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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS ON INSIDE CITY HALL**

**Errol Louis:** Welcome back to Inside City Hall, in just under 12 hours from right now, polls will open across the five boroughs for election day. The city says that the NYPD is prepared for any potential unrest, although officials say that there is no specific threat of violence. Now that has not stopped businesses from boarding up their windows, especially in Midtown, Manhattan. Joining me now to talk about that, as well as the latest in the COVID pandemic, we've got Mayor de Blasio from the Blue Room Inside City Hall. Welcome Mr. Mayor, good to see you.

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good to see you, Errol, how you doing?

**Louis:** Just fine, thanks. I – we have a lot to talk about with public safety, I want to get to that later, but let me just ask there's threats of violence is one thing – is the city aware of any planned demonstrations on or after Election Day?

**Mayor:** No, Errol, you know, a lot of demonstrations we hear about right before they happen, but no major demonstrations planned at this moment and a lot of preparations in place – had a long meeting today with the NYPD to go over different scenarios and, you know, we're ready for whatever may come. I think the most important point here is that New Yorkers need to get out there and vote tomorrow and then be ready for the fact that may take a while for us to get a clear result. But the most important thing is – is let's not forget the first step – we need everyone engaged. We need everyone voting tomorrow because the stakes for New York City in this election are extremely high and people have to remember that and not worry so much I think about the aftermath as what's at stake tomorrow, in terms of the future of fighting COVID-19, having a vaccine we can actually believe in, getting a stimulus so we get back on our feet, and all the bigger issues like fighting global warming, so crucial to the future of the city, massive decisions, massive issues on the table in this election, and people need to participate.

**Louis:** Speaking of COVID-19, the city is now consistently, it seems exceeding 550 new daily cases which was one of the metrics that you created as a measure of our ability to control the spread. The seven-day average is now 593, which is eight percent over the threshold. What are your public health experts telling you this means? And what will it mean if we can't get the number back down?

**Mayor:** Errol, right now we see in the three different indicators we talk about, sort of three different stories, hospitalizations still pretty low, and the amount of COVID positivity among those hospitalized low, the cases have gone up and that's a concern, but it also correlates with a lot more testing, so that's an important factor to keep in mind. And then the positivity levels

where we see the seven-day average, you know, hovering that 1.7, 1.8, 1.9 kind of territory. It's not where we want to be. It's not horrible either. It's much better than most of the country. It's a crucial moment for us to, you know, really come off of the work that we've done in Brooklyn and Queens, really bring that down, those positively levels down once and for all, and then get to work fighting off the dangers that might come from travel, for example, and discouraging people from traveling at this time of year. So, it's a mixed bag. We take it really seriously. But, again, we are still doing a hell of a lot better than a lot of other places in this country and around the world.

**Louis:** There was a question from one of our viewers. This is from Paul. He sent this on Twitter and the question is, how will our out of state visitors get tested and get fast results to comply with the Governor's orders? And why would anybody come to New York City if they have to comply with those orders? Or is that the point that no one else comes to the city?

**Mayor:** It's not to say that people shouldn't come here as to say they should come here safely. Look, even if you're coming from one of the other States of the country, pretty much all of them now are on the state quarantine list, if you're coming here, you're expecting to quarantine. In fact, this testing rule allows you a way out out of quarantine if you can prove you have a negative test. Most of our test turnaround now is in the two-day turnaround range. If you go to one of our Health + Hospitals facilities, you have a really good chance of getting your result back in a day or two. So no, I don't think it makes it impossible for people to travel. I think the question right now at this season, the holidays, and also what's happening with COVID around the country is why would anyone travel at this moment unless you absolutely have to? Because it's just not the smart move if we're trying to contain COVID and knock it down, it just doesn't make sense to travel at this moment.

**Louis:** Another question from a viewer it's a as follows, "as thousands of New York City businesses have dealt with COVID-19 hardships, New York City government has yet to have a single layoff related to it. When will the time come to take the cost cutting measures that New York City needs to make?"

**Mayor:** Well, I disagree with the way it's framed because layoffs are not good for New York City. Layoffs mean not only would a lot of families lose their livelihood and people lose their job, but it means the services we rely on wouldn't be there, and if we're going to get the kind of recovery we need, we need a strong local services to get us going again. So layoffs are not something to celebrate or wish for, layoffs are a last resort. You know, we've gotten some major, major budgetary savings working with our labor partners in the last few weeks, obviously tomorrow is going to tell us the most important thing, will there be a new president? Will there be a president ready to do a stimulus that will actually allow New York City to recover? That's what's on the line tomorrow. Layoffs are the last resort.

**Louis:** The labor deal that you announced recently really was just a deferring payment. The money is still owed, right? It was really, in some ways, a form of borrowing.

**Mayor:** Well, look at it this way, this is the year right now when we're feeling the brunt of COVID and we haven't had help from Washington or Albany. We are really hoping, I'm hoping

that tomorrow is the beginning of a very new era for this country and for the city and where there's the kind stimulus we deserve, which would be a game changer. If it's anything like what the House of Representatives passed, it would allow us to address our fiscal issues and move forward. So what we did with labor, I want to thank our labor partners, was to, you know, buy us some time and take pressure off this year's budget, defer those payments to the future, and hopefully that's a future where we get the federal support we deserve to get back on our feet.

**Louis:** There was a question that's been raised about schools. 21 schools, obviously out of 1,600 are closed, but there are really only a handful of just over a quarter of kids who have been to in-person classes so far. Is it time to rethink the results of the survey that led you to push for reopening? It may not be as popular as perhaps you would expect it?

**Mayor:** No. You know what I think happened, Errol, when we first surveyed back in the summer – and obviously the city was doing a really amazing job, the people of the city fought back COVID, I think folks really wanted their kids back in school, and then, you know, as it got closer more and more concern, and I understand people's concern, and then of course more recently what's been happening around the country. It makes sense that people might have had a hope that they're still not feeling comfortable with, but what we do see now it's almost 300,000 kids attending in-person learning, that number does keep growing, obviously the opt-in period started today for kids to come in who were previously in remote instruction. I think parents are really aware of what's happened in the schools and how safe they've been, how much testing there's been, how few cases there have been. I'm very hopeful that as more and more parents think about, they're going to say, look, it's time, you know, it's time to get my kid, the opportunity that in-person education gives that you just can't get from remote.

**Louis:** In, in some cases in-person learning is, you know, maybe half a dozen times in a month, right? I mean, it's not as if kids are going back five days a week?

**Mayor:** Well, yeah, that's true in some cases and other cases, it's, you know, two or three times a week, and, you know, kids are getting a really good amount and that's one of the reasons it's so important now to really get clear on behalf of our parents, which parents want to be in-person, which kids should be in-person, which want remote. So we can really make sure that kids have the maximum time in school. You know, we don't want to see a seat being held for a kid who actually would prefer to do remote. That's fine. But the kids who want to in-person, we want to maximize the number of days. There are some kids right now, for example, maybe it's two days a week, we could get them to three days a week or more. And really that's what I hope will come out all of this, just figuring out what each family needs and then giving them the best possible version of that, you know, pandemic or no pandemic.

**Louis:** Okay. Stand by Mr. Mayor, I want to talk about these city-wide crime statistics that came out this evening. We're going to talk about that and much more with Mayor de Blasio after this short break, stay with us.

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**Louis:** Welcome back to Inside City Hall. I'm once again, joined by Mayor de Blasio, who's coming to us live from the Blue Room. Mr. Mayor, citywide crime stats were released today and you know, the election is the big story tomorrow, but the headline is murders are up 37.2 percent over the last 10 months of compared to the 10 months of last year, shootings are up quite a bit, 137 shootings in October compared to 62 a year ago in October, that's 121 percent increase – year to date, 93.9 percent increase in shootings. Burglaries up 32 percent. What is your theory about what's going on and what can we expect the administration to do about it?

**Mayor:** Errol, we've really talked about this a lot, but I'll say it again. We've experienced a global pandemic, a perfect storm of negative factors this year, including people being out of work in huge numbers, schools shut down, houses of worship, shut down all the underpinnings of society disrupted, and it's been an incredibly difficult time. On top of that for a long time, a lot of officers were out sick. The court system was closed. I mean, you could go on and on. This is not like any year in the history of New York City. Nonetheless, this city's fighting back. The people of this city had been working with NYPD to fight back. We're seeing a major, major increase in gun arrests. The NYPD has been making a lot of adjustments in strategy to address the situation, and look, we're going to get past this because we're going to get out of this pandemic. We're going to start our recovery and next year is going to be a very, very different year. So it's been incredibly tough, but I have confidence that we'll turn this around because we're going to turn around the overall situation and get past the coronavirus.

**Louis:** Have we reached bottom as far as you're concerned? I mean, if we're controlling the spread, some elements of the coronavirus are under control. At what point can people expect there to be say, fewer murders?

**Mayor:** Look, I think we've – the worst is behind us in terms of the disease based on what we know now. Now we have to be vigilant. We have to make sure that we do – New York has been really the great example of this country in terms of the comeback we had in fighting the coronavirus. But now we have to bring back not only our economy, but the whole national economy. Tomorrow will have so much to say about it. Errol. If we get – if Joe Biden and Kamala Harris go to the White House, we get a major stimulus that helps put New York City back on its feet. That's going to turn things around. We get a vaccine we can believe in, and this is crucial. If Joe Biden's president, the science is going to run you know – be the ruling factor here, science and data, and you're going to have a vaccine that the federal government can actually promote to people in a believable fashion. The faster people get that vaccine, the more we turn around our economy in our city, the faster we get back to normal. So these are the more essential factors to me and I'm hopeful.

**Louis:** But the, I mean, the experts that I've interviewed on this program have said that, you know, we should expect to hold tight for like a year under the best case scenario before those factors that you just described start really making themselves felt both the stimulus and certainly the vaccine and its distribution, and the reopening of the economy. I mean, surely you're not saying to the people of New York, “hey, murders are going to, and burglaries and shootings are all going to get worse for the next year?”

**Mayor:** No, I didn't even come close to saying that Errol, I'm disagreeing with your experts too. If Joe Biden's elected president, the most likely time for a major stimulus is February, and I'm thinking along the lines of the New Deal, and he's obviously talking about emulating FDR. I think the smartest thing for him to do would be to come in with a major stimulus, like the House bill. The second we have that New York City's in a position to address a whole host of issues, avert layoffs, but also to do a lot of positive things. Right behind that the vaccine, our health leadership thinks there's going to be a vaccine in the next few months, and then the question of course is how quickly we can distribute it, how quickly the supply builds, and we can do the right kind of distribution. I think we're going to have a lot of people vaccinated even in the first half of the year, and that's going to make a difference. I think you're going to see by the summer, which is historically the time when we deal with the biggest crime challenges a very, very different reality in the city, if Joe Biden is elected president. If Joe Biden's not elected president, this is a real challenging road ahead for us. But I have no doubt if you have a stimulus and a vaccine people can believe in, and all of that is happening over the next four or five months. It's a game changer for how next summer will be in this city.

**Louis:** There were a couple of early forums for people who want your job after you leave because of term limits, almost without exception. Not that I can even remember a single exception, including people who used to work for you. All of the candidates are saying that if elected mayor, one of the first things they would do is replace Commissioner Shea the Police Commissioner, and I understand that, you know, every new mayor comes in and picks his own commissioner, but that's not really the point that they're making there.

**Mayor:** Well, I can tell you when I ran for mayor every single one of us, except I think Christine Quinn said we wanted to replace Ray Kelly. I do think people want their own leadership in place, and that makes sense but the bottom line here is we've been through an extremely difficult time this year, unprecedented. There's literally no year in New York City history like 2020 in terms of so many crises hitting at once. It's been tough out. There that being said, the City is well on its way to coming back, and this City has been triumphant and fighting back the coronavirus, no one doubts that we got our schools up and running. One of the few places in a few major cities in America that were able to do that, and you see a lot more activity, economic activity, human activity out there, outdoor dining, and so many other things. So in the end, I think people are going to look at this, not just this year, but how are we going to going into next year? And if we get the help we've been deserving all along from Washington, New York City is going to make an amazing comeback, and that's what people are going to say see in the end.

**Louis:** Here's a question from one of our viewers. This is from Max, and he says, what is the timeline for increased civilian oversight of the Police Department? Why is the Mayor letting other cities lead New York in this way? Oakland's next police chief will be hired based on interviews, collected in – conducted in public meetings by its police oversight commission with four candidates. I guess the general idea being, have you considered opening up the process by which you name and promote and place your commanders?

**Mayor:** Look, I think we have extraordinary oversight. When you think about the Civilian Complaint Review Board, when you think about the police Inspector General, as well as all the other levels of government I think we've got a lot oversight. I think in terms of choosing

leadership, I do understand that model, Errol. I don't think it's the best way to choose leaders necessarily, but I understand it. I think the issue here in, in the biggest, most complex, most diverse city in America is the Mayor is elected with a vision with a platform and then chooses people who will best be able to bring that to life. That's what I think makes sense for such a challenging place. Oakland's a whole other reality, God bless them. But for here, when I think about the kinds of folks that I brought into leadership, whether it's police or schools or so many other places, there are people who have been able to take a vision like neighborhood policing and bring it to life, and we've been through a perfect storm, but before that perfect storm, we had six years of crime going down and improvement in the relationship between police and community, and we will restart that again, as we come out of this pandemic. I don't have a doubt about that at all.

**Louis:** Okay. Before I let you go, I would be remiss if I did not ask you as a former political strategist what states or storylines are you going to be watching in tomorrow's election? Where are you going to be watching the results?

**Mayor:** I think just be at Gracie mansion with Chirlane ready for a very long night. Look, I think what's really interesting in this election is one, Arizona, which could be about to make, you know, a long-term flip to the Democratic camp, and then a real interesting question about places like Georgia, Texas that were considered sort of the next in line. We're seeing some really powerful indicators from those states that bigger change may be on the way and let's face it. If Texas goes blue, even once, that is the decisive element in the future of America in terms of it being a more progressive and democratic country. So I'll be watching those three states, particularly tomorrow night.

**Louis:** Yes. To see if the political map gets rewritten will be important in the case of Texas. Is that a case where almost would [inaudible] however many dozens of electoral votes, don't go to Joe Biden, but they'd come close. Does that signal the same kind of change you're describing?

**Mayor:** To me it does. I've talked to a lot of my fellow mayors in Texas over the years, and they have gotten increasingly optimistic, obviously with the Senate race with Beto O'Rourke last time, very encouraging. We're seeing a lot of energy on the ground, incredible turnout efforts, Harris County, where Houston is 24-hour voting amazing thing arrow, where they wanted to engage people so much they literally did round the clock poll sites. Something exciting is happening in Texas. So a win changes the country right now. Close means it's on the way.

**Louis:** In the closing weeks of the 2016 campaign, you and I were on a panel with the US Conference of Mayors wondering where urban policy and where cities figured in either the Clinton or the Trump campaigns. It was an unhappy conversation followed by four unhappy years. Are you talking to anybody in the Biden campaign and will cities, including New York get a better shake if he should win?

**Mayor:** Yeah. I've talked to a number of key people in the Biden world, and there's no question in my mind, look, Joe Biden coming up, you know, in Wilmington, Delaware you know, obviously his family from Scranton, this is a guy that really understands cities and feels something for cities, and there's no question that we're going to have the first chance, you know,

now after these four long years to actually talk about what will bring cities back and therefore help restore the whole country. Joe Biden, someone who understands that, you know, urban areas about lead the recovery, and he's not unlike president Trump running away from that reality, he's going to embrace it.

So I'm very, very excited, and again, the notion of a huge stimulus in February I think that's going to be the game changer for New York City and the whole country, and that's what's at stake tomorrow night. So couldn't be more on the line to say the least.

**Louis:** Okay. I know you've got more than one television up there at Gracie Mansion. Make sure one of them is tuned right here at NY1, and we'll catch up with you again.

**Mayor:** As always Errol, as always.

**Louis:** Thank you, okay. We're going to take a quick break here.

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