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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT STATEN ISLAND
GROUNDHOG CEREMONY**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Eddie Burke, ladies and gentleman – he'll be here all week. Try the veal. [Laughter]

So, Eddie [laughs] – Eddie, you definitely have another career after public service. Vegas needs you.

It is great to be here at Staten Island Zoo. It is a wonderful place. It is a place that families in Staten Island enjoy, and I am thrilled to be here to promote the good work of this zoo. I want to thank all of my colleagues who are here, who have come here early in the morning out of similar devotion – a particular thank you to Kenny Mitchell, who runs this zoo so well, and does so much for the people of Staten Island. A special – yes, let's give him a round of applause.

[Applause]

A special thank you to the kids of P.S. 29 for their wonderful singing.

[Applause]

All right, we know why we're here. We want to figure out if we're going to have a longer winter or an early spring, based on the work of our furry and four-legged meteorologist Chuck – six more weeks of winter if he sees the shadow; spring comes early if he sees no shadow.

It's hard – it's hard to believe he won't see a shadow on a day like this, but let us hope for the best.

Now, there's been a very concerted effort over the last few weeks – teams of animal behavior experts, and scientists have consulted from all over the country, the National Institute of Health has weighed in on my behalf – the National Institute of Groundhog Health has weighed in as well. I think we got NASA involved. We've had a lot of people working – and based on consultations with the zoo – has come up with a new – what was it? – new, progressive, exciting approach to groundhog diplomacy on this day.

This new approach will be safer for both species involved. And I'm very excited about that. So, any minute, Chuck will emerge with the news. As you heard, Chuck has an extraordinary rating. This is – this is something I did not know – ranked the number two groundhog by the Weather Channel's list of Top 11 Groundhogs to Watch. [Laughter] I did not know there was such a list, but I'm glad the Weather Channel put that together.

Chuck is usually right. And let's hope he gives us a warm forecast today. With that, take it away!

I've got my hands free.

[Laughter]

Unknown: Ring the bell? Absolutely. Tish, ring the bell there – three times.

Mayor: Everyone, get your hands in there. Ready, everyone? Three times. Go.

[Bell rings three times]

Unknown: Here comes Chuck. Here is Chuck, ladies and gentlemen – in his brand new habitat. It's a Chuck-avator.

Mayor: Chuckavator!

Public Advocate Letitia James: His back is to everyone.

Unknown: Here he comes.

Mayor: Come on, Chuck.

Okay, Chuck, what's wrong with you?

[Laughter]

It's like a Popemobile. That's good.

[Laughter]

Unknown: It is like the Popemobile. It's the Chuckmobile.

He's – Chuck is doing what groundhogs do. He's looking to see if he sees his shadow. And right now, Mr. Mayor, I would say he doesn't his shadow over there.

Mayor: Really?

[Laughter]

Public Advocate James: Shadow or no shadow? No shadow? Aw...

Unknown: He's peeking. He's peeking up. He's wondering, if on a day like today, the city has a slush fund.

[Laughter]

Mayor: Security [inaudible]

[Laughter]

Unknown: Here he comes. Come on, Chuck. We're waiting.

Mayor: What's up, Chuck.

[Cheers]

Unknown: There he is, ladies and gentlemen. Staten Island Chuck!

[Cheers]

Mayor: Very exciting. The verdict...Chuck says, Spring is coming!

[Cheers]

Mayor: Good news all around. Chuck, I want to thank you for this new approach. I think we finally understand each other. Thank you for the good news.

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