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NEW YORK STATE SENATE

THE STENOGRAPHIC RECORD

ALBANY, NEW YORK

March 16, 2026

3:00 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: In the absence of  
9 clergy, let us bow our heads in a moment of  
10 silent reflection or prayer.

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

13 THE PRESIDENT: Reading of the  
14 Journal.

15 THE SECRETARY: In Senate, Friday,  
16 March 13, 2026, the Senate met pursuant to  
17 adjournment. The Journal of Thursday, March 12,  
18 2026, was read and approved. On motion, the  
19 Senate adjourned.

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

22 Presentation of petitions.

23 Messages from the Assembly.

24 The Secretary will read.

25 THE SECRETARY: Senator Skoufis

1 moves to discharge, from the Committee on Ethics,  
2 Assembly Bill Number 2330 and substitute it for  
3 the identical Senate Bill 5843, Third Reading  
4 Calendar 452.

5 THE PRESIDENT: So ordered.  
6 Messages from the Governor.  
7 Reports of standing committees.  
8 Reports of select committees.  
9 Communications and reports from  
10 state officers.

11 Motions and resolutions.

12 Senator Gianaris.

13 SENATOR GIANARIS: Good afternoon,  
14 Mr. President.

15 THE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon.

16 SENATOR GIANARIS: I have several  
17 amendments here.

18 Amendments are offered to the  
19 following Third Reading Calendar bills:

20 By Senator Cleare, page 7,  
21 Calendar Number 229, Senate Print 8072A;

22 Senator Persaud, page 12,  
23 Calendar Number 357, Senate Print 516A;

24 And Senator May, page 18,  
25 Calendar Number 454, Senate Print 2708.

1                   THE PRESIDENT:    The amendments are  
2                   received, and the bills will retain their place  
3                   on the Third Reading Calendar.

4                   Senator Gianaris.

5                   SENATOR GIANARIS:    Please call on  
6                   Senator Harckham for an introduction.

7                   THE PRESIDENT:    Senator Harckham.

8                   SENATOR HARCKHAM:    Thank you very  
9                   much, Mr. President.

10                   You know, from time to time on this  
11                   floor we welcome dignitaries from far and wide --  
12                   from New York, from around the world. Today we  
13                   have some friends visiting us from Connecticut.

14                   With us today are representatives  
15                   from the Korean United Methodist Church of  
16                   New Haven, as well as the Korean American  
17                   Association of Connecticut.

18                   And while decorum prohibits me from  
19                   mentioning names explicitly, there is also the  
20                   person here who puts up with the incorrigible  
21                   Senator from the 40th Senate District on a daily  
22                   basis.

23                   So if you please, Mr. President,  
24                   please welcome our guests and offer them all the  
25                   privileges and courtesies of the chamber.

1 THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator.

2 To our guests, I welcome you on  
3 behalf of the Senate. We extend to you the  
4 privileges and courtesies of the house.

5 Please rise and be recognized.

6 (Standing ovation.)

7 THE PRESIDENT: Senator Gianaris.

8 SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President,  
9 Senator Harckham didn't want to mention his  
10 wife's name, but I can.

11 So welcome to Jin-Hee Stevens, who  
12 is part of the delegation that was just  
13 introduced.

14 We have a privileged resolution at  
15 the desk. Let's take that up right now,  
16 Resolution 1753, and recognize Senator Kavanagh  
17 after reading that resolution's title.

18 THE PRESIDENT: The Secretary will  
19 read.

20 THE SECRETARY: Resolution 1753, by  
21 Senator Kavanagh, honoring St. Patrick and all  
22 persons of Irish descent upon the occasion of the  
23 celebration of St. Patrick's Day on Tuesday,  
24 March 17, 2026, and memorializing Governor Kathy  
25 Hochul to proclaim March 2026 as Irish-American

1 Heritage Month in the State of New York.

2 THE PRESIDENT: Senator Kavanagh.

3 SENATOR KAVANAGH: Thank you,  
4 Mr. President.

5 And happy St. Patrick's Month to  
6 everybody.

7 We are -- as a proud Irish-American  
8 whose father emigrated to the United States from  
9 County Donegal and whose maternal grandparents  
10 also made that journey somewhat earlier, it's an  
11 honor to introduce this resolution proclaiming  
12 March 2026 as Irish Heritage Month in the State  
13 of New York and celebrating St. Patrick's Day, a  
14 day that acknowledges the resilience, heritage,  
15 and enduring spirit of the Irish people and our  
16 great contributions to the State of New York.

17 Today of course we honor  
18 St. Patrick, who is the patron saint not only of  
19 Ireland, but also of the Archdiocese of New York.

20 And we also celebrate the  
21 generations of Irish immigrants, many of whom  
22 turned hardship into hope and really have  
23 enriched New York and our entire nation.

24 In the mid-19th century, millions of  
25 Irish began flowing into the United States

1 through what's known as the "Golden Door," often,  
2 of Ellis Island, seeking refuge from famine, from  
3 political oppression, and from injustice. Among  
4 them was Annie Moore, of Cork, Ireland, who was  
5 the very first immigrant from anywhere in the  
6 world to arrive at Ellis Island in pursuit of a  
7 new life in America.

8 Many, many of them arrived with very  
9 little, and yet contributed so much to New York,  
10 building the Erie Canal -- many, many thousands  
11 of Irish were involved in that -- as well as lots  
12 of our infrastructure, in a continuing tradition  
13 of being very important in our trades, our  
14 workers who construct and maintain all kinds of  
15 infrastructure around the state.

16 The spirit of public service of the  
17 Irish runs very deep. A quarter of the  
18 Continental Army was Irish-born, including the  
19 Fighting 69th that served on the battlefields of  
20 the Civil War and through many of our conflicts  
21 up to this day, and is headquartered in the 69th  
22 Regiment Armory in Manhattan.

23 One of the very first Medal of Honor  
24 recipients post-9/11 was Navy Seal Lieutenant  
25 Michael P. Murphy of Smithtown.

1                   And of course I had the honor  
2           yesterday of joining an Irish delegation at 9/11,  
3           at the 9/11 Memorial and Museum, and many, many  
4           of my Irish brethren and sisters gave their lives  
5           on that day, answering the call of service as  
6           police officers and firefighters.

7                   That proud tradition really has sort  
8           of been consistent throughout our history as a  
9           country. Again, I mentioned the Continental Army  
10          and also nine signers of the original Declaration  
11          of Independence, and 23 United States  
12          presidents and a few governors I'll get to in a  
13          moment.

14                  This is also Irish History Month, so  
15          it is important to recognize also the many  
16          Irish-American women who have been visionaries  
17          and trailblazers, including Annie Sullivan, who  
18          opened up the world to Helen Keller as her  
19          teacher; Nellie Bly, who changed the face of  
20          journalism; and Colonel Eileen Collins, who was  
21          the first woman to command a space shuttle and is  
22          a New Yorker.

23                  And their legacy reminds us that the  
24          Irish spirit of courage has never been confined  
25          to one arena, one area of life, but across many

1 sectors and activities in our society.

2           Their legacy also lives on through,  
3 again, public service right here in New York. Of  
4 course a leader like Al Smith, New York's first  
5 "Happy Warrior," who really defined much of the  
6 great changes in our country, starting with  
7 services and programs in New York that made sure  
8 that we lifted up the neediest, made sure we took  
9 care of everyone in society, and became the  
10 New Deal programs of the '40s and into the '50s  
11 and still are some of our basic safety-net  
12 programs to this day.

13           The labor movement, of course, has  
14 been led by many, many Irish-Americans and  
15 continues to be -- to do so today. And of course  
16 we're very proud, as Irish-Americans, to have a  
17 Governor who is of Irish descent and also very  
18 much embraces that experience as a formative  
19 experience of her own and something that really  
20 defines her work and her commitment to making  
21 sure we're caring for all New Yorkers.

22           St. Patrick's Day is more, of  
23 course, than a tribute to the past. It's a  
24 living celebration of values that unite  
25 Irish people all over the world and us also as

1 New Yorkers: Resiliency in the face of struggle,  
2 solidarity in times of division, and the belief  
3 that every person deserves dignity.

4           The Irish island, of course, has  
5 been divided at times. There has been  
6 discrimination and oppression based on religion  
7 and other divisions in our society. We are very  
8 proud now that we are hopefully moving past those  
9 in a permanent way.

10           But we know that also  
11 Irish-Americans and the Irish have learned from  
12 those experiences and, again, we try to apply  
13 them to our work here.

14           As president of the American-Irish  
15 Legislators Society, I'm happy to work with  
16 leaders in this chamber and across -- and, you  
17 know, across the other side of the building,  
18 including our vice president, Senator Patrick  
19 Gallivan, and our treasurer, Pat Fahy, as well as  
20 Mary Beth Walsh and Mike Fitzpatrick, our  
21 Assembly colleagues.

22           So as we honor St. Patrick, who  
23 stood against intolerance and discrimination  
24 suffered by the Irish people, we are mindful of  
25 the continuing need to stand for justice,

1 inclusion and mutual understanding here in  
2 New York, and Ireland, and around the world.

3 This includes, again, our steadfast  
4 commitment to the Good Friday Agreements and the  
5 peace and reconciliation it has brought to the  
6 north of Ireland since 1998. And we know we are  
7 very much as Americans proud of the fact that  
8 American leaders of Irish descent and others were  
9 very instrumental in bringing that peace process  
10 to fruition in 1998, and continue to support that  
11 process.

12 So again, tomorrow is the biggest  
13 St. Patrick's Day parade not just in New York  
14 State, but anywhere in the world. We're  
15 expecting, as we usually do, about 2 million  
16 spectators, about 150,000 marchers. And it's not  
17 just a day for the Irish, it's a day when  
18 countless New Yorkers and many people from  
19 Ireland and other parts of the world join us in  
20 the spirit of Ireland and in the spirit of  
21 celebration.

22 And so for anyone who might be  
23 considering joining us who's within earshot of  
24 this speech, I say "Céad Míle Fáilte," which  
25 means, of course, "100,000 welcomes." I'm sure

1 that's on the tip of all of your tongues.

2 And again, St. Patrick's Day has  
3 very much become not just a day but really a  
4 month of celebration across our communities. I  
5 know many of my colleagues have participated in  
6 parades and other events.

7 So again, thank you for the  
8 opportunity to speak with you. And just to end,  
9 there's an old Irish blessing that says "We all  
10 live in each other's shelter," and I hope we can  
11 continue in that spirit.

12 Happy St. Patrick's Day, and I vote  
13 aye on the resolution.

14 THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator.  
15 Senator Fahy.

16 SENATOR FAHY: Thank you,  
17 Mr. President.

18 I join my colleague in noting Irish  
19 Heritage Day. Every March we do hear the  
20 bagpipes echo down the streets and a lot of green  
21 appears around the Capitol and certainly in  
22 New York City tomorrow.

23 But today, here, is a day to remind  
24 ourselves it's more than parades or even pints,  
25 it really is about heritage, the shared

1 sacrifices, resilience, and then that enduring  
2 promise of America.

3           It's a month that I -- that puts me  
4 down memory lane. My story is a very personal  
5 one, and I certainly share the pride. And I have  
6 to say the older I get, the more I believe that  
7 my roots have become a compass for my life.

8           I was born in Chicago to  
9 Depression-era immigrant parents who left small  
10 farms. Didn't really want to leave those farms,  
11 but they arrived here after immigration reopened  
12 after World War II. They were the very last of a  
13 generation to come off the boat right here in the  
14 New York City harbor -- or right south of us, I  
15 should say.

16           Mine is a very universal story. My  
17 parents came for the same reasons we see again  
18 universally, and that is that they had a chance  
19 at a job that they didn't have in their own  
20 country, and the chance that their children would  
21 ultimately have an education. Both of my parents  
22 only had a primary school education. My father  
23 had a year of technical school. But again,  
24 education was out of reach financially for their  
25 families.

1                   So like many Irish, they helped  
2 build this country. My father started in the  
3 Chicago stockyards, my mother as a domestic  
4 servant. And as we've seen so many communities  
5 build, brick by brick, many ultimately found  
6 their way into public service. And I, as their  
7 daughter, ultimately did, against my father's  
8 best wishes, I have to say. Or against his  
9 recommendation.

10                   But it was this unshakable belief in  
11 fairness and that opportunity -- we're reminded,  
12 opportunity should never be because of where you  
13 were born, because of who your parents were, or  
14 because of an accent or color of those who  
15 arrived on these shores.

16                   The parallels to today's immigration  
17 battles are absolutely uncanny. My parents,  
18 through a lot of hard work, were afforded one  
19 version of an American dream, as many generations  
20 were. But that has really turned into more of a  
21 fairy tale for way too many.

22                   And we have seen Lady Liberty's  
23 torch dim in recent years, dim with a lack of  
24 opportunity and that unshakable belief in  
25 fairness that we experienced and grew up hearing

1 about.

2 We must not forget -- so it's a  
3 reminder to me not to forget the roots, not  
4 forget our shared roots, the repression that held  
5 Ireland back for centuries, and the suffering for  
6 centuries, because of an autocratic rule. And I  
7 think it has led me to become so outspoken as I  
8 reflect on those.

9 But it's also that spirit of  
10 community, perseverance, and standing up for the  
11 underdog that the Irish have done so much on.

12 So as we celebrate the culture, the  
13 traditions, and the values of generosity,  
14 courage, and more, it is a reminder of the  
15 shoulders we stand on, the shared sacrifices.

16 And one of the many beautiful  
17 sayings from Ireland is "May your troubles be  
18 less, your blessings be more, and may nothing but  
19 happiness come through your door."

20 And with that, Mr. President, I wish  
21 all smiling eyes shine down upon all of us here  
22 and throughout the state.

23 Thank you.

24 THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

25 The question is on the resolution.

1 All those in favor please signify by  
2 saying aye.

3 (Response of "Aye.")

4 THE PRESIDENT: Opposed, nay.

5 (No response.)

6 THE PRESIDENT: The resolution is  
7 adopted.

8 Senator Gianaris.

9 SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President,  
10 Senator Kavanagh would like to open that  
11 resolution for cosponsorship.

12 THE PRESIDENT: The resolution is  
13 open for cosponsorship. Should you choose not to  
14 be a cosponsor, please notify the desk.

15 Senator Gianaris.

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

18 THE PRESIDENT: The Secretary will  
19 read.

20 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number  
21 102, Senate Print 3852B, by Senator Hinchey, an  
22 act to amend the Environmental Conservation Law.

23 THE PRESIDENT: Read the last  
24 section.

25 THE SECRETARY: Section 3. This

1 act shall take effect on the 180th day after it  
2 shall have become a law.

3 THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

4 (The Secretary called the roll.)

5 THE PRESIDENT: Announce the  
6 results.

7 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

8 THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

9 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number  
10 122, Senate Print 3736, by Senator Comrie, an act  
11 to amend the Public Authorities Law.

12 THE PRESIDENT: Read the last  
13 section.

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

16 THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

17 (The Secretary called the roll.)

18 THE PRESIDENT: Announce the  
19 results.

20 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

21 THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

22 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number  
23 159, Senate Print 119, by Senator Cleare, an act  
24 to amend the Emergency Tenant Protection Act.

25 SENATOR GIANARIS: Lay it aside for

1 the day.

2 THE PRESIDENT: The bill will be  
3 laid aside for the day.

4 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number  
5 336, Senate Print 566, by Senator Skoufis, an act  
6 to amend the Executive Law.

7 THE PRESIDENT: Read the last  
8 section.

9 THE SECRETARY: Section 6. This  
10 act shall take effect immediately.

11 THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.  
12 (The Secretary called the roll.)

13 THE PRESIDENT: Announce the  
14 results.

15 THE SECRETARY: In relation to  
16 Calendar 336, voting in the negative are  
17 Senators Ortt, Rhoads and Walczyk.

18 Ayes, 57. Nays, 3.

19 THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

20 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number  
21 366, Senate Print 630, by Senator Stavisky, an  
22 act to amend the Criminal Procedure Law.

23 THE PRESIDENT: Read the last  
24 section.

25 THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This

1 act shall take effect immediately.

2 THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

3 (The Secretary called the roll.)

4 THE PRESIDENT: Announce the  
5 results.

6 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

7 THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

8 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number  
9 431, Senate Print 3699, by Senator Sanders, an  
10 act to enact the Facial Recognition Technology  
11 Study Act.

12 THE PRESIDENT: Read the last  
13 section.

14 THE SECRETARY: Section 4. This  
15 act shall take effect immediately.

16 THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

17 (The Secretary called the roll.)

18 THE PRESIDENT: Announce the  
19 results.

20 THE SECRETARY: In relation to  
21 Calendar 431, voting in the negative are  
22 Senators Rhoads and Walczyk.

23 Ayes, 58. Nays, 2.

24 THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

25 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number

1 446, Senate Print 1052, by Senator May, an act to  
2 direct the Department of Economic Development to  
3 move the Central New York Welcome Center to the  
4 Equal Rights Heritage Center in the City of  
5 Auburn.

6 SENATOR LANZA: Lay it aside.

7 THE PRESIDENT: Lay it aside.

8 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number  
9 452, Assembly Bill Number 2330, by  
10 Assemblymember McDonald, an act to amend the  
11 Legislative Law.

12 THE PRESIDENT: Read the last  
13 section.

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

17 THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

18 (The Secretary called the roll.)

19 THE PRESIDENT: Announce the  
20 results.

21 THE SECRETARY: In relation to  
22 Calendar 452, voting in the negative are  
23 Senators Chan and Rhoads.

24 Ayes, 58. Nays, 2.

25 THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

1 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number  
2 456, Senate Print 257, by Senator Martinez, an  
3 act in relation to authorizing a study on  
4 lithium-ion battery fires and prevention.

5 THE PRESIDENT: Read the last  
6 section.

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

9 THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.  
10 (The Secretary called the roll.)

11 THE PRESIDENT: Senator Borrello to  
12 explain his vote.

13 SENATOR BORRELLO: Thank you,  
14 Mr. President.

15 I certainly support this bill. I  
16 think it's important. But I find it rather  
17 ironic or dangerous that we are proceeding  
18 forward with this electric school bus mandate  
19 without actually having a study on something like  
20 are these things going to start on fire.

21 We're already watching kids freezing  
22 because they're turning off the heat in order to  
23 complete their routes in the rural areas that I  
24 represent.

25 And we really need to pump the

1 brakes on this, no pun intended. This is one of  
2 many things that we should be studying before  
3 we're going to put our children on a bus that  
4 could be potentially deadly.

5 I'm supporting this, but I really  
6 would like some more common sense when it comes  
7 to the overall electric battery mandates.

8 Thank you.

9 THE PRESIDENT: Senator Borrello  
10 will be recorded in the affirmative.

11 Senator Weik.

12 SENATOR WEIK: Thank you,  
13 Mr. President. I rise to explain my vote today,  
14 although I also agree with today's bill.

15 Today's bill is a study on  
16 lithium-ion battery fires, which pose a huge  
17 safety and environmental concern.

18 I have a bill, of course, that  
19 prohibits the mandate that requires school  
20 districts to purchase, operate and maintain  
21 electric buses, since we don't even know how to  
22 stabilize prevent or extinguish these fires.

23 The fact that we're passing this  
24 bill today certainly shows that everyone who  
25 votes yes on today's bill is also concerned with

1 the safety of electric buses and the children  
2 that we're mandating to ride on them.

3 Thank you.

4 THE PRESIDENT: Senator Weik will  
5 be recorded in the affirmative.

6 Announce the results.

7 THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 60.

8 THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

9 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number  
10 473, Senate Print 5779, by Senator Fernandez, an  
11 act to amend the Education Law.

12 THE PRESIDENT: Read the last  
13 section.

14 THE SECRETARY: Section 4. This  
15 act shall take effect on the first of July.

16 THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

17 (The Secretary called the roll.)

18 THE PRESIDENT: Senator Oberacker  
19 to explain your vote.

20 SENATOR OBERACKER: Thank you,  
21 Mr. President.

22 This is a great bill, plain and  
23 simple. And I'm grateful to Senator Fernandez  
24 for bringing this forward. And again, it kind of  
25 shows that when we sit down, discuss, talk, be

1 able to work things out, great things can be  
2 accomplished.

3           And the fact that this bill will  
4 take potentially much-needed opioid antagonists  
5 and put them in an area where, if there is a  
6 health issue, most people know where these AEDs  
7 are anyway. I think it's just well thought out,  
8 a great bill.

9           And again, Senator Fernandez, thank  
10 you for bringing it forward. Every once in a  
11 while, I say, in Albany we get it right. Today  
12 we got it right.

13           Thank you, Mr. President.

14           THE PRESIDENT:    Senator Oberacker  
15 will be recorded in the affirmative.

16           Senator Fernandez to explain her  
17 vote.

18           SENATOR FERNANDEZ:   Thank you,  
19 Mr. President.

20           And through you, I really want to  
21 thank the comments by my colleague here, because  
22 this is a very common-sense approach. First aid  
23 kits, AEDs are the tools that we run to when  
24 there is someone in distress, when they are  
25 unconscious. And many times maybe they don't

1 need that, or maybe they do need Narcan.

2 But this does provide more tools in  
3 a secure location to help somebody in their most  
4 desperate time of need for whatever may be the  
5 cause.

6 So I thank everyone for voting for  
7 this bill and for making New Yorkers safer by  
8 having the tools all together.

9 Thank you.

10 THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

11 Announce the results.

12 THE SECRETARY: In relation to  
13 Calendar 473, voting in the negative:  
14 Senator Walczyk.

15 Ayes, 60. Nays, 1.

16 THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

17 THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number  
18 474, Senate Print 410, by Senator Gounardes, an  
19 act to amend the Civil Practice Law and Rules.

20 THE PRESIDENT: Read the last  
21 section.

22 THE SECRETARY: Section 4. This  
23 act shall take effect immediately.

24 THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

25 (The Secretary called the roll.)

1                   THE PRESIDENT:    Announce the  
2 results.

3                   THE SECRETARY:    In relation to  
4 Calendar 474, voting in the negative are  
5 Senators Ashby, Borrello, Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick,  
6 Chan, Gallivan, Griffio, Helming, Lanza, Martins,  
7 Mattera, Murray, Oberacker, O'Mara, Ortt,  
8 Palumbo, Rhoads, Rolison, Stec, Tedisco, Walczyk,  
9 Weber and Weik.

10                   Ayes, 39.   Nays, 22.

11                   THE PRESIDENT:    The bill is passed.

12                   THE SECRETARY:    Calendar Number  
13 479, Senate Print 2627A, by Senator Kavanagh, an  
14 act to amend the Real Property Law.

15                   THE PRESIDENT:    Read the last  
16 section.

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

19                   THE PRESIDENT:    Call the roll.  
20                   (The Secretary called the roll.)

21                   THE PRESIDENT:    Announce the  
22 results.

23                   THE SECRETARY:    In relation to  
24 Calendar 479, voting in the negative:  
25 Senator Walczyk.

1                   Ayes, 60. Nays, 1.

2                   THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

3                   THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number  
4 483, Senate Print 661, by Senator Gianaris, an  
5 act to amend the Insurance Law.

6                   THE PRESIDENT: Read the last  
7 section.

8                   THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This  
9 act shall take effect on the first of January.

10                  THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

11                  (The Secretary called the roll.)

12                  THE PRESIDENT: Announce the  
13 results.

14                  THE SECRETARY: Ayes, 61.

15                  THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.

16                  THE SECRETARY: Calendar Number  
17 517, Senate Print 5116A, by Senator Cleare, an  
18 act to amend the Education Law.

19                  THE PRESIDENT: Read the last  
20 section.

21                  THE SECRETARY: Section 2. This  
22 act shall take effect on the 90th day after it  
23 shall have become a law.

24                  THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

25                  (The Secretary called the roll.)

1                   THE PRESIDENT:    Announce the  
2 results.

3                   THE SECRETARY:    Ayes, 61.

4                   THE PRESIDENT:    The bill is passed.  
5                   Senator Gianaris, that completes the  
6 reading of today's calendar.

7                   SENATOR GIANARIS:    Mr. President,  
8 not since Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas in  
9 1858 have a series of debates taken on such great  
10 importance as those between Mark Walczyk and  
11 Rachel May.

12                   (Laughter.)

13                   SENATOR GIANARIS:    Let's take up  
14 the controversial calendar to hear the next  
15 installment, please.

16                   (Laughter.)

17                   THE PRESIDENT:    The Secretary will  
18 ring the bell.

19                   The Secretary will read.

20                   THE SECRETARY:    Calendar Number  
21 446, Senate Print 1052, by Senator May, an act to  
22 direct the Department of Economic Development to  
23 move the Central New York Welcome Center to the  
24 Equal Rights Heritage Center in the City of  
25 Auburn.

1                   THE PRESIDENT:     Senator Walczyk,  
2     why do you rise?

3                   SENATOR WALCZYK:    From the party of  
4     Lincoln, Mr. President --

5                   (Laughter.)

6                   SENATOR WALCZYK:    -- I rise in  
7     hopes that the sponsor will yield for some  
8     questions.

9                   THE PRESIDENT:     Does the sponsor  
10    yield?

11                  SENATOR MAY:     Mr. President, I am  
12    happy to debate this bill once again.

13                  THE PRESIDENT:     The sponsor yields.

14                  SENATOR WALCZYK:   In 2018, the  
15    state spent \$10 million to build the Equal Rights  
16    Heritage Center, which opened in 2018. Is that  
17    correct?

18                  SENATOR MAY:     Through you,  
19    Mr. President, I don't know the price tag on the  
20    building.

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

24                  THE PRESIDENT:     Does the sponsor  
25    yield?

1                   SENATOR MAY:    I do.

2                   THE PRESIDENT:    The sponsor yields.

3                   SENATOR WALCZYK:    So at the time  
4 that the state spent \$10 million to build the  
5 Heritage Center in the City of Auburn, it was  
6 under agreement that the City of Auburn was going  
7 to run the operations, be responsible for running  
8 the operations of the Equal Rights Heritage  
9 Center, is that correct?

10                  SENATOR MAY:    Through you,  
11 Mr. President.  There was an understanding that  
12 the Central New York Welcome Center would be  
13 placed in the Equal Rights Heritage Center and  
14 the normal funding for a welcome center would  
15 contribute to the operating expenses of the  
16 center.

17                  SENATOR WALCZYK:    And through you,  
18 Mr. President, would the sponsor continue to  
19 yield.

20                  THE PRESIDENT:    Does the sponsor  
21 yield?

22                  SENATOR MAY:    I will.

23                  THE PRESIDENT:    The sponsor yields.

24                  SENATOR WALCZYK:    But the CNY  
25 Welcome Center was actually placed in

1 Destiny USA, not in Auburn, is that correct?

2 SENATOR MAY: Through you,  
3 Mr. President, that is correct.

4 As far as we can tell, there was  
5 some side deal made between Governor Cuomo and  
6 the mall developers to shift the plan and put the  
7 Welcome Center at Destiny instead.

8 SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you,  
9 Mr. President, would the sponsor continue to  
10 yield.

11 THE PRESIDENT: Does the sponsor  
12 yield?

13 SENATOR MAY: I do.

14 THE PRESIDENT: The sponsor yields.

15 SENATOR WALCZYK: And in the  
16 Heritage Center's first year of operations they  
17 received \$50,000 from the State of New York to  
18 help the City of Auburn with operating, is that  
19 correct?

20 SENATOR MAY: Through you,  
21 Mr. President, I don't -- don't know. I wasn't  
22 in office at that time. And I didn't represent  
23 Auburn at that time, either.

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

1 yield?

2 THE PRESIDENT: Does the sponsor  
3 yield?

4 SENATOR MAY: I do.

5 THE PRESIDENT: The sponsor yields.

6 SENATOR WALCZYK: You may have been  
7 in office in 2025 when the city received \$200,000  
8 from the state. Is that figure correct, \$200,000  
9 for the operations to help the City of Auburn run  
10 the Heritage Center?

11 SENATOR MAY: Through you,  
12 Mr. President, that is correct. Because I have  
13 advocated each of the last few years to get some  
14 operating funding into the state budget to  
15 replace what was lost by losing the CNY Welcome  
16 Center designation.

17 SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you,  
18 Mr. President, would the sponsor continue to  
19 yield?

20 THE PRESIDENT: Does the sponsor  
21 yield?

22 SENATOR MAY: Yup.

23 THE PRESIDENT: The sponsor yields.

24 SENATOR WALCZYK: So I noticed you  
25 once again provided \$200,000 for the City of

1 Auburn for the operations of the Heritage Center  
2 in your one-house budget.

3 The city says that it costs about  
4 \$234,000 annually to run, is that correct?

5 SENATOR MAY: Through you,  
6 Mr. President, that sounds right to me.

7 SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you,  
8 Mr. President, would the sponsor continue to  
9 yield?

10 THE PRESIDENT: Does the sponsor  
11 yield?

12 SENATOR MAY: Yes.

13 THE PRESIDENT: The sponsor yields.

14 SENATOR WALCZYK: Destiny USA is  
15 actually -- so it's a mall in Syracuse. It is  
16 the top 20 most -- in the top 20 most-visited  
17 shopping centers in the nation, with over  
18 20 million visitors per year.

19 The Equal Rights Center gets about  
20 8,000 visits a year, is that correct?

21 SENATOR MAY: Through you,  
22 Mr. President, I don't know that number. But  
23 that sounds very low to me. There are always  
24 people there when I go.

25 SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you,

1 Mr. President, would the sponsor continue to  
2 yield.

3 THE PRESIDENT: Does the sponsor  
4 yield?

5 SENATOR MAY: Yes.

6 THE PRESIDENT: The sponsor yields.

7 SENATOR WALCZYK: Yeah, in their  
8 annual 2024 report, I can read you the specific  
9 number. A total of 8,206 walk-ins. That was an  
10 increase of 3,000 visits over 2023, so headed in  
11 the right direction. But falling pretty short of  
12 20 million, where the Visitor Center is  
13 currently.

14 My question is, is Onondaga County  
15 in support of moving the Visitor Center from  
16 their county into the County of Cayuga in the  
17 City of Auburn?

18 SENATOR MAY: Through you,  
19 Mr. President. This isn't a decision for  
20 Onondaga County, this is a decision for the State  
21 of New York.

22 And I would also say the  
23 Visitor Center actually is a gathering place.  
24 There are events that take place outside of it  
25 all the time. And so I don't know if they're

1 clocking every single person who comes in there.

2 But Destiny Mall also -- some of  
3 those numbers of visitors are very old, to be  
4 honest, and it is -- I would say there's been a  
5 significant drop-off, especially now that  
6 Canadian visitors aren't coming to Syracuse  
7 anymore.

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

11 THE PRESIDENT: Does the sponsor  
12 yield?

13 SENATOR MAY: I will.

14 THE PRESIDENT: The sponsor yields.

15 SENATOR WALCZYK: In fact, at least  
16 in their 2024 report, they do clock combined  
17 events and tours total, adding another 6400 of  
18 combined events and tours.

19 I assume that's things outside of  
20 the Heritage Center that rally there, to include  
21 the No Kings rally that was held on October 18th  
22 at the Heritage Center or on January 22nd, a  
23 Democrat running for county court judge having  
24 their announcement in the Heritage Center.

25 My question, are there any

1 Republican events or conservative events ever  
2 held at the Heritage Center?

3 SENATOR MAY: Through you,  
4 Mr. President, I don't have a list of events that  
5 are held there, but I do know there are a lot of  
6 community events that occur outside the center.  
7 And -- and I'm sure some of them are, at the very  
8 least, nonpartisan, if not Republican-organized.  
9 I just -- I don't know.

10 SENATOR WALCZYK: And through you,  
11 Mr. President, would the sponsor continue to  
12 yield?

13 THE PRESIDENT: Does the sponsor  
14 yield?

15 SENATOR MAY: I do.

16 THE PRESIDENT: The sponsor yields.

17 SENATOR WALCZYK: The City of  
18 Auburn is often called the "Prison City," for  
19 very good reason. There were a number of events  
20 in Auburn this time last year as corrections  
21 officers were fighting for safety on their job.

22 Were any of the corrections  
23 officers' rallies held at the Heritage Center?

24 SENATOR MAY: Through you,  
25 Mr. President, I don't know the answer.

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

4                   THE PRESIDENT:    Does the sponsor  
5 yield?

6                   SENATOR MAY:     Yes.

7                   THE PRESIDENT:    The sponsor yields.

8                   SENATOR WALCZYK:   Do you happen to  
9 know the party registration of the executive  
10 director, the chair of the board, the treasurer,  
11 and almost the entire board of directors?

12                  SENATOR MAY:     Mr. President, I do  
13 not see how that is relevant to this question.  
14 And the answer is no.

15                  SENATOR WALCZYK:   Thank you,  
16 Mr. President.

17                  On the bill.

18                  THE PRESIDENT:    Senator Walczyk on  
19 the bill.

20                  SENATOR WALCZYK:   So this bill  
21 would move the Central New York Welcome Center  
22 from one of the largest malls most frequently  
23 visited in America. It is in the top 20 largest  
24 malls, has over 20 million people visit it each  
25 day {sic}.

1                   I know it well because I grew up in  
2 the Central New York region. I also represent  
3 the North Country and have many Canadian friends  
4 who talk about doing their Christmas shopping  
5 there. That's why it's situated well to be a  
6 welcome center.

7                   The area where you've got 20 million  
8 people in Central New York showing up to shop is  
9 a great way to welcome them to the State of  
10 New York, show them some of the products that we  
11 make in the State of New York, and show them some  
12 information that they may spread out to  
13 communities, even like communities of Auburn.  
14 It's a great place to advertise for Prison City.

15                   It's at the confluence of Route 81  
16 and 90, making it very easy for many visitors --  
17 even with traffic changes, still very easy for  
18 many visitors across the State of New York.

19                   But on top of the strategy of this,  
20 what bothers me the most about this bill is that  
21 the City of Syracuse and the County of Onondaga,  
22 where the CNY Welcome Center is situated today,  
23 haven't asked for this, haven't approved of this,  
24 and would agree that in Central New York,  
25 Syracuse is the beating heart. That makes sense

1 for CNY to have the Welcome Center there and  
2 well-placed in the area where people most  
3 frequently visit.

4 So it doesn't make strategic sense  
5 for us in this body to move CNY's Welcome Center  
6 out to the City of Auburn. And no offense to  
7 Prison City; I'm sure they love the visitors.

8 But when you look at everything  
9 from -- actually, if you should know -- and you  
10 should know -- parking was taken away from the  
11 City of Auburn. Many residents at the YMCA  
12 weren't happy having to park out on the street.

13 Actually, at the Syracuse Mall, at  
14 Destiny USA, parking is free. And people,  
15 20 million of them, are already showing up to  
16 shop there. So moving this into the City of  
17 Auburn could even cause more consternation.

18 And the real reason that this is  
19 brought forward is to support the Democrat  
20 hangout in the City of Auburn. This is the place  
21 where all the events are, this is the place where  
22 all the organizations are, this is where people  
23 coalesce and have rallies for one side of an  
24 issue, not for the other.

25 And that's what makes it difficult

1 in this body, with the State of New York and  
2 taxpayer dollars that we're investing here, to  
3 say no. So I hope that you will join me in  
4 voting no on this bill.

5 Thank you.

6 THE PRESIDENT: Are there any other  
7 Senators wishing to be heard?

8 Seeing and hearing none, debate is  
9 closed.

10 The Secretary will ring the bell.

11 Oh, sorry. Senator Gianaris.

12 SENATOR GIANARIS: Mr. President,  
13 we've agreed to restore this to the  
14 noncontroversial calendar.

15 THE PRESIDENT: Read the last  
16 section.

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

19 THE PRESIDENT: Call the roll.

20 (The Secretary called the roll.)

21 THE PRESIDENT: Senator May to  
22 explain her vote.

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

25 When the state builds a building, I

1 think it is reasonable to expect that that  
2 building -- that the state will have a plan for  
3 how that building will be operated over time.

4           The state built a very nice building  
5 right in the middle of Auburn, right across from  
6 City Hall, right next to the Seward House, which  
7 is a very important tourist destination, and  
8 right around the corner from downtown.

9           And then the state pulled the  
10 funding that was supposed to be what enabled the  
11 building to continue its operation.

12           And personally, I think this is  
13 irresponsible on the part of the state and an  
14 insult to the City of Auburn, and it has left the  
15 city in a position where either they had to come  
16 up with a significant amount of money to run this  
17 building or watch it fall down, essentially,  
18 right in the middle of town.

19           So I am proud to advocate for a  
20 sustainable system of funding the operation of  
21 this building.

22           But I also need to say, clearly:  
23 This isn't about partisanship. This isn't about  
24 some kind of lefty plot. This is about  
25 infrastructure and how we support the

1 institutions in our upstate cities.

2 And the reality is even if --I think  
3 it's pretty inflated to say 20 million people are  
4 visiting Destiny Mall now, in a year. The  
5 reality is that the Welcome Center at Destiny  
6 Mall is located in a distant corner that very few  
7 people ever see.

8 So the numbers who actually visit  
9 that Welcome Center -- I've been by several times  
10 to check, and there's almost never anyone there.

11 So I would bet if they were  
12 collecting information, that there are actually  
13 at least as many people visiting the Equal Rights  
14 Heritage Center in Auburn as there are visiting  
15 the Welcome Center at Destiny Mall.

16 So I think this is smart economics  
17 for us to put state money into operating this  
18 building. And I think Auburn is deserving of it.

19 And I vote aye.

20 THE PRESIDENT: Senator May will be  
21 recorded in the affirmative.

22 Announce the results.

23 THE SECRETARY: In relation to  
24 Calendar 446, voting in the negative are  
25 Senators Ashby, Borrello, Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick,

1 Lanza, Martins, Mattera, O'Mara, Ortt, Palumbo,  
2 Rhoads, Stec, Tedisco, Walczyk, Weber and Weik.

3 Ayes, 47. Nays, 15.

4 THE PRESIDENT: The bill is passed.  
5 Senator Gianaris, that completes the  
6 reading of the controversial calendar.

7 SENATOR GIANARIS: Is there any  
8 further business at the desk?

9 THE PRESIDENT: There is no further  
10 business at the desk.

11 SENATOR GIANARIS: I move to  
12 adjourn until tomorrow, Tuesday, March 17th,  
13 St. Patrick's Day, at 3:00 p.m.

14 THE PRESIDENT: On motion, the  
15 Senate stands adjourned until Tuesday,  
16 March 17th, at 3:00 p.m.

17 (Whereupon, at 3:39 p.m., the Senate  
18 adjourned.)

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24  
25