59. Nays, 1.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The bill is passed.

Senator Gianaris, that completes the reading of the calendar.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Madam President, as members of this chamber know, every Wednesday in this chamber is Walczyk Wednesday. So --

(Laughter.)

SENATOR GIANARIS: -- if we can take the controversial calendar up, please, and let Senator Walczyk have his debate for the day.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The

Secretary will ring the bell.

The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 141, Senate Print 904A, by Senator Gonzalez, an act to amend the Public Service Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Walczyk, why do you rise?

SENATOR WALCZYK: I rise in a time-honored tradition of this chamber, Madam President.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR WALCZYK: I hope the sponsor will yield for some questions.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: In the spirit of time-honored tradition, will the sponsor yield?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Absolutely, Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The sponsor will yield.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Through you, Madam President. So the Section 16A of this bill is about reporting on utility investigations. And I was reading through the language here. The reporting is to committee chairs, to the

President of the Senate and to the Speaker of the Assembly, all of whom are Democrats.

Why weren't any minority leadership or rankers of committees included in the reporting requirement here?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Through you, Madam President. It is very custom for us to provide reports to chairs of the relevant committees. Certainly those reports are often reviewed within the committee. And in this case I believe the Senator is a part of the Energy and Telecommunications Committee.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Through you, Madam President, would the sponsor continue to yield.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Will the sponsor yield?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Through you, Madam President, yes, I do.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: So the Public Service Commission currently has the authority to stay penalties, fees, interest charges, some of the things that you're getting

at here, even temporarily suspending bills.

Have they failed in certain instances, has the Public Service Commission failed in certain instances in the State of New York in doing that, and that's why you're proposing this legislation?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Through you, Madam President, while we're aware that the PSC has this ability, they don't consistently use it. So it's important to have a piece of legislation like this one to provide that consistency.

There is precedent -- for example, what happened with Central Hudson Gas & Electric in 2021, where over 8,000 customers were billed incorrectly, that those customers were impacted and not intervene by the PSC to protect them from certain fees.

So we are introducing this bill because there has been a history here, and I'm proud that we're providing that consistency for all customers regardless of the case in question.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Through you, Madam President, would the sponsor continue to yield.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Does the

sponsor yield?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: I do.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: But in the Central Hudson case, didn't the Public Service Commission actually do what you're proposing here? Didn't they exercise their authority to stay additional fees, penalties, interest charges, terminations while the billing was straightened out on that issue?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Through you, Madam President. This bill provides that at the end of a case and determination, that customers are protected for 120 days from termination, late fees and penalties regarding the case. And once the PSC has released their report and determined whether or not the utility company is owed any of those fees, then those customers are required to pay.

So while I will understand that the PSC did intervene in part of the Central Hudson case, there is a clear standard and consistent standard being put forward in the process in this bill.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Through you, Madam President, would the sponsor continue to yield.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Does the sponsor yield?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Yes.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: So the Public Service Commission has acted under its authority in order to do exactly what you're proposing here, but we are codifying additional things in law here, if your bill becomes a law, in order to make sure that they do those things, I guess.

And I want to talk to you about some of the things that you've proposed in the change here.

So for investigations for combination utilities -- for example, a gas and an electric utility -- if there's an investigation about the gas utility, will that also impact the stay on fees for fees, penalties, interest rates, terminations for the electric charges under a combination utility?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Through you,

Madam President, this bill specifically addresses residential gas, electric and steam utility services.

If the complaints that triggered the investigation -- and for clarity, the threshold for complaints for the PSC to investigate has to be over 25 individual complaints or a municipality or Department of State submitting a written complaint to DPS. You know, after this happens, then if those complaints are regarding gas and electric, then yes, this would apply to both of those services.

SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you, Madam President, would the sponsor continue to yield.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Does the sponsor yield?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: I do.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: So I want to talk about your definition of investigations. You used "investigations" a couple of times.

My read of your legislation here is that there's kind of two different things that

could fall under the investigations category. One is a rate case that is brought to the Public Service Commission, and another is from users or municipalities under Section 71. That could be 25 users or one municipal leader that files with the Public Service Commission asking for an investigation? Am I understanding that correctly?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Through you, Madam President, I appreciate the opportunity to clarify the intent of this bill.

This does not necessarily cover routine proceedings by the PSC and is not relevant to rate-setting. It is written to address only significant investigations with broad implications for consumers. And it defines investigations as a formal proceeding conducted by the commission to examine the policies, practices, rates, charges, services, facilities, operations or management of a utility corporation or to determine compliance with any law, rule, regulation, order or tariff applicable to such a utility corporation.

So the bill's intent is to protect consumers from the impact of major systemic

issues. But if a utility company is going through a routine rate case and following all of the relevant laws, then this certainly -- then that process would go along smoothly and this bill would not be covering that.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Through you, Madam President, would the sponsor continue to yield.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Does the sponsor yield?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Yes.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Right, so that answered half of my question. This does include rate cases that would be considered an investigation. What about under Section 71? Does this also include 25 members or users or a municipal official that could ask for an investigation from the Public Service Commission?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Through you, Madam President. I want to clarify billing rates.

So if a consumer or customer has been incorrectly billed and over 25 of them have

submitted complaints, for example, and the Department of Public Service, through an informal investigation process, which on average lasts eight to nine months, has determined that there is a reasonable doubt around how those bills have been set, then yes, those rates would be under investigation. And to the member's question, they would be covered under this bill.

But again, larger rate cases and routine proceedings are not within the scope of this bill.

SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you, Madam President, would the sponsor continue to yield.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Does the sponsor yield?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: I do.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: But Section 71 of the Public Service Law isn't just about price, complaints as to quality and price of gas and electricity investigation by commission. This is the section of law that outlines 25 members of the public or a trustee of the village town or

board, chief executive officer of a legislative body, et cetera.

I just want to make sure that Section 71 of the Public Service Law also applies here. Is that called out in your bill?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Through you, Madam President, yes, that is correct.

SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you, Madam President, would the sponsor continue to yield?

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Does the sponsor yield?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: I do.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Are you aware that PSC rate cases take on average 11 months in the State of New York?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Through you, Madam President. Yes, I am aware.

SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you, Madam President, would the sponsor continue to yield?

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Does the sponsor yield?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Yes.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: So you're proposing here, as one of those investigations, a PSC rate case that for those 11 months the utility could not charge late fees if somebody hasn't paid their bill, cannot charge a penalty, cannot charge interest, and cannot discontinue service? Is that correct?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Through you, Madam President, there are currently two paths for rate setting: A litigated process and a settlement track, which are outlined in law. If the rate increase requested by the utility is in compliance with all applicable rules and regulations, then this process should move along smoothly.

However, the bill is not relevant to how rate-setting occurs. But if there are concerns about that process, legislators of course are welcome to submit legislation on that issue.

SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you, Madam President, would the sponsor continue to

yield.

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Yes.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Will the sponsor yield?

The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: But you do acknowledge that rate cases generally take about 11 months in the State of New York?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Through you, Madam President, yes, that is correct.

SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you, Madam President, would the sponsor continue to yield?

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Does the sponsor yield?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Yes, I do.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: And the legislation that you're proposing here goes a little bit further than just the timeline of the 11 months where there's a pending rate case -- called an investigation under your proposed legislation. It also goes 120 days, four months after that rate case would be settled, where the

utility still could not charge late fees, charge a penalty, charge interest or discontinue service for any of the users.

Am I reading that correctly?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Through you, Madam President, yes.

SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you, Madam President, would the sponsor continue to yield?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Yes.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Does the sponsor yield?

The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: And this legislation that you're proposing today also has a requirement that the utility notify customers within 10 days and post on their website within three days of their filing for a rate case, is that correct?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Through you, Madam President, yes, that is in the bill.

SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you, Madam President, would the sponsor continue to yield?

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Does the

sponsor yield?

The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: So the total amount of time that somebody would not have to pay their electric or gas bill would be 15 months, a year and a quarter, while there's a pending rate case and then the effective 120 days? Am I reading that timeline correctly?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Through you, Madam President, I'd like to reiterate that this is not about a standard rate case. Again, routine rate cases are not part of the scope of this bill.

But it is true, if billing rates are in question for the investigation and the PSC is under -- or investigating the utility, which would qualify as a formal investigation -- which again, I will reiterate, only happens after an informal rate investigation of eight to nine months where the Department of Public Service reviews the complaint and sees if they are credible and there should be a formal investigation. Only then are consumers protected from late fees, from termination of service, and from penalties.

I'd also like to reiterate that this bill does not encourage customers or consumers to not pay their bills. But certainly in cases where they are being double-billed or billed at higher rates, there may be customers who are unable to pay the full amount required, and those customers should certainly not be penalized or lose service during that time.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Through you, Madam President, would the sponsor continue to yield.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Does the sponsor yield?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Yes.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: So to create a formal -- as you were outlining, to create a formula under Section 71, the complaint in writing of not less than 25 customers or purchasers of such gas or electricity, or upon the complaint in writing of the Department of State.

So am I understanding 25 customers of that utility could create and trigger the

formal investigation that would kick this off?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Through you, Madam President. Once more, I'd like to clarify that if over -- if 25 customers or over submit complaints and those complaints are reasonable and determined to be reasonable by the Department of Public Service, then yes, once a formal investigation is triggered, that is absolutely possible.

But again, there is an additional review process, and this will only happen in cases where there is a credible reason to have a formal investigation.

SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you, Madam President, would the sponsor continue to yield.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Does the sponsor yield?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Yes, I do.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: But you can't really determine whether it's credible until the investigation is complete. I think that's the purpose of the investigation.

So when 25 customers of a utility company say, My rates are too high, I want an investigation, and they go to the Public Service Commission and file with the Public Service Commission, then there's an investigation.

And your legislation is requiring that while that investigation is ongoing, they can't terminate service, add any of the fees or penalties or that kind of thing. Is that -- am I reading that correctly?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Through you, Madam President. Yes, if a formal investigation is underway, while it's true that customers have a responsibility to pay their bills, so do utility companies have to provide timely and accurate billing.

So if there is a formal investigation, then yes, this bill would ensure that those customers are not seeing termination of service if they are unable to pay those, you know, unreasonable bills.

SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you, Madam President, would the sponsor continue to yield?

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Does the

sponsor yield?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Yes.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Also empowering the Public Service Commission to waive terminations, back-billing, bills in arrears in this legislation, is that correct?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Through you, Madam President. Once the formal investigation is completed, the Public Service Commission has the ability to decide if those late fees, penalties are due to the company or only due to them in part.

But what's important to note here is if the investigation results in a ruling in favor of a utility company, then that utility company will be made whole and the bills that were due to them will be required to be paid from the customers.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Through you, Madam President, would the sponsor continue to yield?

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Does the sponsor yield?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Yes, I do.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The sponsor yields.

SENATOR WALCZYK: I appreciate you saying that the utility companies would be made whole. Do you know how many dollars in arrears the utility companies in the State of New York are right now?

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Through you, Madam President, I'd like to be clear that "made whole" is only if the ruling was in favor of the utility company.

But to answer the member's question, if he would like to share that with the chamber, he is welcome to share that number.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Madam President, on the bill.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Walczyk on the bill.

SENATOR WALCZYK: $1.3 billion is how much our utilities are in arrears right now. Having interest, penalties, fees for people who are currently not paying their electric bill because their electric and gas bills are too pricey because of the things that come out of

this chamber and the chamber down the hall and are signed into law by the Governor.

Power production is not free. Neither is transporting that power. The customers of the State of New York are feeling that pain right now.

What this legislation does is it allows 25 customers in a utility to file a case with the Public Service Commission in order to not pay their bill for up to 15 months in a rate case. So if there's a rate case pending with the Public Service Commission -- those generally take 11 months -- this bill tacks on another four months.

And I know how this sounds at face value. It sounds great. Everybody says, Well, great, I don't have to pay my electric or my gas bill for 15 months. That would be a lot of relief. But the companies are going to be made whole, is what the sponsor said. So at what point and who is going to pay that electric bill? They already have $1.3 billion in arrears.

Electricity is not free. It is expensive to produce. It's expensive to transport. The same is true with gas.

Yeah, I think I've made my point. This -- yeah, I've made my point. All right, thank you, Madam President.

(Laughter.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Senator.

Are there any other Senators wishing to be heard?

Seeing and hearing none, debate is closed. The Secretary will ring the bell.

Read the last section.

THE SECRETARY: Section 7. This act shall take effect on the 30th day after it shall have become a law.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Gonzalez to explain her vote.

SENATOR GONZALEZ: Thank you so much, Madam President.

I want to thank my colleagues for passing this very important piece of legislation. While I know that we are in a cost-of-living crisis, one of the driving factors is utility

costs. And when utility companies -- for example, last year in the North Country, with National Grid, and I believe certain members of this chamber in their own districts had the lowest customer satisfaction ratings because of their inability to provide quality service. When these issues happen, it is so important for those consumers to have every possible protection in this cost-of-living crisis.

So I think this bill is an important step towards doing that. And it's certainly reasonable and common sense to say if a utility is under a formal and credible investigation, that those consumers -- who of course will have to pay if they are not ruled in favor of -- should certainly have some sort of protection as they struggle to keep up with their bills.

So I am so proud to have sponsored this bill and certainly appreciative of this chamber for voting. And of course I vote aye.

Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Gonzalez to be recorded in the affirmative.

Senator Krueger to explain her vote.

SENATOR KRUEGER: Thank you very

much.

I appreciated the debate. I am voting yes on this bill.

My colleague who led the debate against the bill does point out that there's an enormous amount of utility debt out there. And yes, utilities cost something. But the point of this bill, as was clarified over and over again by the sponsor, was these are actual investigations into overcharges, not simply a rate increase.

And the truth is most of us have constituents who are in an enormously difficult situation trying to pay their monthly utility bills and then of course falling into default and even risking losing their electricity or heat, which can be a crisis for the family.

And so this Legislature, this government, has an obligation to make sure everybody's following the rules of the road. Make sure that utility rates are set appropriately, that if there are investigations they are completed hopefully quickly. But if not, we still need to make sure that our consumers are protected.

And there was just the point made that it's expensive. I would say yes, and it would be less expensive if we move more quickly into green alternative energy -- solar, wind, geothermal. That would actually hopefully decrease everybody's utilities and decrease the amount of money people find themselves in default on.

Of course, unfortunately, we've also learned that we've just lost about $500 million from the federal government, who's decided not to continue the LIHEAP program, which is critically important for low-income New Yorkers, those more likely to fall behind on their utility bills as well.

So we have a lot of work to do, Madam President. But this bill is a good bill, and I thank my colleague for sponsoring it.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Krueger to be recorded in the affirmative.

Senator Walczyk to explain his vote.

SENATOR WALCZYK: Thank you, Madam President.

You can't just blame the Public Service Commission and blame the utilities for

the cost of electricity and gas in the State of New York. You have to look in the mirror and look at the policy that you've passed in this chamber.

The Empire Center says that electric and gas bills have already gone up 10 percent in the State of New York because of the CLCPA, and estimates at the low end by the Comptroller say that the CLCPA's implementation is going to be $340 billion. Where does that money come from?

If you don't even allow the utilities to collect revenue but you require the utilities to do the entire thing, how does that math? It doesn't. They're already $1.3 billion in arrears on bills now. But this legislation says, Don't worry, once there's an investigation -- which 25 customers can trigger -- then nobody has to pay their bill and we'll probably waive any late fees even if they do have to pay their bill eventually.

And then you have the gall to go out and say that we're trying to make electricity and gas more affordable in the State of New York. I'm not fooled, and neither are the residents. They see it on their bill every single month.

And I vote no.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Walczyk again to be recorded in the negative.

Senator Tedisco to explain his vote.

SENATOR TEDISCO: Thank you. To explain my vote on this bill.

You know, I think all of us get a lot of calls and concerns about various issues. At the top of the list, probably the calls you get are the affordability problem, which we're called to solve this year by the Governor and many of my colleagues on the other side have talked about -- some talk about it, some not. Criminal justice reform. But right at the top of the list is the rate increases in the cost of energy for our constituents.

I get calls galore about that. And I have to explain to them, why did you -- they say to me, Why did you increase my electric rates or my gas rates or these rates? You know, they're going up astronomically. And they're right, I think.

Then I have to explain to them, we have this thing called the Public Service Commission. Well, which legislators are the

Public Service Commission? Well, they're not legislators. I say they're faceless bureaucrats, because nobody knows them. And out of nowhere there's a rate increase, and now we're going to investigate them.

I have a solution for this. And this may be significant. You might want to investigate them. How about this -- you took an oath of office to protect the best interests of your constituents, their health, their safety, their financial well-being. This is a part of 101,000 people leaving the State of New York in the last census, about 3 million over the last three or four years, number one in outmigration.

How about if we pass my bill pending that says we ratify any rate increase that these commissioners you appointed in there say is justified. Then you can stand up and say, Well, we need an investigation. Or if you want to investigate you could say, yeah, we were responsible for that, if you vote for it. Or you could say, Well, I didn't vote for that, and this is the reason why.

Now, if you really want to solve this problem, pass my bill, put your name on it,

and we'll do the job we were elected to do, not faceless bureaucrats --

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Tedisco, how do you vote?

SENATOR TEDISCO: -- which you blame them for the rate increases --

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Tedisco, how do you vote?

SENATOR TEDISCO: But it's you, who were put here to protect --

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Tedisco, how do you vote?

SENATOR TEDISCO: -- their financial best interests.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Tedisco to be recorded in the negative.

SENATOR TEDISCO: Madam Speaker, thank you very much --

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Announce the results.

SENATOR TEDISCO: -- for your leadership. You look wonderful in that blue outfit today.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR TEDISCO: It is blue, isn't

it? Oh, no, that was the other bill, color blind.

(Laughter.)

THE SECRETARY: In relation to Calendar 141, voting in the negative are Senators Ashby, Borrello, Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick, Chan, Gallivan, Griffo, Helming, Lanza, Martins, Mattera, Murray, Oberacker, O'Mara, Ortt, Palumbo, Rhoads, Stec, Tedisco, Walczyk, Weber and Weik.

Ayes, 39. Nays, 21.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The bill is passed.

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

SENATOR GIANARIS: For the record, Madam President, your suit is not even blue.

(Laughter.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Maybe he's color blind.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR GIANARIS: Let's take up the supplemental calendar, please.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number 674, Senate Print 3786, by Senator Felder, an act to amend the Education Law.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Read the last section.

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

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Call the roll.

(The Secretary called the roll.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Felder.

Call the roll -- announce the results.

THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: The bill is passed.

Senator Gianaris.

SENATOR GIANARIS: Madam President, I think the members of this chamber know that today is Senator Felder's last day with us here in the Senate.

He has served for a little over 12 years, if I'm not mistaken. And, you know, the Senate has flipped sides in that time, and

somehow Senator Felder has not served one day in the Minority in this chamber.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR GIANARIS: It's a unique distinction.

But I will say that I appreciate that he waited just a few extra months to leave, because he served six years with the Republican conference and six years and three months here with the Democratic Conference. So I guess we've had him for longer than you have.

But we do I think all, on both sides of the aisle, appreciate his service, appreciate his good humor, his kindness, and all he has lent to this body as he embarks on a new chapter in his public service.

We're going to, by consent, give him a few moments to bid farewell to all of us. So if you could please recognize Senator Felder.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Senator Felder.

SENATOR FELDER: Thank you.

During the 12 years that I've been here, there were only two times that I spoke. Once, one session, was -- it was about the need

to help special-needs children. And the other time was about the onerous bag tax.

In addition, the Citizen -- I think it's the Citizen Union, or one of the good government groups, at one point for whatever reason did a computation on each member, the number of words each member said during the session. And I'd love you to guess who had the most words -- if you'd get it right, Senator Krueger.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR FELDER: I won the least.

It seems that every session they said that you were compelled to say yes at the beginning of session when they said -- when they start a session.

So I'm going to make up for it today --

(Laughter.)

SENATOR FELDER: -- if you don't mind.

So Psalm 145 -- in Psalm 145 it says: The Lord is good to all, and His mercies are in all His works.

About 25 years ago, the first time I

ran for office, I asked a Holocaust survivor who was a congregant in my father's synagogue if he could please pray that I win the election. And he said, "Absolutely not." He said that "I'll pray that you get what's good for you, not that you win the election."

And here I am, just wanting to thank -- you know, and I hope -- I apologize to anyone I left -- leave out -- is, you know, all the people that have really -- you know, that I've been able to have a wonderful relationship with and even laughed at the bad jokes that I made.

So, you know, the people who run session all the time and, you know, really just get it moving, I thank -- I thank them.

You know, I -- I -- my -- my staff, Bryan Best and Peggy Germain; over the years, Jay Bove and Rodney Powis, and of course the entire staff in Brooklyn and my chief of staff, Judah Wohlgelernter, who -- so I -- they've been wonderful.

I'm not going to, you know, explain each thing why they're wonderful. I'm just going to thank -- thank, you know, the people that I

really appreciated having the relationship and working with them.

Of course Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and the leadership and her, you know, staff that I work with and the leadership of Senator Gianaris and all -- again, all the staff, the Secretary of the Senate. And, you know, all the staff like getting extra garbage cans or things like that, which in government is monumental.

The Sergeants-at-Arms were wonderful. And I would just ask that we pray for Ben, who has been out and can use our prayers. You know, I've spoken to him a number of times. On one hand, you know, I pray that he gets well. On the other hand, he was too strict, really.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR FELDER: So we want him back, but softer.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR FELDER: We want him back softer.

I mean, Tim, who runs the lounge, I -- I don't think that I've ever gone into a fancy restaurant with -- as nice and

accommodating. And they give you shopping bags even if you don't pay.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR FELDER: The messenger service, I mean, they're just wonderful. They -- and they will tell you that.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR FELDER: It's just really, really very nice.

I've had -- you know, we've had relationships with the custodians, who are like secret -- you know, if you're here late at night, you get to spend some of your time with them. And I would not in any way try to convince you that I was here late at night working. But I did fall asleep on the couch one night, and the staff was gone. And thank God one of the custodians came in, and I -- you know, I left. I won't tell you what time.

And of course all of you -- I know over the years many of -- many people who are not -- you know, have just -- who left. It's been, you know, just wonderful in different ways. Somebody said to me, Will you miss being here? And I said, Absolutely not. I will not miss

being here. But I will miss the people. With -- you know, without exception, I will miss the people, all of you that I've spent some, you know, time. And if you haven't spent some time with me, we can make an appointment to do so.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR FELDER: But it's -- without exception, without exception, it's been -- it's been wonderful working with you.

So I just want to end by saying that my mother, may she rest in peace, passed away two, a little more than -- almost three years ago. And she was 102.

And she used to wake up very early in the morning and pray. And towards -- towards the end of her life, I used to see that when she was done praying, she, you know, sort of like added. And I finally said to her, "Ma, what -- what did you say?" She said, "I told God that it's enough, he should please take me." Because she had a such a variety -- that's not the right word -- of ailments, she just wanted to -- as she said, It's time to check out.

That's what she -- and she asked -- she asked me and, you know, of course my siblings

to pray as well. I said, That I can't do. Because despite the fact that I knew she was suffering, there was no way that I would pray that, you know, she'd leave.

She -- she very often would spend time talking about the fact that it's critical that if you love someone, to tell them you love them. It's not enough for that person to know, especially, you know, in families and with children growing up, you know, physical -- a physical hug or something, of course, she used to say that's even better. But if you can't manage that -- and I'm quoting her -- if you can't manage that, she'd say you have to tell people that you love them. You must remember to tell them. It's not enough to indicate or do things that show that you love them.

So towards -- I would say it was three days before she passed away, she -- she had shut herself down. That's what the doctor said to me. She was -- her eyes were closed, she was not in coma. She just didn't want to eat, didn't want to do anything. And she remained -- her eyes remained closed. No matter what I did, I could not get her to open her eyes or say

anything. And, you know, that was the situation.

My oldest daughter, who I believe was her favorite grandchild, even though I have many siblings who will claim otherwise, you know, about this. But I believe that. So my oldest daughter, who lives in South Jersey, said she's coming to see my mother, to visit my mother in the hospital. And I said absolutely not. I did not want her to see my mother in that condition, you know.

And she said, "No, I'm coming." I said, "You know, it's one of the Ten Commandments." She said "Too bad." That's what she said, "Too bad, I'm coming." And of course she did not listen, and she came. And I said, "If you're coming, I don't want to be there when you're coming."

So about 10 minutes before she arrived, she called. She said, "I'm 10 minutes away." So I left. I -- you know, I couldn't be there to watch her see my mother that way.

Anyway, she called me from the hospital and she said, "Ta, I don't know what you're talking about. I whispered into" -- "Bobe" is grandmother. "I whispered into Bobe's

ears, and I said, 'Hi, it's Teporah. You know, Daddy said that you won't open your eyes or talk. But it's me. You know, I know -- I know you're going to talk to me." That's what she said to me -- to my mother.

And my mother opened her eyes and looked right at her and said, "You don't -- you don't really need me to do it, because you know, I keep on telling everyone that you have to tell them you love them. And you know how often I used to tell you how much I love you."

And my mother didn't have long conversations. You'd say "How are you?" And she'd usually say "Is everything all right?" And that was the end of the conversation. She would say "I love you, bye," and that was it.

So she said -- says to my daughter that "You know how much I love you and how much I will always love you. Even after I'm gone, don't forget that that's so."

My daughter called me and said, "Ta, I don't know what you're talking about. I just had a long conversation with Bobe." So of course I came running. And I tried the same, but was not successful in getting her to say anything.

So I -- I want to say to you that I love you all, and I hope that God gives you what you need. Thank you.

(Sustained standing ovation.)

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Gianaris.

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

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

SENATOR GIANARIS: I move to adjourn until tomorrow, Thursday, April 10th, at 11:00 a.m.

ACTING PRESIDENT PERSAUD: On motion, the Senate stands adjourned until Thursday, April 10th, at 11:00 a.m.

Congratulations and best wishes, Senator Felder.

(Whereupon, at 1:27 p.m., the Senate adjourned.)