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NEW YORK STATE SENATE

THE STENOGRAPHIC RECORD

ALBANY, NEW YORK

January 7, 2026

12:36 p.m.

REGULAR SESSION

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR ANTONIO DELGADO, President

ALEJANDRA N. PAULINO, ESQ., Secretary

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

2 THE PRESIDENT: The Senate will
3 come to order.

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

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

8 THE PRESIDENT: Bishop Mark
9 O'Connell, of the Roman Catholic Diocese in
10 Albany, New York, will deliver today's
11 invocation.

12 BISHOP O'CONNELL: Almighty God,
13 source of all wisdom and compassion, we gather
14 here in the halls of the New York State Senate at
15 the threshold of a new dawn, a fresh beginning
16 filled with promise amid these uncertain and
17 critical times for our world.

18 As conflicts rage in places like
19 Ukraine, Israel, Gaza and Venezuela and unrest
20 echoes across the nations, we pause to seek
21 Your guidance, trusting that our actions here in
22 New York can contribute to the greater good,
23 fostering peace and justice both near and far.

24 We invoke Your presence upon this
25 assembly, granting wisdom to the members of the

1 Senate, the Assembly, and to our Governor.
2 Illuminate their minds and hearts as they
3 deliberate and legislate, that they may enact
4 policies which uplift and protect the poor, the
5 vulnerable, and the marginalized among us.

6 Help them to see beyond division, to
7 build bridges of understanding, and to prioritize
8 the common welfare in all their endeavors.

9 In the face of global turmoil, wars
10 that displace families, crises that deepen
11 inequality, may our leaders draw strength from
12 Your eternal light, working tirelessly to promote
13 healing, equity and hope, that their decisions
14 reflect the commitment to human dignity, ensuring
15 that no one is left behind in our shared pursuit
16 of a just society.

17 Gracious God, at this new dawn, as
18 this new dawn breaks, unite us in purpose,
19 inspire us with courage, and bless the work of
20 this session. May it bear fruit that honors
21 Your creation and serves all people with
22 integrity and mercy.

23 Amen.

24 (Response of "Amen.")

25 THE PRESIDENT: The Secretary will

1 call the roll to ascertain a quorum.

2 THE SECRETARY: Senator Addabbo.

3 SENATOR ADDABBO: Here.

4 THE SECRETARY: Senator Ashby.

5 SENATOR ASHBY: Here.

6 THE SECRETARY: Senator Bailey.

7 SENATOR BAILEY: Here.

8 THE SECRETARY: Senator Baskin.

9 SENATOR BASKIN: Here.

10 THE SECRETARY: Senator Borrello.

11 SENATOR BORRELLO: Present.

12 THE SECRETARY: Senator Brisport.

13 SENATOR BRISPORT: Here.

14 THE SECRETARY: Senator Bynoe.

15 SENATOR BYNOE: Here.

16 THE SECRETARY: Senator

17 Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick.

18 SENATOR CANZONERI-FITZPATRICK:

19 Here.

20 THE SECRETARY: Senator Chan.

21 SENATOR CHAN: Here.

22 THE SECRETARY: Senator Cleare.

23 SENATOR CLEARE: Here.

24 THE SECRETARY: Senator Comrie.

25 SENATOR COMRIE: Present.

1 THE SECRETARY: Senator Cooney.
2 SENATOR COONEY: Here.
3 THE SECRETARY: Senator Fahy.
4 SENATOR FAHY: Here.
5 THE SECRETARY: Senator Fernandez.
6 SENATOR FERNANDEZ: Present.
7 THE SECRETARY: Senator Gallivan.
8 SENATOR GALLIVAN: Here.
9 THE SECRETARY: Senator Gianaris.
10 SENATOR GIANARIS: Present.
11 THE SECRETARY: Senator Gonzalez.
12 SENATOR GONZALEZ: Here.
13 THE SECRETARY: Senator Gounardes.
14 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Present.
15 THE SECRETARY: Senator Griffo.
16 SENATOR GRIFFO: Here.
17 THE SECRETARY: Senator Harckham.
18 SENATOR HARCKHAM: Here.
19 THE SECRETARY: Senator Helming.
20 SENATOR HELMING: Here.
21 THE SECRETARY: Senator Hinchey.
22 SENATOR HINCHEY: Here.
23 THE SECRETARY: Senator Jackson.
24 SENATOR JACKSON: Here.
25 THE SECRETARY: Senator Kavanagh.

1 SENATOR KAVANAGH: Here.

2 THE SECRETARY: Senator Krueger.

3 SENATOR KRUEGER: Here.

4 THE SECRETARY: Senator Lanza.

5 SENATOR LANZA: Here.

6 THE SECRETARY: Senator Liu.

7 SENATOR LIU: Here.

8 THE SECRETARY: Senator Martinez.

9 SENATOR MARTINEZ: Here.

10 THE SECRETARY: Senator Martins.

11 SENATOR MARTINS: Here.

12 THE SECRETARY: Senator Mattera.

13 SENATOR MATTERA: Here.

14 THE SECRETARY: Senator May.

15 SENATOR MAY: Here.

16 THE SECRETARY: Senator Mayer.

17 SENATOR MAYER: Here.

18 THE PRESIDENT: Senator Gianaris, a
19 quorum is present and the Senate may proceed.

20 I want to first begin by wishing
21 everybody here in the body a Happy New Year.

22 I certainly want to acknowledge our
23 esteemed Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins. Thank
24 you for your work and leadership here. To Deputy
25 Majority Leader Senator Gianaris, thank you.

1 Minority Leader Rob Ortt and Deputy Minority
2 Leader Lanza, and every member of this awesome
3 body.

4 I also want to acknowledge
5 Sergeant-at-Arms Ben Sturges. It is good to see
6 you.

7 (Extended standing ovation.)

8 THE PRESIDENT: As president of the
9 Senate, it is my distinct honor to welcome you
10 all to the 2026 legislative session and to
11 welcome you all to a new year of service to the
12 great State of New York.

13 As I look around this room I am
14 reminded that this chamber is a place of immense
15 power -- but it is also a place of incredible
16 responsibility. Because the work done here does
17 not stay here. It reaches into the daily lives
18 of New Yorkers across the state, into their
19 homes, their jobs, their schools, their places of
20 worship, their communities.

21 That responsibility calls on us to
22 remain grounded, to resist distance, abstraction
23 or habit. It requires us to stay rooted in the
24 lived experiences of the communities we
25 represent, and that begins with listening:

1 Listening not as a formality, but as a
2 discipline.

3 Because when we listen honestly, we
4 are reminded who we work for and what is being
5 asked of us. We hear the pressures families are
6 under. We hear the anxiety about staying in
7 their communities. And we hear the expectation
8 that government should be a partner, making life
9 more affordable and more secure.

10 Each of you hears the voices of your
11 constituents every single day, voices shaped by
12 different geographies, different histories, and
13 different needs. In this chamber we have a
14 responsibility to listen not only to be informed
15 but also to be guided, to allow those voices to
16 sharpen our judgment and anchor our decisions in
17 the realities people are living with daily.

18 At its best, leadership is not about
19 value or visibility, it is about conscience. It
20 is about listening closely and then having the
21 courage to act boldly on what we hear. It is
22 about governing with integrity, walking with
23 humility, and remaining accountable to the people
24 who place their trust in all of us. Especially
25 when the challenges we face are deeply felt and

1 urgent. Especially when the decisions we are
2 faced with are difficult.

3 New York has always been a state of
4 possibility. The possibility must be tangible.
5 It must show up in whether people can afford to
6 live, raise families, and build a future here.
7 This is not an abstract goal, it is the measure
8 by which our work will be judged.

9 The work ahead will demand
10 seriousness and resolve. It will require
11 transparency, honesty, and a clear vision for
12 where we as a people are trying to go. It will
13 necessitate a shared respect for the people we
14 serve. And it will call for us to remember that
15 the power of this institution exists for one
16 reason and one reason only: To improve the lives
17 of all New Yorkers.

18 We all have the power to make this
19 state stronger, fairer, and more affordable for
20 the people we serve.

21 As Lieutenant Governor, I look
22 forward to working with members of both parties
23 throughout this session. I encourage each of us
24 to remain open to one another and to the voices
25 of the communities we represent as we carry out

1 the responsibilities entrusted to us all. My
2 hope is for a productive, thoughtful and
3 meaningful legislative session.

4 Thank you.

5 Senator Gianaris.

6 SENATOR GIANARIS: Thank you,
7 Mr. President.

8 At this time let's proceed with the
9 regular order of business.

10 THE PRESIDENT: Presentation of
11 petitions.

12 Messages from the Assembly.

13 Messages from the Governor.

14 The Secretary will read.

15 THE SECRETARY: "Dear Majority
16 Leader Stewart-Cousins:

17 "I would appreciate the privilege of
18 the presence of all of the Members of the
19 New York State Senate at the Kitty Carlisle Hart
20 Theatre on January 13, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. to
21 deliver the 2026 State of the State Address.

22 "Very yours truly, Governor Kathy
23 Hochul."

24 THE PRESIDENT: The message shall
25 be filed in the Journal.

1 Reports of standing committees.
2 Reports of select committees.
3 Communications and reports from
4 state officers.

5 Motions and resolutions.

6 Senator Gianaris.

7 SENATOR GIANARIS: Please recognize
8 Minority Leader Ortt for opening remarks.

9 THE PRESIDENT: Minority Leader
10 Ortt.

11 SENATOR ORTT: Thank you,
12 Mr. President.

13 To my colleagues, both on my side of
14 the aisle and the other side of the aisle,
15 welcome back. Happy New Year to everyone. It is
16 good to see all of you healthy and back here in
17 the Capitol.

18 I hope everyone had a great holiday
19 season with their families and got to spend time
20 with the people who love us and the people who we
21 love. And hopefully that recharges you. I know
22 for me that kind of recharges me, and sometimes
23 reframes why I'm here, why we all do what we do.

24 I'll say it's good to be back in
25 Albany. I think I speak for everyone why we do

1 what we do. We have to come here to do it. But
2 the real reason, the motivating factor, is for
3 the people we represent and that we work for back
4 in our districts.

5 And I'm sure most of you and I hope
6 most of you got to spend some time in those
7 districts the last six months, obviously as we
8 get ready for a new session. It's always
9 exciting. It's kind of like the first day back
10 at school. It's a clean slate. Right?

11 It's very thematic when you think
12 about the new year. We all have hopes and
13 aspirations for what this year can be for
14 ourselves, for our constituents, and for the
15 people of this state, remembering that they also
16 have aspirations.

17 That our constituents, the people we
18 work for, also have hopes and aspirations for
19 what they, their family, their business and this
20 state can achieve for them, and the opportunity
21 that that can lay out for them and their families
22 and for people who call the Empire State home and
23 who want to continue to call it home.

24 And so with that, our conference is
25 ready to work. We are ready to do the hard work

1 on behalf of the people of New York. We're
2 certainly ready to work with our colleagues
3 across the aisle. We're certainly ready to stand
4 in opposition when we think that is necessary as
5 a matter of policy, as a matter of principle.

6 We know affordability is going to be
7 a major topic, as it has been for the past couple
8 of years. There is obviously at times a
9 difference in how we define affordability and our
10 solutions to that. And I don't think those
11 differences are strictly political. I think
12 they're sincere; I think they're principled
13 differences. But they're important differences.

14 You know, our conference does
15 believe and will continue to advocate that one of
16 the ways to make things more affordable for
17 New Yorkers is to put more of their money back in
18 their pockets, to let them keep more of their
19 hard-earned money in any way we can do that.

20 We certainly will continue to
21 advocate for a cleaner environment while at the
22 same time advocating for a menu of energy options
23 to keep prices down, keep New Yorkers working as
24 we transition to new technologies and a cleaner
25 and healthier environment here in the State of

1 New York.

2 Our conference believes in public
3 safety for everybody, regardless of your
4 ethnicity, your color, your creed, your zip code,
5 your income level -- for everybody -- instead of
6 advocating for some type of general insecurity
7 for all. That I think is a very big difference
8 between our conferences.

9 And when we work to protect the
10 marginalized, I think it's important that we
11 remember the marginalized is not the thief or the
12 assaulter or the drug dealer, it's the victim of
13 those crimes. And those are the communities that
14 our conference and, I believe, many of my
15 colleagues across the aisle also care about and
16 want to make a better life for.

17 We need to provide a better quality
18 of life, in short. And this is -- we all know
19 it's an election year when all of us will go up
20 basically for that interview before our
21 constituents to say: Did we do a good job on
22 behalf of you? Did we represent you -- your
23 values, your hopes, your dreams, your needs --
24 did we accomplish that? Did we move that forward
25 in a tangible way?

1 Not just good speeches, not just
2 well intentions. But, Mr. President, you sort
3 of -- did we actually put some points on the
4 board for people? Did we make their life a
5 little easier? And if the answer is no, then we
6 need to do a better job.

7 Our conference, again, stands ready
8 to work here. The Republican Conference is ready
9 to work with our colleagues across the aisle,
10 with the Governor this session to improve the
11 lives of our constituents and New Yorkers across
12 the board.

13 Mr. President, thank you for your
14 indulgence. Happy New Year, and God bless.

15 THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator.
16 Senator Gianaris.

17 SENATOR GIANARIS: Now let's
18 recognize Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins
19 for opening remarks.

20 THE PRESIDENT: Majority Leader
21 Stewart-Cousins.

22 SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: Good
23 afternoon, Mr. President. Thank you for being
24 here, and certainly for your words at the outset
25 of our session.

1 To my colleagues, welcome back.
2 Happy New Year. And of course to those who are
3 streaming in here, to all New Yorkers: Happy
4 New Year.

5 Once again, I am proud to represent
6 the great state, as we all are, and very, very
7 excited for the opening of the 2026 legislative
8 session.

9 So, Mr. President, you recognized my
10 good friend Ben, but I think we deserve to give
11 Ben another round of applause because we missed
12 you so much.

13 (Standing ovation.)

14 SENATOR STEWART-COUSINS: You get
15 two rounds of applause because, you know, we
16 missed you last year, so we can't applaud your
17 being here and your recovery enough. So
18 thank you.

19 I also want to welcome back staff
20 from both sides of the aisle. And again, as the
21 Minority Leader said, I hope that we all had an
22 opportunity to enjoy the holidays and to enjoy
23 some meaningful time with those people who care
24 about us.

25 And obviously we are, you know,

1 again hoping that you are energized, recharged,
2 and ready to take on, you know, what we know is
3 going to be an interesting year and a challenging
4 year.

5 I certainly look forward to another
6 year of partnership with the Governor, with my
7 colleagues in the Assembly. And I also want to
8 continue to work with the Minority Leader and my
9 colleagues on the other side of the aisle.

10 I am especially happy to see our
11 floor leaders back and ready to go. My deputy
12 leader, Mike Gianaris, thank you so much for all
13 you do, and your counterpart, Senator Andrew
14 Lanza. So again, thank you for your
15 collaboration when we do these things.

16 You know, as I look around the
17 chamber, I know I'm looking at leaders who are
18 rightfully confident in what you've delivered for
19 your communities. But at the same time I'm
20 keenly aware that too many families are still
21 struggling to pay the bills and to make ends
22 meet.

23 These are not times of complacency.
24 These are times that will demand clarity,
25 responsibility, and focus. We're beginning a new

1 year in a moment when the pressures facing
2 New Yorkers feel heavier and more immediate in
3 their daily lives. Families are opening utility
4 bills they can barely afford, they are walking
5 down grocery aisles where prices are rising
6 higher than their paychecks. They're worried
7 about the cost of housing, healthcare, childcare,
8 the overall cost of living.

9 At the same time, many New Yorkers
10 are watching with genuine and well-founded
11 concern the erosion of hard-won rights and
12 constitutional freedoms that are being challenged
13 all across the country. That's the reality that
14 our constituents are living with.

15 It's the responsibility, therefore,
16 of the Senate, led by this Majority, to meet it
17 head on.

18 Understandably, there's a lot that
19 we do not know and a lot that we cannot predict.
20 And that uncertainty can feel overwhelming. But
21 there is one truth about our work: It is that
22 we've been here before, and every time this
23 chamber has risen to meet the moment.

24 In fact, we have already proven who
25 we are in times of crisis. When the chaos and

1 division of Trump 1.0 tested the foundations of
2 our institutions, it was this chamber that
3 stepped forward to defend New Yorkers.

4 We'll continue to be a clear and
5 unwavering voice for what New Yorkers deserve
6 from their federal representatives. For example,
7 laws like our SHIELD Act were not abstract ideas,
8 they're fundamental protections that matter now
9 more than ever. We showed the country that
10 states could hold the line when Washington would
11 not, and that government could still be a force
12 of stability, fairness, compassion and good.

13 In moments of crisis when COVID
14 brought the world to a halt, and even when a
15 former governor resigned in scandal, this chamber
16 provided continuity and steadiness. We
17 confronted what was uncomfortable, kept
18 government functioning, and passed critical
19 budgets under impossible conditions. We did it
20 without losing our values or losing sight of the
21 people we serve.

22 Those moments were not easy, but
23 they reminded us of something essential. We know
24 how to lead in uncertain times. We know how to
25 confront the unimaginable. We know how to govern

1 when the ground shifts beneath us, because we
2 already have. We know how to work together, we
3 know how to reach consensus.

4 We represent every corner of the
5 state, from cities to suburbs, small towns,
6 farmlands. We represent districts that are
7 safely Democratic and Republican as well as
8 districts that are competitive, moderate,
9 hard-fought. Our strength comes not from
10 pretending that one size fits all, but from
11 understanding that New York works best when
12 communities see themselves reflected in the
13 various solutions we advance.

14 Ideology and principles matter.
15 They guide us. They shape our priorities and our
16 sense of justice. But governing also requires
17 realism. The landscape ahead is complicated.
18 The stakes are high. Navigating what comes next
19 will require discipline, collaboration and
20 resolve.

21 In moments like these, we have to be
22 the adults in the room. We have to help set the
23 tone and direction for the state. We must give a
24 sense of security to our constituents who are
25 living in unprecedented times of uncertainty.

1 That is what the Senate has done
2 under this Majority's leadership. When
3 Washington chose chaos, we delivered stability.
4 When Washington offers rhetoric, we produce
5 results. When Washington leans on division, we
6 focus on improving the people's lives in tangible
7 and practical ways.

8 That's the standard New Yorkers
9 expect from us as we move into this new year. We
10 know what our communities need. We understand
11 the challenges they face. We see the role of the
12 Senate, led by the Majority, that we must play --
13 not to respond to the moment only, but to shape
14 what comes next.

15 This session our work continues to
16 meet the affordability crisis head on. We'll
17 tackle everything from the rise in utility costs,
18 the price of groceries, promoting universal
19 childcare. We'll continue strengthening a
20 healthcare system that puts patients first.

21 And we'll stand firm in defense of
22 voting rights and equal rights, with one of our
23 central focuses being standing up for
24 communities -- and certainly the Bishop mentioned
25 this today, they're being targeted and

1 marginalized -- which includes protecting our
2 immigrant brothers and sisters by advancing goals
3 set forth in New York For All.

4 As we open the legislative session,
5 let us do it with confidence, grounded in what
6 we've already proven, clear-eyed about the work
7 ahead, and united in our responsibility to
8 deliver. Because New York and New Yorkers are
9 counting on us, and this Senate will be able, as
10 always, to meet the moment.

11 Thank you. Let's get to work.

12 (Standing ovation.)

13 THE PRESIDENT: Thank you,
14 Majority Leader.

15 Senator Gianaris.

16 SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President,
17 before I move the next resolution, I want to
18 acknowledge that we are joined by
19 Assemblymembers Pretlow and Ra, who are informing
20 us that the Assembly is ready to conduct
21 business.

22 And with that, I would like to take
23 up our own resolution appointing a committee of
24 two to inform the Governor that the Senate is
25 organized and ready to proceed.

1 THE PRESIDENT: The Secretary will
2 read.

3 THE SECRETARY: Resolution 1307, by
4 Senator Stewart-Cousins, directing the
5 Temporary President to appoint a committee of two
6 to inform the Governor that the Senate is
7 organized and ready to proceed with business.

8 THE PRESIDENT: The question is on
9 the resolution. All those in favor please
10 signify by saying aye.

11 (Response of "Aye.")

12 THE PRESIDENT: Opposed, nay.

13 (No response.)

14 THE PRESIDENT: The resolution is
15 adopted.

16 Senators Bynoe and Chan are
17 appointed to inform the Governor that the Senate
18 is organized and ready to proceed with business.

19 Senator Gianaris.

20 SENATOR GIANARIS: And now let's
21 take up the resolution appointing a committee of
22 two to inform the Assembly that the Senate is
23 assembled and ready to proceed with business.

24 THE PRESIDENT: The Secretary will
25 read.

1 THE SECRETARY: Resolution 1306, by
2 Senator Stewart-Cousins, directing the
3 Temporary President to appoint a committee of two
4 to wait upon the Assembly and inform that body
5 that the Senate is assembled and ready to proceed
6 with business.

7 THE PRESIDENT: The question is on
8 the resolution. All those in favor please
9 signify by saying aye.

10 (Response of "Aye.")

11 THE PRESIDENT: Opposed, nay.

12 (No response.)

13 THE PRESIDENT: The resolution is
14 adopted.

15 Senators Ryan and Weik are appointed
16 to inform the Assembly that the Senate is
17 assembled and ready to proceed with business.

18 Senator Gianaris.

19 SENATOR GIANARIS: Is there any
20 further business at the desk today?

21 THE PRESIDENT: There is no further
22 business at the desk.

23 SENATOR GIANARIS: I move to
24 adjourn until Monday, January 12th, at 3:00 p.m.,
25 with intervening days being legislative days.

1 THE PRESIDENT: On motion, the
2 Senate stands adjourned until Monday,
3 January 12th, at 3:00 p.m., with the intervening
4 days being legislative days.

5 (Whereupon, at 1:03 p.m., the Senate
6 adjourned.)

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