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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES MORE THAN 53,000 CHILDREN
LEARNING IN HIGH-QUALITY, FULL-DAY PRE-K**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Welcome, everyone, to P.S. 397. We are really honored to be here.

Before we talk about today's event, I just want to give you a quick update at – about what's happening at the World Trade Center. I've just spoken to our OEM Commissioner Joe Esposito, and our Fire Commissioner Dan Nigro. As I think some of you know, just in the last few minutes, the two workers who were unfortunately dangling outside, in real danger, have both been saved and secured. An extraordinary effort by the FDNY got up to the floor where these workers were dangling, cut through the glass – and this was a lot of glass to cut through, very reinforced glass, and they cut through it – and got to them.

And I want to hasten to add, at the same time, the Port Authority police and the NYPD Emergency Services Unit were lowering a separate carriage down as a backup plan. This is a case where our first responders were working in tandem to have not one escape route but two, to make sure these individuals would be safe in either situation. Thank god plan A – which was the fire department approach, to get them out through the window that was cut through – has succeeded, and both of them are safe.

I want to give a lot of credit here to our first responders – FDNY, NYPD, OEM, Port Authority police – everyone worked in tandem, great coordination. Great care was taken on the ground to create a space to make sure that if – god forbid – the carriage had fallen, that people below would not be harmed.

So, fast and effective response by our first responders, and these individuals are now safe.

Before we go into the subject at hand, I just want to see if there's any initial questions you have on this. There will be a further briefing momentarily by our OEM Commissioner Joe Esposito, but I just want to see if there's any initial questions you need before we go into the event here.

Question: Mayor, can you [inaudible] on the window washers thing – what is your understanding of, was anyone injured, and what the reason for this happening is?

Mayor: We don't know the reason why the carriage became insecure. There's obviously going to be an investigation to figure that out. To the best of my knowledge, at this moment, neither of the individuals was harmed, thank god. Again, they are both safe. So, as far as this moment, I have not heard of any injuries.

Any other questions on this? Okay. Thank you.

So again, it is a real honor to be at P.S. 397, otherwise known as the Spruce Street School. This is an already renowned school – it's a fairly young school, but it's already renowned. It's a beautiful facility, as you can see,

and a lot of people helped make that happen, particularly Speaker Silver, who played a big role in the creation of this school. The principal, Nancy Harris, originated the idea of the school – saw it through to completion first at another location, now here. So, she gets a lot of credit for having built something extraordinary. Let's thank our principal.

[Applause]

And it is really wonderful, for those of us at City Hall, thinking every day about education issues, and there's a school right here across the street – there's obviously kids learning in the Tweed Building. It's keep us focused to see the children we're serving right here on our doorstep, and this is a case of so much good happening for our children.

A lot of people contributed to what we're here to celebrate, which is the completion of the first wave of our pre-k effort. And there's so people to thank, and you're going to hear from some of the folks up here, but I want thank three people in particular – really, day in, day out, built the apparatus that got us to over 53,000 kids in pre-k – of course, our Deputy Mayor Richard Buery, who led the effort through thick and thin, and on an incredibly tight timeline; our Chancellor Carmen Fariña, who has been an outstanding leader of our school system, and believes deeply in the power of early childhood education; and the guy who had to pay the bills, our Budget Director Dean Fuleihan, who was creative and focused throughout to make sure the resources would be there for pre-k. They all deserve a lot of credit. And of course, our elected officials – you'll hear from them in a moment – who were extraordinarily supportive throughout this process.

Now, on September 4th, we launched Pre-k for All, and you remember, on that day, more than 51,000 kids were in place. On September 4th, 51,000 kids plus showed up at their schools, in their seats, including here at the Spruce Street School, which added a whole full-day pre-k classroom as a result of the expansion.

And we said from the beginning, our goal was to get past 53,000. We thought that the need was there, the demand was there, and we could do it even on a tight time frame. Well, I'm here to say today that we're happy to announce that we do have a final figure – and it's a great figure – for the number of kids who are getting full-day high-quality pre-k in New York City today – 53,230, in seats as we speak. And that's an accomplishment that everyone up here deserves credit for.

I can safely say no one deserves more credit than Speaker Shelly Silver, and that is because this was not a new idea to him. Shelly Silver was working on this idea, not for just years – for decades. I could never have been in the position to achieve this full-day pre-k program if it weren't for the work he did years and years ago – and in the last year, where he was the strongest voice in Albany, the person who so many times helped us find the way forward so we could achieve from – for our children. You're going to hear from Shelly in a moment, but I really like to give credit where credit is due. This is a culmination of ideas put forward by Shelly Silver years ago, and I'm glad that he was the person who shepherded it through to completion.

Now, enrollment numbers are part of the story. The programs themselves, the quality of the programs, the impact of the programs – obviously that's what we're here to achieve. Not just a lot of kids in seats – that's a great beginning, but they have to have quality programs, and that starts at the teachers. Our job is to make sure the teachers are supported, and getting better all the time. Over the summer, we had a three-day professional development program for teachers. Over 4,000 teachers participated. This fall, there's been continued training for pre-k teachers. 6,000 pre-k teachers have been a part of that training. This is something Carmen Fariña believes in so deeply – the constant improvement, constant work to help our teachers be better. Our teachers believe in it too and are acting on it.

We provide a lot of support at the schools as well. In each of the community-based early childhood centers – each of the different sites where our pre-k programs exist – they've each had a visit from an instructional coordinator, checking on how they're doing, giving them advice, helping them get better. That will happen

continually throughout the year. And the training and the support has an impact, and we have teachers who really believe in what can be done at the early childhood level, a lot of people who really yearn to serve, particularly at this level. You're going to hear from Al Long in a moment, who teaches the new pre-k class here at Spruce Street. You're going to hear the passion he has.

So, when you have educators like Al – who is a great educator by the way, has a background in stand-up comedy – you'll hear about that – and he performs with that passion for his students every day. There are a lot of people who are great teachers already, but the fact that we're going to support them and help them become better – and they want to get even better all the time – is part of what makes this work so well. And remember, teachers like Al – they're teaching these kids how to learn. This is what's so powerful about the pre-k level, it's the first chance most kids get to learn how to learn, to learn how to embrace education, to learn about numbers and the alphabet – all the things that will be the foundation for all of their education up ahead – and to learn how to be in a classroom setting, to listen, to respond to the teachers, to work with others, to participate. It all begins at pre-k. It's the building blocks for life-long learning. This is what happens in pre-k. Each additional child who gets into a pre-k seat gets that foundation.

Next year is as exciting in some ways, and even more exciting, when we're going to reach every child in New York City at pre-k age who is ready to take up a seat. There will be a seat for literally, every child. That's part two and that's going to be done with the support of all the folks here. And that's going to be a day when we take yet another step forward for this city. So, pre-k for all is something that benefits each and every child that participates, benefits families, benefits the entire school system, makes the school system stronger – and it's only going to get bigger and better. A word in Español.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

It's free – a very important point. I'd like you to hear first from our chancellor. She has been doing so much to make our schools better. And again, someone who started at the beginning as a teacher – a great teacher, a great principal – understood through her work what early childhood education does for our kids – our chancellor, Carmen Fariña.

[...]

Mayor: You've got some deep students there. "The pumpkins are changing as we change" – very lovely. Okay, we're going to take questions on this topic, and then we'll go to other topics. On this topic. Yes.

Question: Hi, can you tell us [inaudible] where there are empty seats and where there are waiting lists? So what neighborhoods may have [inaudible]?

Mayor: Sure, I'll have Deputy Mayor Buery come up to say – you know, we found, in the beginning – we knew there were going to be some challenges, particularly where we already have overcrowding. We knew there would be an absence of space to accommodate pre-k. We found some success in school buildings, some success in community-based organizations, but that was one of the challenges at the beginning that we intend to resolve by next year, when we go to absolute – an absolute universal system. So, Richard will tell you those details, but that's the challenge we're working on right now.

Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives Richard Buery: Thank you. Yeah, as the – as the mayor said, this plan has only been a two-year plan, and so our goal is to make sure that, by next year, every four-year-old in New York City has access to full-day, high-quality prekindergarten. There are neighborhoods around the city where there was more demand than supply, and so that's part of what goes into our planning for next year. There're also neighborhoods in New York City where there is more supply than demand, and that goes into our planning for next year. So, we always knew that there would be that – that would always this happen this year, and part for the reason that the mayor said in part – because we're sort of learning where the actual natural

demand is. And so, we're confident that with the information we have, and with the additional time to work on it, we can [inaudible] fulfill our promise to our four-year-olds.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: I think I have an amen here. [inaudible]

Deputy Mayor Richard Buery: So waiting lists – central Queens, lower Manhattan – all the neighborhoods you would expect, based on population patterns. In neighborhoods where there are a bigger gap, neighborhoods like central Brooklyn – the community is an example of a community where there were some more seats than the actual [inaudible] this year.

Mayor: And I just wanted to follow on that – I think there's also a process. You know, the pre-k discussion last year on this really engaged a lot of parents to understand there was going to be a lot more availability, and what it would mean for their children. So, that's an ongoing discussion, and we're going to be doing that at the community level, working with elected officials, clergy, community leaders – there's still parents who do not yet fully understand what pre-k could do for their child. There's still parents who thought they couldn't get in. When you go to a system – and again, this has been Shelly's dream for a long time – universal actually meaning universal – every child guaranteed a full-day seat. I think I have to immediately say to parents, they don't have to wonder – I hasten to add, not every seat is going to be right down the block, some will take a little bit of travel – but it's going to be there for their child. That's going to change the attitude, when it's a full guarantee. But I still think we have to do more to explain to some parents that it is different, than, you know, keeping a child home with a family member, let's say. Some parents prefer that, and they have that right. But I want to argue, over the next year – I'm sure Richard will as well – that, in fact, you're going to give your child a much better start in the modern world if you get them into a full-day pre-k rather than having them stay home. Did you have a...?

Question: How many seats were added between September 4th and October 1st? [inaudible] And, if there were a lot of seats added after October 1st, [inaudible]?

Mayor: Yeah, [inaudible], the state has been very flexible because this was a brand new thing for everyone, for them, for us – and obviously we were partners with the state in this. You know, we did not double pre-k. We did double and then some, we did 150 percent increase, plus. We had about 20,000 seats full-day as recently as June. So, this was a huge complicated undertaking with so many sites in all. The state understood that, and they were willing to be creative to make sure that we got the number right.

Deputy Mayor Buery: So, I'm going to attest to my pre-k education, because that was a multi-part question, so let me see if I can keep up with it. So, as you point out, the majority of the seats were created by the first day of school in September. In terms of the seats that came right after that, the bulk of additional seats came on in September, and then fewer came on after October. So, we can get you the final breakdown, but the bulk of it happened during October – I'm sorry, during September. So, moving forward, the state – and as the mayor said – we're working very closely with the state, we talk every day. This is obviously a big expansion, not just for New York City, but for the state. And so, we're working with the state to figure out how that reimbursement will work for seats that were available by – after October 1st. And our commitment, though, is that whatever seats the state is not able to reimburse, the city is prepared to reimburse the difference, but we continue to work with the state to figure out how that's going to work for the additional seats that came on line in October.

Mayor: And that's obviously a small number of seats. Please.

Question: You talked a lot about delivering high quality pre-k and I'm hearing from a lot of programs – you've hired a thousand new teachers and there's been a lot of motion with those teachers since September. Teachers

have been leaving their jobs in a lot of centers, shifting around. Do you have numbers on teacher retention and how does that kind of motion impact the quality?

Mayor: Richard and Carmen may both want to speak to this. I – I’ll actually say, I have not heard that report, of “a lot of.” There’s some natural shifting around by definition with kids, with teachers, because you know, everything is settling down in the first weeks of school. What I think we found was a huge number of teachers who wanted to participate – teachers from New York City, teachers from around the country wanted to be a part of this pre-k expansion. But I don’t think we’ve had an inordinate challenge with people moving around – but Richard or Carmen may want to speak.

Deputy Mayor Buery: We’re not aware that any inordinate movement of teachers out of pre-k classrooms. What we’ve seen, as the mayor said, is real, real positive results – response to the opportunity of helping to build this strong full-day system here in New York City. We’re also very proud of the enormous investments we’ve made in professional development. You know, as the mayor said, it’s not just about having 53,000 four-year-olds in prekindergarten classrooms. It’s about making sure that those four-year-olds are having the kind of experience that’s going to put them on the path to a positive education. And so, in addition to the training that happened over the summer that Al described, you’ve already had 6,000 teachers from district schools, from CBECCs, participate in training sessions already this fall. The instructional coaches at the Department of Education have already been off to visit every prekindergarten program in this system. We are absolutely committed to not only having the seats but having the seats operated at a high degree of quality.

Mayor: I’m going to have Carmen come up.

Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña: To be very honest, I’ve heard just the opposite. I’ve heard because of the extra attention to pre-k, the principals – in many cases, for the first time – are really focusing on the early childhood grades – and also, that many of the teachers in our pre-k classes are teachers who requested to change from other grades – 2nd grade, 1st grade – to go into the kindergarten – pre-k. So, as I’ve said, I haven’t heard it at all, and I do ask for surveys on a regular basis. So, if you know something I don’t know let us know. Thank you.

Mayor: [Laughs] We accept your [inaudible]. Yes.

Question: [inaudible] lower Manhattan neighborhoods like Battery Park City actually lost pre-k seats this year. As you got a full-day – or universal next year – is there going to be any thoughts of perhaps putting a pre-k center in Tweed, and is there going to be any more consideration for maybe expanding the classroom space at Tweed?

Mayor: I’ll let Carmen speak to that. It certainly has not been part of the discussions to date. But I think the fact is, in general, we expect not only to find more spaces in community-based organizations, we will, over time, be creating pre-k centers in some locations. We’ll be leasing space in some locations. The School Construction Authority has the mandate to get us up to the level that we expect for next year – and we’re still honing what we expect that exact number to be – but their mandate is to look at the areas where there was greater demand, and available space, and add additional space, and that’s going to take a lot of different forms.

Chancellor Fariña: We have a school right now in Tweed, we anticipate when they move to their site that some of those classrooms will be set up for pre-k. And we look forward to having little four-year-olds in the building. It will really be a pleasure. And I think they’re – that some principals who are seeing the results of pre-k have all of a sudden found space for an additional pre-k next year. So, my feeling is that most of the schools will be able to provide in most of the communities.

Question: [inaudible] classroom space in Tweed. Speaker Silver and others have talked about wanting a conference [inaudible] Is that, is that – ?

Chancellor Fariña: [inaudible]

Question: I'm going to ask the principal here, how the program works? How many students are enrolled here, how many students applied to get in here, and how many were turned away because there wasn't space for them?

Nancy Harris, Principal: Sure. So, I don't have exact numbers of how many applied here. I can tell you in our one full-day section we have 18 children enrolled. We have four half-day sections as well, which we've had since 2011. And we currently have gone through our entire waitlist and our classes are just about full. So, we were able to accommodate any family that was interested, even if it meant calling them off the waitlist.

Mayor: Okay. Excellent. On topic. Anything else? Yes. Right here first, then we'll come to you. Go ahead.

Question: Are there any programs [inaudible] in the fall, to remain open [inaudible] how many programs?

Mayor: Yeah, well I think what we found is – and I'll turn to Richard on this – that we've had some that we wanted to help them get to a better enrollment. In other words, everything – every program that started on opening day on September 4th, is open. But there's some we think still could potentially have a little bit of growth and that's what we tried to work on over these last two months, in particular, to see if we can pump them up some. So why don't you speak to that?

Deputy Mayor Buery: Sure. Absolutely. One of the reasons why we continued enrollment past October 1st is because there were still – we still had parents who wanted to find out about the programs, and we still had programs that had vacancies. So, we're working very closely with all of our providers to make sure – including those who still had vacancies – to make sure that there are in stable financial conditions. And over the course of the year, as you can imagine, things do happen. But we have not seen, and we're not anticipating, a large number of providers being forced to close for business reasons.

Question: None have closed? [inaudible]

Deputy Mayor Buery: No.

Question: How many seats are still open city-wide?

Mayor: How many seats are – ?

Question: Still open?

Mayor: I think we've gotten to the end of the rainbow.

Deputy Mayor Buery: Yeah, we're – there are – so, around the city, in different classrooms, different places may have fewer kids and are fully enrolled. But as of right now, we're not enrolling future kids, and so all of those programs, we'll be working with for the capacity they have right now.

Question: Somewhat on topic, education –

Mayor: Let's see, we have actual on-topic for the moment. Go ahead. Then we'll come right to you.

Question: Speaker Silver, I was wondering if you could speak about how you're planning to guarantee financial support for pre-k in years to come.

Speaker Silver: Well, I think what we did last year was put in a five-year authorization. So, there currently is \$300 million more for the city of New York in the next four budgets. And you know, we hope to continue and possibly expand that as the need is shown that we need more money. But it's a significant amount – fully funded by the state in those terms. So, that's basically how we do it. It's there. It's just a matter of appropriation each year. The authorization is there.

Mayor: Okay, on-topic. We're going to you in one second. Anything on this specific topic? Going once, going twice. You will bridge us now to off-topic. Take us there.

Question: I was wondering if you could speak a little bit about the increase in teacher's tenures granted this year to last year? Or the chancellor can speak about it.

Mayor: Let's have the chancellor speak to it.

Chancellor Fariña: I think that nationally – it's pretty close to what the national numbers are. And also, that it's something that's already carefully under review. We have put in additional ways of evaluating teachers. I think with Common Core, we have additional challenges. So, I think one of the things that we strongly are anticipating with the new superintendents is that teacher quality is going to be looked at very, very closely. And again, we've added professional development back on the table. Many teachers were expected to do Common Core without any professional development whatsoever. So we have had a tremendous amount of interest in the last months. We've had over 900 principals attend professional development and those principals are expected to send their teachers. So, we are looking for highly effective teachers and I do not want to see any teacher in a classroom where the kids are not getting what they need. But this is something we are looking at very closely moving forward, and I do think professional development of the right kind is the answer.

Mayor: Okay, we continue on off topic.

Question: Going off the op-ed you wrote on Huffington Post, do you think a competitive Democratic primary in 2016 is good for the Democratic primary? Or are you worried that a [inaudible] fight in the primary would be bad for [inaudible] like Hillary Clinton?

Mayor: I think the point of the op-ed was not whether a primary per se is good or bad, it's that the Democratic Party has to represent its values. And a lot of what happened this year around the country was Democrats running away from Democratic values, running away from progressive values, being unwilling to talk about economic reality, unwilling to offer a progressive vision of economic fairness. And I think that's what really undermined a lot of those candidates, because folks who even agreed with them, in large measure, didn't feel inspired to come out to vote. So, I think that's the central question. It's not whether a primary – there's a great argument always made, whether primaries are energizing and helpful to a party, or hurtful to party unity. I don't think that's the core of the issue. The core of the issue is, are Democrats going to come to grips with the economic reality? If they do, they're in a position to win.

Question: What do you think – specifically about primaries – what do you think –

Mayor: My view over the years has been that I do not fear them. Sometimes they can be very helpful in terms of preparing a candidate to be stronger for the general election, sometimes they're the best way to sort out who is the best candidate, but I don't think it's a hard and fast rule. I think it really depends on the situation. Much more important right now is Democrats getting back to Democratic values. In the back.

Question: [inaudible] support of more than 30 students who moved out of the school, some of who said it was sort of against their will [inaudible]

Mayor: The chancellor can come up. [inaudible] the big picture if she does. Change was really needed at that school. It was one of the strongest examples of the kind of changes we intend to make through our renewal schools program. And in that case, the school needed new leadership. It will have new leadership. The school needs the opportunity to look at its whole team from scratch, to really start over. And that's the agreement the chancellor won – to make sure that literally, the entire team can be evaluated and decisions can be made about what will make that school stronger. And it's a legendary school. It's a school that's done so much for Bed-Stuy and Brooklyn, but it needs a fundamental renovation of its approach and the chancellor is going to oversee that.

Question: The school population –

Chancellor Fariña Let me answer the question specifically that you asked [inaudible]. In the first place, Michael Wiltshire, who's the principal there, has already done a turnaround at Medger Evers Prep. When he took it over, it wasn't what it is today. And he has really good, strong experience in what it means to turn around a school. When I heard the rumor about him getting students to leave, it wasn't quite what it appeared. So, let me be very clear – many of the students at Boys and Girls Prep, and in several of our other high schools, are overage and under-credited. The fact that they will graduate on time is little to nothing in terms of their age. So, he had transfer school fair at the building, where he asked students to come and visit with their parents or by themselves, to see what other opportunities are there in transfer schools. And many – maybe half of the kids took him up, and others didn't. It was a free choice. It was not obligatory. It was simply to say there are other opportunities – there is a transfer school in that same building – they wouldn't have to go that far – who was willing to take these students on and had special strategies, including a lot more support to work with families. So, I also know that Good Shepherd Services, in connection with John Hopkins, is doing a phenomenal job at Boys and Girls High and is also taking on this issue. So, it's not only as it appears to me, it's a matter of, is this another chance, something else you might want to do, to ensure that kids are getting on the right path as quickly as possible.

Mayor: I want to comment – just one related point. I'm just going to keep moving this way across. But, you know, the chancellor came under some criticism from someone who – last I checked – was not an educator, Jack Welch. I would say to Jack Welch, he should stick to lightbulbs. He fundamentally misinterpreted the situation with the chancellor's choice of superintendents. She chose people who had tremendous history with turning around troubled schools – folks who dealt with troubled schools. If you want people who have never been near a troubled school, you can find those people, but if you want people who actually are going to help turn our school system around, you need people who have gotten their hands dirty fixing the problem, and rolled up their sleeves and dealt with it. And that's what the chancellor did. So, I just want to say, I thought that was a real misunderstanding of what's being done here from someone who clearly is not an educator.

Question: Mr. Mayor, we reported last night on a group of women [inaudible] with small infants and toddlers all over Midtown. We've heard reports since last night that there are more of them in downtown New York. They're refusing the [inaudible] they're refusing shelter, they want [inaudible] cash – I'm wondering if you'd like to see more enforcement by police of the existing [inaudible]?

Mayor: Well, I appreciated that report a lot, and as a parent, I was very, very troubled. Because obviously we don't have all the facts, but if it's even possible that parents are using their babies as pawns to get people to give them donations – that's horrendous, and deeply unfair to those children. So, as a parent I'm really troubled by it. We need to get all the facts. NYPD is on the situation right now. If we find any evidence of a conspiracy or a coordinated effort, there will clearly be enforcement. But I want to remind all New Yorkers, if you come across someone – look, we all have that instinct to help someone in need. The best thing we can do is connect people to the services they need. If they are honestly in need – and that's not a scam, they really are in need – call 3-1-1, help them get the services they need. That's the productive way to do it.

Question: Even if it's not organized, your thoughts about someone begging on the street – is that something you think should be allowed, given that there –

Mayor: Look – we always want to get people to social services. We know there are some people – for whatever reasons, potentially including mental health reasons – that don't choose to take advantage of social services. That's a challenge. I think every parent, no matter what their situation, should first and foremost protect their child. So, you don't take a child out into the elements, particularly as it's getting colder, and use them as part of begging. But I do understand some people may feel driven to desperation – that's one thing. We can help them. We need them to give us a chance to help them with our Department of Homeless Services and Administration for Children's Services. But the folks who are actually scamming their fellow New Yorkers, and using their children as pawns – that's disgusting.

Question: Mayor, I know –

Mayor: [inaudible]

Question: – your office put a statement out earlier today about you being late to the Flight 587 memorial, and I understand the fog was the reason, but we all saw the fog early this morning when we woke up, and I'm just wondering – why not take a different mode of transportation, or maybe leave a little bit earlier –

Mayor: No, I think that's – that's absolutely my responsibility. I want to be clear – everyone else in the process I think did their job well, I – it was a combination of things. The fog was unexpected and it did slow us down quite a bit. Previously we had used the boat to go to certain places, and it was the faster alternative. But it's also my fault because I was just not feeling well this morning, I had a very rough night, and woke up sluggish. And I should have gotten myself moving quicker. And so, the folks out there, obviously I have a lot of respect for them, and I wanted to be there with them, and I was honored to be there with them. And I know those families have gone through so much over 13 years, so I wanted to be a part of it. But absolutely, that's my responsibility.

Question: I don't mean to pry, but why was last night a rough night?

Mayor: Just woke up in the middle of the night, couldn't get back to sleep, and felt really sluggish and off-kilter this morning.

Question: I was actually going to have the same question.

Mayor: Okay.

Question: You said the weather was pretty bad – did you guys take that into account, or did it catch you by surprise.

Mayor: I think fog is one of those things that's kind of – you don't exactly get a stable situation. So, again, the previous efforts to use the boat – which we've only done selectively – but it has been proving to be a real time saver. Unfortunately at this time, the fog caught us off guard. But again, I take absolute responsibility. I think everyone else did their job, and I take responsibility.

Question: I wanted to ask you – I know the legislation hasn't been introduced yet, but just generally speaking, what you think of the notion of requiring police officers to get either written or audio permission from suspects before they search the suspects or their belongings or their vehicles or homes?

Mayor: Well, you know – that legislation was put forward last year. I don't know if what's been put forward now is the same exact wording or not, so I haven't seen the latest version of it. But I had some concerns then. I certainly have concerns now. You know, we obviously have to protect the rights of our people, but we also have to make sure that we're not, in any way, undermining the ability of law enforcement to do its job. So, I have some concerns that, you know, I need to hear answered in this process.

Question: This legislation hasn't been introduced either, but Lloyd Blankfein is introducing a bill that would make a chokehold a misdemeanor – I'm just wondering if you have any thoughts about that [inaudible]?

Mayor: Well, he's referring to in the case of police officers, specifically, correct?

Question: I believe so.

Mayor: No, I've spoken to this before. I think the best way to handle that is through NYPD policy, and what's going to happen is the retraining of the entire police department, on a variety of approaches, including the fact that the chokehold is not an appropriate tool to use. But I've also said publicly, and I'll say it again – there are some exceptional situations, and I want to respect our men and women in uniform who may be put into a life and death situation, literally one-on-one, them and a perpetrator who could literally mean to kill them, and they have to defend themselves – and that might involve a chokehold. And so I don't think it should be made a matter of a legal prohibition, I think it should be handled by department policy.

Question: Sir, so are you apologizing to the families of the people –

Mayor: Oh, I apologized to them out there. Yes. I'll apologize again. Absolutely. And again, I say it's all my responsibility.

Question: Mr. Mayor, the community meeting this week concerning the proposed South Street Seaport development project – Margaret Chin said to the speaker that you've taken a personal interest in preserving the historic [inaudible] and I wanted – and also, I wanted to [inaudible] and also the broader question of whether a tower adjacent to the historic district – do you think that's appropriate or not?

Mayor: I don't have a philosophical prohibition in my mind about putting a tower next to a historical district. It's New York City – I mean, throughout this city, we have some extraordinary modern buildings right next to historic buildings. I don't think there's any contradiction. It's absolutely – and by the way, it's all case by case, so the attitude we're going to take, I've said, we need to have much more affordable housing. In some cases, that's going to take taller and denser buildings, but it always is about the specific site, and if the specific site is appropriate, and it's always going to be something we do working with community members. But in this case, to the previous point – I think the Seaport Museum is really crucial to this city. I think it has to be protected, because this is how New York City became New York City. We are the ultimate maritime city. We are here because of the water, because of the maritime industry, and I think it's really important that future generations feel that. So, protecting the museum, in some form, is something I care about a lot.

Phil: A couple more, please.

Question: I just want to go back to the op-ed for a minute [inaudible] democrats in New York who feel the same way about the governor, that you feel about national Democrats – that he's not committed enough to the progressive agenda, and he's not preventing inequality, and so forth – and I'm just wondering if you see any parallels between those two criticisms? Do you see any of that there?

Mayor: Look, I think there's a different situation that happened around the country. Obviously, I was referring to Democrats who lost because they didn't speak to economic issues, and I'm very happy that Governor Cuomo prevailed, and I supported him strongly. But my message is to all Democrats – we have to get to the economics, we have to talk about economics, we have to talk about people's standard of living – we have to talk about what's happened to the middle class. I would urge all Democrats to do that, because if we don't do that, fewer and fewer people will see anything meaningful in this party, and they'll vote with their feet. They won't even necessarily vote against the Democrats – they will just stay home. So, I think it's something that all of us have responsibility for.

Question: There were some state senate Democratic candidates that you supported who lost. Do you – do you think they also didn't talk enough about –

Mayor: You know, I was asked a variation – and you may have asked me this the other day – I think Mark Panepinto – who won, who took back a seat from the Republicans – did the best job, of all the candidates who were in the tight races, of talking about real economic reality – talked about taking on big corporations that have been unfair to western New York, he talked about ways to increase wages and benefits for people who are struggling. He went right at the heart of the matter, and he talked about the inequality crisis. He won where he wasn't supposed to win. I think other candidates didn't do as good a job at that.

Question: Following up on the op-ed, you know, in the piece you described a forceful embrace of progressive principles by Democrats – here in the city, there are some [inaudible] who are encouraging you to take what they say is a more forceful approach to [inaudible] reform, and the two council bills that were just mentioned now, [inaudible] I'm just curious how you balance [inaudible] in your agenda. Are there some [inaudible]?

Mayor: Look, let me separate the – I think there's two points. There is – there's always going to be voices – advocates, activists, calling for you to do more on a whole host of issues. There'll be people who say everything you do is going too far. So, that kind of comes with the woodwork. I respect all of them, but that is a – kind of a fixed reality. On police reform – I could not be more proud. I think we have the best police commissioner in the country, who's committed to reform, retraining the force – great reduction in stops, what we're doing in terms of reforming marijuana policy. You know, you go up and down the line – we have a new IG, we have a reinvigorated CCRB – this is in ten months time. So I would say to any of my critics, with respect – those who think we have not moved fast enough, I'd say look at any other ten-month time frame in New York City government history, and tell me where you've seen more movement in terms of real progress and police community relations and reforming the NYPD. On the biggest point, I would separate fully – and I appreciate the question, because it really gets to what I'm trying to say in the op-ed – if it's not economics, it isn't the first topic of discussion. Everything else matters. A whole host of issues matter. But where Democrats fell down is when they didn't talk about people's economic reality, and they didn't offer a forceful progressive solution. It's as simple as that. If you're not willing to talk about how to create more jobs, even if it discomfits the powerful and big corporations; if you're not willing to talk about how we're going to raise wages and benefits, including by legislative means and governmental mandates; if you're not willing to actually talk about how people are going to be able to feed their families, get to the middle class, stay in the middle class, and do better by the next generation – you're kidding yourself. And you're not a Democrat. You know, a Democrat is supposed to speak to those issues. And so, from my point of view, you look at what happened – and I said in the op-ed – Al Franken's a great example. Minnesota's a state that has had Republican governors, Republican senators, all in recent time, it's become a swing state. Al Franken stuck to his guns, talked about economic reality, talked about progressive solutions – won handily. But in nearby states, where Democrats couldn't find their true values, and couldn't speak about them, or couldn't even acknowledge whether they had voted for the president of the United States – you know, it's no surprise that people didn't see the real thing, so they didn't vote. You know, Howard Dean had a great formulation four years ago – excuse me, ten years ago, when he said he's from the Democratic wing of the Democratic party. You know, I think that's what people are looking for – they're looking for actual consistent values, and that's what will motivate them to vote. Anything short of that won't.

Phil: Last call, guys.

Mayor: Did you have something, or not?

Question: No, I did, it was part of the same issue, and I guess – what would you say to those who say, well, it's easy for you to take this position, because you're in New York City, which is maybe the bluest of the blue big cities in this country?

Mayor: So, that's a fair question. So, this blue, blue, blue city, which had a Republican mayor for the last 20 years – or you could maybe be more creative and say, in the case of Mayor Bloomberg, someone who was a Democrat, became a Republican, became an independent, but certainly at the time he was mayor, wasn't a Democrat. Rudy Giuliani was a forceful republican. So, 20 years without a Democratic mayor – I believe some of why we broke through last year was because we spoke to people's economic reality. The whole concept of the campaign was to say we're living a tale of two cities. The whole concept of the campaign was to say we have to address income inequality, and we'll do it with forceful means. And again, if some wealthy and powerful people feel discomfited – it's no offense to them, it's what we have to do for our city – and by the way, I would say the same for our nation – that we have to change. We are – I said this a lot, last year – we're on a dangerous path. If inequality continues to grow, this is not going to be a strong and stable nation. Our competitors will surpass us. I said that last year. I want to say – you know, you've heard this year a chorus of voices. They're not the voices you would have expected – for example, Democratic senate – senate candidates around the country. It's Janet Yellen, the head of the Federal Reserve, it's Lloyd Blankfein, the CEO of Goldman Sachs – are sounding the alarm on income inequality. But Democrats didn't. And I think the people paid them back for it. I think the people said, if you're not going to speak to these issues, we're not going to turn out for you. And that's what happened, and so – it's a cautionary tale, it's an alarm bell – you know, this is the chance for Democrats to get it right, and they should start right now, with this next congressional term, fighting for the right things, and that may restore the faith of the American people looking forward to 2016.

Thanks, everyone.

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