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RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS ON AM 970 THE ANSWER

John Catsimatidis: Today we have Mayor Bill de Blasio on with us. Good morning, Mayor de Blasio.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, John. You've got some big shoes to fill today.

John Catsimatidis: Well, John Gambling's shoes – you know, he's had every mayor on, and I believe he's had you on already once.

Mayor: He's had me on several times.

John Catsimatidis: Wow, that's wonderful.

Mayor: It's my pleasure to be with you.

John Catsimatidis: Well, thank you for being with us, and – look, it's good to keep New Yorkers involved. I was at a bank board meeting this morning, and a lot of people were saying, look, you're not so bad. You're doing a good job, contrary to some of those polls. What do you think?

Mayor: Well, John I appreciate hearing that because, look, the facts are the facts, you know, what we're trying to do here is create a lot more opportunity for people, and we got something to show for it – 177,000 new jobs since I came into office 22 months ago. We just announced a plan yesterday to create 20,000 jobs on top of that in industrial and manufacturing sectors. A lot is moving in the right direction. Obviously, crime is down. We're very proud of that. Commissioner Bratton and NYPD are doing a great job. We're very proud of 65,000 kids now in full-day pre-k compared to 20,000 when I came into office. These things really affect people's lives fundamentally, so I think what matters to people is what is government doing for them. Are we continuing to improve the economy? Are we continuing to make this city safe? Are we continuing to fix the schools? That's what they want to see. And ultimately I think that's what people are going to make their judgements based on.

John Catsimatidis: Well, you know, you picked a lot of great commissioners. Bill Bratton is doing a great job for you in the police department, and Daniel Nigro is doing a great job in the fire department, and [inaudible]. Tell me, you know, you've been getting some criticism – what departments do you think you need improvement on?

Mayor: Look, I have to say we don't ever rest on our laurels. We needed work across the board to keep improving the work we do. And I don't know any one of our commissioners who would say anything otherwise. You know, Bill Bratton's the most renowned police leader in the country. He has driven down crime everywhere he's gone. But he'll be the first to say to you, you know, he wants to innovate more. He wants to, you know, find ways to do even better. So this something we feel across the board. We clearly have some challenges we have to come up with additional solutions on like homelessness, there's no question about that. We – we're spending another billion dollars over the next four years to address homelessness, but I've been blunt about the fact that what we have today is an economic challenge underlying homelessness that we didn't

use to have in the past. So, bluntly the numbers are more challenging to us. We have a lot of solutions on the table. I'm proud of the fact that we've gotten 38,000 people out of shelters and into housing, but we need additional solutions on top of that, and we'll have more to say on that in the coming weeks and months. So, John, you know New York City as well as anyone, you know, and you're so civically involved in this city. We will keep working on every front because there's always more to do.

John Catsimatidis: One of the things that I know New Yorkers are a little bit upset about is a lot of guns in the street. And I know we went away from stop-and-frisks and we went into other programs. Do you feel that there's any possibility we should go back to it?

Mayor: Look, stop-and-frisks, the way it was being handled, was a broken policy. It was literally unconstitutional. It was unfair to people. It was treating – you know, over 90 percent of the folks who were stopped had done nothing wrong, and that was according to the police statistics themselves. And we're treating innocent people like criminals. And it was overwhelmingly people of color, and particularly young people. We're not going to go back to that. And, by the way, listen to Commissioner Bratton; listen to Chief O'Neill and how they've gone about reducing crime. And you just heard, October was the lowest in terms of any October in the last, basically, quarter century; the lowest amount of crime in any October in that timeframe. The strategies they're using are working. Shootings are down, gun arrests are up. We are up almost seven percent in gun arrests compared to last year. They'll tell you, one, we want police and community to be closer than ever. We want the information from the community, so we can find out where the guns are, and we can find out where the bad guys are, but look out how assertive the NYPD has been; continuing to drive down crime; upticks regularly in gun arrests. Look at what was done the other day between NYPD and the Manhattan DA's Office – a gun arrest operation that got 74 loaded handguns and assault weapons off the street. I was there when they unveiled what they'd done. They had – literally had AK47s there, and tons of ammunition. The work of the NYPD, the work of the district attorney was extraordinary in that case. There's going to be a lot more where that came from because we've put a huge amount of money into the equipment that will help them to do a better job at reaching those guns. The, obviously, things like ShotSpotter that are going to give us a lot more information on where shots are fired, and how to get at them quickly – new training for our officers. And, let's be clear, 1,300 more officers will be here over the next year. So, this is a lot that's going to help keep us safe and make us safer, but I am convinced the NYPD knows how to get at guns. They're doing an extraordinary job with the policies of today.

John Catsimatidis: Let's talk about the courts for a second. Any hope – when a guy has 29 arrests and the judge lets him out is there a point that you throw away the key?

Mayor: Look, I said bluntly the other day there are some people who unfortunately cannot be redeemed. There are some people who simply should be behind bars. And, you know, you hope that's very few people, but the fact is there are some hardened criminals; there are some career criminals. And what we have in this state is a very unacceptable situation where judges cannot consider the dangerousness of the person in front of them when they make a bail decision. And they're not required to consider the dangerousness of the person before them when they think about things like diversion programs. Now, look, Judge Lippman, the chief judge in the state has been calling for these reforms for quite a while. I started talking about this issue a year ago, you know, when we saw a situation where people even were making threats against police officers – that couldn't be considered in determining bail, that's crazy. We need a state law change. We need Albany to deal with this in the upcoming legislative session. And what I [inaudible] very clearly is there are diversion programs that are working great for low-level offenders who should not be in jail or prison. There's better ways to handle, a lot of people have not done anything violent. There's reforms we have to make in the bail system to keep people out of jail and prison who don't belong there, but there are some other people, absolutely, belong behind bars, and right now our criminal justice system doesn't give judges the opportunity to follow through on what they're seeing before their eyes, we've got to change that.

John Catsimatidis: Now there's also been some controversy on the MTA being short a billion dollars to finish the Second Avenue subway. What's your input on that?

Mayor: Well, look, I think what the head of the MTA, Tom Prendergast, said the other day is helpful – that they’re looking at that situation again and that they’re going to be open to coming back if they find they can speed things up. Look, we all know we want the Second Avenue subway to succeed, and to expand. We also know that the first phase has taken a real long time and has been much more complicated than anyone would have anticipated. So I think what was a surprise was hearing this change that there really hadn’t been a lot of notice on, but I think the response from Prendergast is a good one – saying that now they’re going to reassess the situation, and if they find ways to speed things up they’re going to come back and ask for a special new approach to that. I think that’s a smart move.

John Catsimatidis: Now, we’re about to enter your – what your 21st, 22nd month of being mayor. What do you feel that your best accomplishments have been?

Mayor: Look, I am so proud of Pre-K For All. This was the number one agenda item when I ran for this office. I said, you know, instead of 20,000 kids in full-day pre-k every child who wants it should be getting it. We now have over 65,000 kids in full-day pre-k this very day. That was a really fast example of progress. And I got to tell you, when I talk to the families whose kids are getting a really great start on their education, on their lives there’s such enthusiasm – and families of all backgrounds, every neighborhood, every part of the city – very, very proud of that. Obviously, the other thing I want to highlight is, you know, we know this city has become less and less affordable, and we have the boldest and largest affordable housing program in the history of any city in the country – 500,000 people – half-a-million people will be served by this program when it’s completed, we’re on target with that program. A lot of people told me from the beginning that it was beyond our reach – you know what, after the first year we’re on target, and we’re going to keep adding to that. I’m very proud of what we did just a few weeks ago with Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village saving 5,000 affordable units that would have been lost otherwise. This is the kind of thing that really affects, you know, the ability of people to live in the city they love. And I’m proud of those accomplishments.

John Catsimatidis: And believe me all of us – we really love New York and we want the best for New York. Talking about real estate, what incentives do we have for the real estate – I mean, I’ve seen so many cranes being up, and so much being built. What do we have that we can keep the real estate industry investing in New York City?

Mayor: Well I think, you know, right now the market obviously is incredibly strong. There is demand like never before – we have the largest population we’ve ever had in this city. We’re well on you way now to 9 million people over the next couple of decades. We have demand from all over the world, both in terms of people who want live here and people who want to start businesses and expand their businesses here. We see incredible growth in the technology sector – over 300,000 people employed in a sector that didn’t really exist here 20 years ago. So, there’s a lot of very powerful things happening. But, what I say to the real estate industry is we’re going to work with you for the right kind of development. We need a lot more affordable housing; we need a lot more market rate rental housing. But we’re also going to put real demand on the process for the people – people need affordable housing. And in many cases, when we’re developing something new, we need to think about things like the need for schools, in some communities, or open space, obviously jobs for community residents. So there’s a lot that we are putting on the table very forcefully to the real estate community – saying this what it’s going to take to have strong neighborhoods and opportunity for people. But we’re also going to work with the real estate community to get things done. And I think you will hear from a lot of people in real estate that we are moving the ball in terms of keeping development moving forward, but with really tough rules.

John Catsimatidis: You feel that those incentives are good enough, in other words, to keep our real estate industry moving?

Mayor: There is no question in my mind that the combination of a strong market and an administration devoted to the right kind of development adds up to a lot. That’s why you see all of these cranes. We’ve said to developers, we’re going to – whenever we do re-zonings or major land use changes, we’re going to require affordable housing, that is our mandatory inclusionary zoning program; we’re going to drive a hard bargain on

behalf of the people; we're going to make sure that community needs are accounted for, you know, the things people need in the community, again the schools, the parks, the infrastructure. But at the same time, once we have a plan that we think is fair to the people of New York City, then we're going to make sure development moves quickly. And what I've heard from a lot of people in real estate is that they really appreciate the team of people we've put together – our Deputy Mayor Alicia Glen, our Housing Commissioner Vicki Bean, and our HTC Commissioner Garry Rodney, our City Planning Chair Carl Weisbrod – uniform praise for them, because what people find is once we agree that a plan is fair for the people of the city, we will move it quickly. And that, let's face it – people in business know, time is money.

John Catsimatidis: Tell us – let's talk about the school system for a few minutes. What do we do to improve graduation rates in our school system?

Mayor: Well John, the plan we put out just some weeks ago, the Equity in Excellence Plan, is very clear about that fact that we need to hold ourselves to a much higher standard in terms of graduation. We intend, over the next decade, to reach an 80% graduation rate. We intend to have many more of our graduates college ready – right now fewer than half are college ready. We intend to bring that number to two thirds or more. We intend to go to the heart of the matter early in our children's lives. That's why we did Full-Day Pre-K for All because if you don't lay that foundation, you can't move the whole school system, and you certainly can't give kids an opportunity to succeed. I mean, pre-k is the best chance to lay that strong foundation, but what we also know is kids have to be on reading level by third grade. Right now, only about a third of kids are, and that's been true for many years in New York City – it's not acceptable. We've said over the next 10 years, we will bring that to 100%, and we're investing a lot to get that done. Now, I'm going to move every one of those agendas very quickly, and I want to see if we can beat those goals, but the bottom line is we need, not only is it a matter of fairness to our children – and a matter of fairness that every school, every neighborhood has to be good. It can't be, you know, here are the quote-unquote 'good schools' and here are the quote-unquote 'bad schools'. We're not doing that anymore. We have to make sure that every school is brought up to a standard of excellence. This is not only the morally right thing to do – if we're going to have the kind of workforce we need in the future for an ever more complex economy, and business are going to choose to build here and expand here, they need to see young people are better educated than ever. So, this is a kind of investment not only in our children and our families, but also the future of our economy.

John Catsimatidis: Well, Mayor de Blasio, thank you for joining us, and we're going to have you back on on Sunday at the Katz Roundtable, and thank you for keeping New Yorkers informed. I mean, I think that's really important.

Mayor: I appreciate it

John Catsimatidis: For disclosure purposes, me and you go back 20, 25 years, way back, and we've always had similar ideas in a lot of ways.

Mayor: Yeah, no, it's been a great relationship for many, many years John. I really appreciate all you do for the city, particularly what you do for the Police Athletic League, which I know is a passion of yours. And, I look forward to continuing to work with you, and I look forward to being on your show this weekend.

John Catsimatidis: Sounds good, and thank you for being with us, and thank you for keeping New Yorkers informed.

Mayor: Thank you. Take care.

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