



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT AARP AGE-FRIENDLY
NYC LIVABILITY SOLUTIONS FORUM, HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you very much. Well, number five is something to be proud of, but we are only just beginning and we intend to go farther, right?

[Applause]

Beth, thank you – thank you for your leadership. And it’s a great pleasure to be here. I think people actually understand all over the city, all over this country, just what an extraordinary force AARP is. And I have watched over decades as this organization has grown in power and influence, and you’ve done it, in my opinion, absolutely the right way by raising the serious issues, by organizing people in common cause, by often being well ahead of the curve in terms of the changes we need to make to have a more just and inclusive society and a more fair society. And so, AARP has reached really an exalted level in our national discourse and in our national governmental reality where you’re one of the voices that truly matter because you have earned it and you represent so many people. And we are thrilled to be developing a deep partnership with AARP on a number of issues.

I want to thank you because the work you do has touched millions upon millions of people, and, had you not been there to do it, these achievements, these changes wouldn’t have happened. Obviously, you played a central role in protecting social security, which has been very necessary over the years.

You played a central role in pushing healthcare reform over the finish line – and for those of you with a sense of history, healthcare reform was talked about going back to the Truman administration, and even before, as a front-burner issue, but wasn’t achieved until just the last few years under President Obama, and AARP played a central role in that truly historic achievement.

You’ve been in the front line of calling for increased funding for mass transit and increased accessibility.

You’ve championed affordable high-speed internet. All – in every instance, ahead of the curve, recognizing where our society was going, and the changes we needed, and being a crucial advocacy voice that really changed the trajectory of these debates.

So, you have a lot to be proud of. It’s truly a proven track record, and, therefore, when you speak, it takes on a very powerful meaning, as any city, any state, or our country is debating a set of issues. So, right now, this city, for example, as we discuss the future of affordable housing – we know there’s not issue more on the minds of New Yorkers across the city. And we put forward a housing plan with a number of elements to allow us to do what’s never been done before in terms of preserving affordable housing, building new affordable housing, protecting tenants’ rights. Your endorsement of that plan was a central moment for us, in terms of the pathway to success – the pathway to reaching, ultimately a half million New Yorkers, and then more after. We can only do that because of support from crucial leadership such as AARP.

So, I want to thank you. Your endorsement means an immense amount to this administration. I think it's going to be central to the success up ahead. And I want to thank you and tell you how happy I am to see the launch of the Livability Index. I think it's an extraordinary new tool and something that's going to allow people to make sense – better sense of what's the right home for them, and what is consistent with their needs, and will look at cities and towns all over this country. But I am very, very proud that New York City has fared well – that's something we have worked hard to achieve. And now, we will take the inspiration of this index and go much farther.

So, I want thank you for putting all this issues on the front-burner, mobilizing so much energy and support, helping people to see more clearly what we have to do. And I know you have here 750,000 members – an extraordinary number of people gathered around one organization. I want to thank you for all you do on their behalf and all they do for this city.

And let me just take a moment to thank some of the folks in the room – a lot of people are here for this important moment. From my administration, I want to thank our wonderful commissioner for the Department of Aging, Donna Corrado, for her great work. Let's give her a round of applause.

[Applause]

Where are you Donna? There?

And some who has done amazing work in making sure that our parks, and our recreation centers, and all we do is truly inclusive and available to all – our commissioner for the Parks and Recreation Department, Mitch Silver, thank you for your great leadership.

[Applause]

One of the good consciences of this city, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, I believe is here.

[Applause]

She has a fan club.

[Laughter]

And then, I want to thank your state president, Leo Asen – you get a round of applause there.

[Applause]

I want to thank Dr. Jo Ivey Boufford, president of the New York Academy of Medicine.

[Applause]

And Dr. Derek Yach, chief health officer at Vitality, thank you.

[Applause]

And Dr. Olivier Oullier – am I saying that right? Oullier? I'm not saying it right, but I'm trying to say it right –

[Laughter]

– from the World Economic Forum. Thank you, doctor.

[Applause]

So, let me just say a couple of other things. New York City, right now – we know this city is changing. And one of the things that is great about New York City is, we understand we are a city in constant evolution. We understand that change is in our DNA. And we understand to find all of the strengths that come in this change.

So, look at the demographics of our city today – almost one in five New Yorkers over the age of 60, and that is projected to more than double in two decades. So, by 2020, New York City will have an over-60 population – now listen to this statistic, it's amazing – by 2020 New York City will have an over-60 population the size of the entire population, today, of the city of Chicago. Isn't that extraordinary? And we see in that the many, many positive elements, because what we see is an ever more healthy and vital population, that folks are doing so much to contribute to our society, to continue to be able to do all they want to do – 20 percent of our workforce made up of folks over 60, more hours of volunteer work provided by folks over 60 than any other age group – so, extraordinary contributions to our city that will only grow.

I can tell you that for so many families who are struggling in this city, there is more than ever, more than probably in generations, an understanding of how all the generations can work together. Look, people sadly today are working longer hours than ever before. That's what's happened as a result of technological changes and other things. So, extended family matters more than ever before, and so many grandparents have stepped up as the lead caregivers for grandchildren in so many cases, and been transformative, and have provided an anchor for so many families.

So, there's a lot to understand about these changes that are making us stronger. And at the same time, there are profound challenges. 20 percent of our seniors are below the poverty level, and too many are struggling to make ends meet in the city. And this is part of – and a very important part of the larger discussion that I've been having with this city over the last two years now on how we fight income inequality, how we keep this city affordable, how we live up to our values of inclusion.

We have to address senior poverty. We have to address the affordability crisis for seniors. We can't see more and more people forced out of the neighborhoods they love and that they've been a part of for decades upon decades. That's why we have such an aggressive affordable housing plan. That's why we're doing so many other things to try and address affordability and income inequality issues. That's why we've reconvened the Age Friendly NYC Commission. And the Age Friendly NYC Commission helps us to do what AARP has done all along – get ahead of where we are, look over the horizon, figure out the policy changes that will allow us to be smarter and more strategic about serving our people.

We're doing a lot of the basic, tangible things. We're delivering more meals to folks who need them. We're helping more people gain access to Medicare savings and other supports and benefits. We're – certainly doing something I know is near and dear to Donna Corrado's heart – we are redoubling our efforts to combat elder abuse, which is a reality we don't talk about enough in our society, but we have to look square in the face. So there are many, many fronts that we are fighting on and we look forward to fighting on together with AARP to support our seniors.

But I have to tell you nothing – again, nothing compares to the issue of affordability and particularly affordable housing. One thing that I have said for years is, when I was public advocate of the city, when I campaigned for mayor, I heard constantly the number one concern was affordability. It was usually said to me this way – will I be able to afford to remain in New York City? Will I be able to afford my own neighborhood? Will I be priced out? Will there be affordable housing for me? Will it actually be affordable? Affordable housing sounds nice, but will I actually be able to afford it?

These are the thoughts on the minds of everyday New Yorkers, and certainly everyday seniors all over this city. And we know that half of our seniors are paying more than 30 percent of their income towards housing. We understand what an extraordinary financial burden that is. So, that is why in our affordable housing plan we have pledged create and preserve 10,000 affordable apartments for our seniors. 10,000 apartments is a beginning that we think will make a huge difference as a part of our overall plan – that’s a commitment of \$400 million. And again, we see our affordable housing plan as something that will continue to grow as we go forward. We want to reach more and more people with it. But we already know we are devoting the most resources and have the most ambitious affordable housing plan of any city in this country, ever, and we’re going to need all of that. Already, 2,000 senior apartments have been secured, and we will keep adding to that every single day.

Your support for this plan means that thousands more people will be able to afford a place to live in this city, that they will be able to safely and securely, that they will have the dignity they deserve. And this is one of the things that as we expand upon it, as we protect people’s economic viability, and help them find more affordable housing options, that’s one of the ways I look forward to us continuing to rise up on the Livability Index.

So, as we are joining you in the announcement of the index today, and we’re very proud to be in the top five, we know that right now we have to lay the groundwork to keep moving forward. We want this to be the most livable city in the entire country for our seniors. You are setting the bar. You’re giving us the reason to be inspired and to aim higher. And, with you, we will get there. I want to thank you. I want to thank you for the extraordinary work you’ve done. I want to express my admiration for what you’ve built. I want to thank you for the partnership we have together. And whenever the next announcement is – next year, I take it – or whenever the next milestone is reached on the Livability Index, we’ll be ready to go farther and take the next step with you.

Thanks very, very much everyone.

[...]

Question: How are you?

Mayor: I’m getting there. I’m walking a little slowly. I’m feeling it, but the doctors did a great job, and they advise to take it a little slow, but it turned out I had a – it was a double hernia, so, I got double my pleasure but we – we’re going to work it through.

Question: Is it from the job? Is it from the stress –

Mayor: No, no – I think Ms. Hinton was doing a little poetic license here. It’s something, I didn’t know about – hernias – until I went through this. So, we’re all born – those that manifest them are born with them and can come out at any point in life, basically. And, you know, perhaps, athletic activity and things like that might hasten it, but it’s something that’s just in you. It might happen while you’re a kid, it might happen when you’re 50, it might happen when you’re 100, but it’s something that is in you. But, again, the doctors did a great job and they want me to keep walking around, so, I’m doing what I’m told.

Question: Mr. Mayor, the Daily News has on the cover, and there’s a lot of articles about gun violence due to gangs. Obviously, Commissioner Bratton has talked a lot about it, but what is your position on that, and what is the focus as far as combatting that, or infiltrating gangs and – what’s being done?

Mayor: We’re very focused on it. I think it’s one of – clearly gangs, are one of the biggest drivers of crime. Crime today is very different than what it was in the past – thank God, there’s a lot less crime, but what we find, still, is a real problem with gangs and crews. NYPD is putting more and more of their efforts into combatting gangs and crews and a lot better intelligence gathering going on – much better use of social media, in terms of

figuring out how gangs are communicating and what their intentions are. It's very much connected to what we're trying to do with neighborhood policing, because we need to bring our police closer to neighborhood residents, neighborhood leaders – we need that information source. A lot of times there are folks in neighborhoods who can help us figure out what's going on. So, we want to get that to happen more consistently. But, you know, NYPD, working with the DA's, working with the U.S. attorneys, and working with the special narcotics prosecutor, they're very aggressively going at gangs. I got one example right here – that we had a major takedown last week – 48 members of two gangs in the Bronx were brought up on charges. But these gangs had three murders and five attempted murders, they were charged with between them. But again, one example of the NYPD intelligence division leading an enforcement effort – two gangs, 48 members arrested in the process, that's just an enforcement effort by NYPD, and you're going to be seeing a lot more. So, we're very, very focused on it.

Question: Mr. Mayor, a lot of people are saying they're seeing more graffiti in their neighborhoods, including near your office neighborhood, near City Hall. I'm wondering – and there are reports that arrests for graffiti are down – do you think more needs to be done? Have you noticed more graffiti near City Hall?

Mayor: I have not noticed city-wide an uptick. I think some places have seen more, other places less, but I can tell you we take graffiti very seriously. It's a very serious quality of life issue. Back even when I was a council member I was focused on this issue. So, we put real resources, as a city, into addressing graffiti, into erasing the effects of graffiti, obviously, arresting and prosecuting those responsible. So, if we see any flare-ups in any neighborhoods, we're going to take them very seriously. I believe in the broken-windows theory of policing, and graffiti is an example of the kind of thing that must be addressed early on, and we certainly will.

Question: I want to get your reaction to Assemblyman Blake deciding not to join Hilltop. Obviously, you know them very well.

Mayor: Yeah.

Question: What did you think of that? And also do you think state lawmakers should be full-time?

Mayor: Yes, I think they should be full-time. I think, you know, they should be compensated properly also, but they should be full-time. I think the assemblyman ultimately made the right decision. It was obviously a very sensitive moment. I think he thought about that, and did the right thing.

Question: What was your reaction initially when he took that job while being a sitting lawmaker?

Mayor: Obviously, it was legal, and he went out of his way to get approved by the ethics panel, but it was also a very sensitive moment. And I think he reflected on that and did the right thing.

Question: Speaking of Albany, with the convictions of Mr. Silver and Skelos what does that say about Preet Bharara's influence in the state and in the city? And what could the city help do to help [inaudible]?

Mayor: Well, first of all I think – I think the U.S. Attorney has done a fantastic job. I think we all owe him a debt of gratitude. He's managed to do something both in terms of stopping some very bad things from happening, but also he's shown a light on the problems in Albany that have to be addressed. So I think Preet Bharara has done a very, very important thing for this state. Now, we need to follow through with much more fundamental ethic reforms. I've been talking about for years now, the need for public financing of elections – that's one of the most fundamental things. We have it here in New York City. It works. It is one of the reasons we've been able to combat corruption effectively. Don't have it on the state level – we should have it. We should have, I think, a ban on outside income, but again only if there's proper compensation.

Question: Will you return money you got from non-prosecution witnesses in those trials?

Mayor: Again, I'd have to look at the individual situation.

Question: Mayor, your administration announced last week that you will be offering job training to people who are in homeless shelters at an additional 31 shelters. Your deputy commissioner at Homeless Services said it's going to be an expectation that people will participate in this, and that her expectation is that the vast majority of people in the shelters are able-bodied and can work, are able to be in job training. How will that work? How will the city decide who is required to participate in this and who isn't?

Mayor: What – let me just step back one second and tell you how we got to this strategy. And, obviously, look, the discussion we've had over the course of this year about homelessness have helped the people of this city to better understand what homelessness looks like today. It is different than in the past. It is more and more, unfortunately, undergirded by economic reality. So, more and more families – more and more folks who are working or have been working or could be working, but who can't make ends meet because a minimum wage job and the job without benefits that doesn't allow you to pay the rent in this city. So, when you look at our shelter system today, there are thousands, in fact, tens of thousands of people who most New Yorkers don't even know are in our shelter system because they have a job, or their children are in school – and the kids go to school, the parents go to their job, but they're still in the shelter, and that's the way things should be. And we're trying to do a lot to turn that around. We recognize that job training is one of the things that maximizes the chance of someone being more viable in the economy. So, that's one of the reasons we're doing this. But another reason is we found that there were folks, particularly in some of our bigger shelters, that didn't have any option during the day but to end up being on the street. You know, they had a place to stay at night, but they didn't have a productive activity to engage in during the day. If they didn't have a job or couldn't get a job, what were they going to do during the day?

Question: – panhandle, sit on the sidewalk –

Mayor: Right. And that's not what anyone wants for them or for our communities. So what we realized is if we provide really high-quality job training and other productive opportunities during the day in the shelters, it will be a positive inducement for folks to get that kind of preparation for their futures, but also to be someplace where they can do something positive and productive, and not end up on the street.

Question: So in answer to my question, will it be a requirement or just a suggestion? Can they opt out if they want to?

Mayor: Well, look, we clearly are starting this on the assumption that it's something offered to people. They have a right – and there are some people pursuing jobs on their own and doing other things. This is something we're going to offer. And I think a lot of people are going to take us up on it.

Question: Mr. Mayor, you've criticized him, the City Council has criticized him, and now Donald Trump's numbers are going down.

Mayor: Well, it's as simple as that, Rich. I think – I've said this for a while – I think the American people and folks who are Republican party members ultimately will turn against this kind of hateful attitude. Look, I think Americans in general believe and respect in tolerance. We've seen many indications of the fact that that's what wins the day in this country – most recently, on marriage equality, which, you know, a decade ago, people say would've been impossible. And when you look at the progress made on marriage equality, that came from all regions. It came from Republicans as well as Democrats. So I think that Donald Trump went too far and started to say things that were just dangerous. And it registered with a lot of people, including a lot of Republicans, and that's part of what's happening.

Question: We had a story this morning about an increase in the number of newborns born with addiction on Staten Island and across the country. I was wondering how you felt about this as a father – I know you’ve spoken about addiction a lot recently.

Mayor: It’s very troubling. It’s very troubling. And you know, the announcement we made on Staten Island last week is one of many things we’re going to do to address addiction problems. But you know, everything we’ve been talking about lately – our mental health plan, the ways we want to reach young mothers, the ways we want to reach children early in their lives – all of this fits together, because, look, we have a society that has not addressed addiction problems squarely. We have to use a variety of tools to get at this. So I feel it very personally. It’s very painful to think of a child starting their life already dealing with addiction. But I think the answer to it is to do the kinds of things we announced in Staten Island last week – to reach people dealing with this struggle early on, to help, first and foremost, avoid the deaths we’ve seen because of addiction, but also to maximize opportunities for folks to get to treatment.

Question: Schumer and Cuomo are pushing for the state to be able to access the no-fly list. I’m just wondering, is this something you support?

Mayor: I agree with them entirely. I think Senator Schumer and Governor Cuomo are exactly right. The no-fly list should define exactly the people we do not want to see have weapons in their hand. It makes no sense that someone who can’t get on a plane is allowed to have a weapon. And the federal government has to work with states that want to enforce this change and really crack down on this problem. And, look, people are legitimately concerned about terrorism. So why don’t we begin with the most obvious step we can take? Everything we can do to keep guns out of the hands of terrorists – I think it’s common sense.

Question: And did you read the Daily News gang thing? Did you like it?

Mayor: I have not read it yet, but I think the Daily News is pointing out a serious issue. And I appreciate Commissioner Bratton was given an opportunity to lay out his vision in the op-ed. And, look, we – I think if you listen over the last year or two, we’ve talked a lot about the gang and crew issue being one of the fundamental drivers of violence. Now, that being said, shootings are down overall; crime is down overall, which says that the NYPD is addressing this issue successfully. We’ve got a lot more to do, but we are blessed in this city. We’ve never had the kind of intensity and pervasiveness of a gang problem, let’s say, as Chicago has had or that LA has had, or other parts of the country. That’s in part because we have the largest police force by far, and the NYPD has been very focused on this problem for years, and effective at dealing with it. It’s in part because we’ve invested in gang interruption and other efforts at the community level, you know, to work with community residents to stop young people from ending up in gangs or pulling them away from gangs. It’s because we have extraordinary youth services and community-based organizations in this city that do a great job of reaching young people productively. So there’s a real history in New York City of why we haven’t gone down the road some other cities have, but we take it very seriously, and it’s something we’ll address [inaudible].

Question: Should the City Council also be full time?

Mayor: Look, we’ll discuss that issue going forward, but I think the bottom line is what is being demanded of elected officials more and more – it isn’t like yesterday. Once upon a time, there was the notion of, you know, the – the farmer-legislator, you know? The person who went to do their legislative work for just a small portion of the year and it was truly part time. Today, legislators are expected to be on top of issues instantly and to provide a lot of services to their community, so I think the trend, correctly, is towards full time – an interpretation of this work as full time.

Question: So is that a yes?

Mayor: Again, I'll have more to say on it soon, but that's – that's my core assumption.

Question: The senator's – Senator Skelos' seat is now open on Long Island. The control of the Senate is an issue you obviously care very much about.

Mayor: Yes.

Question: Are you going to get involved in helping Democrats run a replacement?

Mayor: Look, it's going to be a question of who runs. And obviously, you know, I want to see a Democrat win that seat, but as with any other election, I'll take my cues from whoever ends up running.

Question: What about Todd Kaminsky, who's been floated – former –

Mayor: Again, I don't know who's going to end up running, and I'll take my cues from whoever ends up running.

Question: Mr. Mayor, in the wake of the Skelos verdict and the Silver verdict, do you – what kind of action, if any, do you think Albany should take, come January, when it comes to ethics reform? And do you think that Cuomo has done enough to root out corruption?

Mayor: I think everyone in Albany needs to do more. I think it's clear that the three major forces in Albany – the Assembly, the Senate, and the Governor – all have to get together and agree on a very wide-ranging package of ethics reforms. I think it must involve public financing of elections or we won't make the progress we have to make.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Okay, we have – almost – almost – okay, we're going to do two more and then we're out. Go ahead.

Question: Quick question, have you bought your tickets for Star Wars yet? Are you planning to –

[Laughter]

Mayor: I have not bought my tickets for Star Wars. I respect Star Wars' place in the American cultural firmament, but it's never quite been my thing.

Question: So, Mr. Mayor, is it fair to ask whether you're in pain right now, other than meeting with us, of course?

Mayor: Rich, these questions are putting me in pain, right now. No, no, I am in a little bit of pain – mainly, just, it's not easy to walk around as much as I'd like, but it's – you know, what? These things are amazing nowadays, and I'm blessed to be having this surgery today versus ten or 20 years ago.

Question: Did you get a get-well call or card from Governor Cuomo?

Mayor: I don't divulge my get-well cards or calls, but I would say there were a lot of people who have offered support, and I look forward to being entirely back in the saddle soon.

Thanks very much.

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