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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 12, 2018
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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW

Brian Lehrer: It's the Brian Lehrer Show on WNYC. Good morning everyone and for the first time in three weeks it's our Friday "Ask the Mayor" segment. That's because on both of the last two Fridays, we were preempted for live coverage of the Brett Kavanaugh hearings and debate in the United States Senate, remember? But today we resume Friday life as normal again, if anything is normal anymore, we can pretend it is at least, right? So it's my questions and yours for Mayor Bill de Blasio at 212-433-WNYC, 212-433-9692. Mr. Mayor, welcome back to WNYC.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Yeah, Brian, I think when Kanye is giving a lecture in the Oval Office it's a good question whether anything is normal anymore.

Lehrer: Right, and that's our next segment, folks, right after the mayor. It looks like there were consequences for you of being freed from last Friday's show. I think it was during this time period that you were confronted by a protestor at your gym in Park Slope and told her you wouldn't engage with her there and she used some similar language to the women who confronted Jeff Flake in a Senate elevator about Kavanaugh, asking you to look her in the eye. Any thoughts now a week later about that encounter or the substance of her issue?

Mayor: We've covered it but I'll say very quickly that, you know, one, I've spent most of two decades working on issues of homelessness – I care very deeply about people who find themselves without a home and we've changed a whole set of approaches to make them work better. We've gotten over 90,000 people out of shelter and into better housing over the last five years. We've stopped thousands of people from being evicted and ending up in shelter. We've gotten almost 2,000 people who were on the streets off the streets and into a safe place and they've stayed in and not ended up back on the streets. This is what we're focused on – we're going to be doing a lot more of that.

I care about every individual who's in that circumstance but where I draw a line is, you know, that place I go is a place that you're not supposed to be filming in, no one is, that's a rule for everybody in there – the minute I saw that people were filming, you know, that violates both the rules of that place but also it's just not fair to everyone else around me, and I won't engage

someone in that circumstance, and it's quite clear. So, if anyone wants to raise an issue to me there's town hall meetings, there's call-in shows like this, there's many opportunities I talk to people all the time, on the streets, on the subways, you name it. But that's not the place to do it with a camera.

Lehrer: Does that encounter give you any sympathy for the way some progressive activists are getting into the Republicans' faces lately – really sympathy for the Republicans is what I'm asking. Ted Cruz was heckled while eating at a restaurant – Cory Booker has said, yes, do that, get into the faces of some members of Congress.

Mayor: I think there has to be a balance between raising serious issues, which absolutely should be done when people are on duty, and that's true for example – Jeff Flake was in an elevator at the Capital, town hall meetings, all sorts of other places, absolutely, you know, let your voice be heard. I think when someone is in their private life – I do think there's a certain civility that should be recognized across the board. And, I think look, we're in a really interesting time, where on the one hand, our passions are the most intense they've been because of the threats to our democracy, because the issues are so real, and we have to act on those feelings and those concerns. On the other hand, you know, there's still got to be some humanity in the equation, and some sense that people are still individuals.

Lehrer: And to the particular issue that the protestor was raising with you – I know you just spoke about various things you've done with respect to homelessness, but her very particular issue I believe was that only five percent of the 300,000 new affordable housing units that you're very proud of are being set aside for homeless people and she didn't think it was enough. Do you disagree with the numbers or—

Mayor: Oh, I've spoken to this – I mean part of what I also want to emphasize, Brian, is I would ask the media to look and see if it's an issue I've spoken to. I've spoken to it numerous times, including at town hall meetings—

Lehrer: Our listeners may not have heard it.

Mayor: No of course, but I'm just saying with all due respect to the individual, and again we want to help her in every way we can, but this is not a new issue. I've been very clear about the fact that our affordable housing plan seeks to address the need of a whole host of New Yorkers. Working class people, low-income people, even folks that we might consider middle class, you know, bus drivers need affordable housing, police officers, firefighters, teachers need affordable housing. We're trying to reach across the spectrum. At the same time, we've gotten 90,000 people who were homeless to affordable housing. So I believe that the balance we're striking now is the right one, and I believe stopping people from becoming homeless in the first place is the first goal, and that's what we're doing with the anti-eviction legal services, that's what we're doing with rental subsidies, and I think that balance is the right balance. I think this how we try to address the whole spectrum of need.

Lehrer: Before we get to some calls, let me ask you about the new teachers' contract and the new idea to pay teachers \$5000 to \$8000 extra to teach in some schools that are hard to staff,

particularly in The Bronx, but the pay, as I see it, is just for working there, not for improving the kids' results. Can you predict that that bonus pay will lead to better outcomes?

Mayor: Oh, absolutely, you're talking about schools – The Bronx is a place that's particularly suffered for this reality and if we're going to fight inequality in the city, if we're going to become the fairest big city in America, we have to address a reality like this. The Bronx has often had schools that could not fill the teaching roles in a number of areas. Examples include math and science and bilingual education. And if you can't even fill those teaching roles with a permanent teacher, how on earth are you going to achieve what you need to for the kids? There's been a lot of turnover, there's been a lot of instances where teachers went to a school and then didn't stay. This is about incentivizing good, strong teachers to stay in these schools and to come to these schools and make it their home. And I absolutely believe – I know the chancellor believes, that's part of how we turn these schools around and make them stronger. It all begins with a teaching corps – if you have a strong, dedicated teaching corps and you keep developing them – that's another big thing we did in the last contract, a lot more resources, a lot more time put into the teachers' week for professional development – you do that right, and you get a long-term teaching corps in a school, even if it's a school in a disadvantaged area, you can have a huge positive result for the kids.

Lehrer: The Times article on the agreement this morning says, this contract seems to acknowledge that union rules about how teachers can be paid, hired, and fired have stymied progress in the city's struggling schools. Are you acknowledging that?

Mayor: I think it was time for something new, this is what I'd say, I think it was time for more creativity, more flexibility, and I want to commend the UFT for working with us to find a way that would address this, you know, long-term problem, decades and decades, this has been a problem in The Bronx and some other parts of the city, and we'll extend this same approach to other areas that need it, but I also want to emphasize and we talked about this a lot yesterday, at the press conference – what's been lacking for years is a sense of partnership and cooperation at the school level. It's not that, you know, people in various schools haven't tried – they certainly have. It's that we needed a model that really emphasized labor management agreement on all the specific issues in the school community, trying to really work them through, looking at real facts, real metrics, figuring out together how to make a school better. That historically was not the approach, and part of why this has all come together is something that Chancellor Carranza is talking about a lot. He's saying, you know, his experience – I think this is his fifth school system – around the country – that grassroots cooperation is the difference maker. If it's not there a school can only go so far. This contract encourages that, particularly in the schools that have had the greatest need. So I think, I think everyone is trying to find creative approaches and new approaches, that's why we got this agreement.

Lehrer: On a related topic, I've been seeing the NY1 reporting on the city's failure to pay many teachers, nurses, and therapists who work with special-Ed kids. You said on NY1 Monday that that's unacceptable. Have you figured out what the problem is and fixed it?

Mayor: We've definitely figured out what the problem is, it is being fixed, all those folks will be paid promptly. I get very frustrated with any bureaucracy that does not pay people on a timely

basis, including lots of non-profits that have often complained about this. Some of it, I know there are certain situations there are legal requirements, there are, you know, various vetting requirements and things like that make things slower. That said, in a situation like this, we just have to find a way to pay these folks more quickly it is being done, they will get their pay.

Lehrer: Part of the concern was that some of these therapists and others would walk away because they can't afford to keep working and not getting paid. How quickly will this be resolved?

Mayor: I have to get you a very specific answer on that, I'm happy to do for next week, but I agree we don't want to lose talented people. The good news is – look, this is really important work. The folks who do this work care deeply about kids. I don't think they're going to likely walk away from these kids, they absolutely deserve their pay. Once we get this system right, the good news is, they'll be able to depend on this kind of work and this kind of pay and I think people will stick with it.

Lehrer: Ron in Williamsburg seems to have a school related question. Ron you're on WNYC with the mayor, hello.

Question: Wow, very exciting Brian, I'm huge fan of your show, and Mayor, I'm honored to speak with you this morning—

Mayor: Thanks Ron.

Question: —thank you so much for taking my call. I purchased my property 20 years ago here on the North side of Williamsburg. A ramshackle building, and built it up, next to Boricua College. Last year, Boricua College was sold and the annex – and they're going to develop it into condos. This is the budding property next to my property here. Boricua also has an annex property which they have now rented out to Unity High School – it's a charter school. I was never contacted by the Board of Ed., I was never contacted the charter school. Suddenly in September, I've got three to four hundred kids outside of my front door here in my property, making a huge amount of noise, making a racket. My upstairs tenant, which my livelihood is dependent on, moved out because of all the problems that I'm having here. They put garbage out every night – three nights a week. The rats are eating through the garbage bags – the garbage is spilling all over the streets. They have a gymnasium behind my building, their noise is amplifying up through my house – it's a disaster. I was never contacted by anyone and here I am just in a huge mess and I'm wondering—

Lehrer: And that's a charter school just with respect to all our Puerto Rican listeners, I know it's *Boricua*, but with respect to the charter school, that's a public school, Mayor. Do you have control over that?

Mayor: We have control over every public school and charter schools fall under that rubric as well. Ron, first of all please give your information to the folks at WNYC, so we can follow up.

Mayor: We have control over every public school and charter schools fall under that rubric as well. Ron, first of all, please give your information to the folks at WNYC so we can follow up. I certainly – you’ve painted a very vivid picture and I’m sorry that you’ve gone through all of this. We’ve got to figure out what we can do. Obviously, there’s a huge demand for school space in a number of neighborhoods, that’s one of our challenges, but we have to be real sensitive to neighbors. And the garbage problem that you describe, for example, is something I’m certain can be addressed, we have to see what we can do about noise problems, etcetera. Those are all really fair concerns. So, I would like you to follow up, give the information to WNYC. I’ll have folks at the Department of Education and the Department of Sanitation figure out right away what we can do to improve the situation.

Lehrer: Ron, we’ll take that contact information right now and you’ll talk to a producer. Jason in Brooklyn, you’re on WNYC with the Mayor, hello Jason.

Question: Hi Brian, thanks for taking my call. Mr. Mayor, thank you for taking the time to do this show today. My question is about climate change and about car congestion in New York City. As I’m sure you’re aware, the U.N. put out a pretty damning report about climate change and how it’s going to be affecting us much sooner than initially thought and how New York City really doesn’t seem to be taking immediate action. My office is in the Financial District, which is just crippled by private cars, Uber, triple-parked delivery trucks and buses just can’t get through, public transportation just does not work. And there seems to be things that other cities are doing, like London is looking to ban cars outright from their equivalent from the Financial District. Other cities like Paris are banning car outright from Downtown, prioritizing pedestrians, public transit, bicycles. New York really doesn’t really seem to be doing anything of the sort and it seems like you’re still being driven across the city in an SUV to get to the gym every day. What more can we be doing? What more should we be doing to make sure New York City is not contributing to global warming and really setting us up for failure.

Mayor: Jason, respectfully, I think you don’t have your facts. I think your concern is a very valid one, but you don’t have your facts. The fact is this city – there’s certainly more we have to do but we’re one of the leaders globally in addressing climate change. We have in fact a number of the things that you I think were point to – are things that we are doing or starting to do right now. We, in this City, are working right now on seeing if we can ban deliveries during certain hours of the day that cause a lot of congestion. There’s a pilot, which I announced last year that’s underway. If we get good results we’re going to do that on a broad scale. In this city, we’ve clearly expanded access to bikes on a massive scale. It’s been a huge success, it continues to grow. Select bus service, which has dedicated bus lanes – we’ve been growing that all over the City with tremendous success. We started a ferry service to get people off the streets and give them a better alternative using our waterways – that’s been a huge success. There’s a huge amount more we have to do. I think it’s fair to say should we look at models in other cities and go even farther. Yes, we are going to keep looking at those models for sure but I think you don’t recognize all the things that New York City is already doing and that are having a huge impact and that we are going to be doing a lot more of.

Lehrer: In light of the UN climate report and the New York State Comptroller's new report on bigger than previously stated MTA funding shortfall projections, are you any closer than you were to endorsing a congestion pricing plan for New York City?

Mayor: You know Brian I appreciate the question and I really think one thing I would urge folks is you know, you can ask the question another hundred times but I assure you if my position changes I will tell you. It's the exact same thing I have been saying for the last year or more since the Governor's commissioner proposal came out. I said that commission was a real step forward. It was the first congestion pricing plan to not involve the bridges. I thought that was very, very important. I thought that was an act of fairness, recognizing the needs of almost five million people in Brooklyn and Queens. And that, or over five million I should say – that plan opened the door to a better consideration of congestion pricing but there are still real issues of equity and fairness that need to be addressed. There's still no formal congestion pricing vision or plan on the table from Albany. I'm willing to work with everyone in Albany to figure out what is a solution to our whole MTA problem. I've always said I think the single best solution is a millionaire's tax to fund the MTA, I think it's the most reliable, I think it's the fairest solution, a progressive tax.

We may need more than one piece to a solution. What I will say for sure is I think our best opportunity to address the MTA issues is coming up in this legislative session in the spring, I think it will be the best chance we've had in a long time. I think it will be an even better chance if there is a democratic leadership in the State Senate. But, this is the do or die moment, spring 2019, when we have to address long term funding for the MTA once and for all.

Lehrer: A couple of questions if I might about transitioning to a post Rikers Island world. Gothamist reports that City Council members who represent the districts that will house your four borough based jails are taking a beating in public facility site meetings. Gothamist asks why isn't the Mayor front and center advocating for the moral imperative of closing Rikers the same way he holds press conferences about affordable housing? What would he say to people who are concerned that his plan is in jeopardy? What would you say to our colleagues here at Gothamist?

Mayor: Well a couple of things, I would say first of all I have spoken about this issue numerous, numerous times. And there's old press conferences on this and it's quite clear, I think there is a city wide consensus that Rikers Island needs to be a part of our past. It doesn't represent rehabilitation. It doesn't represent helping make sure that people never commit another crime. It represents an approach that unfortunately held us back and was part of a horrible era of mass incarceration. And I always say that mass incarceration didn't begin in New York City but it will end in New York City. We are driving down the number of folks in our jail system constantly. And we expect to get to a historic low level that will allow us to get off Rikers Island and literally tear down that facility and never need it again. But to do that we have to have borough based jails. They will be modern, they will be focused on rehabilitation. They will be safer for officers and inmates alike. And they will allow people who were there to visit their loved ones much easier access than what they have now at Rikers. I've said this a lot, I think the four council members involved have shown tremendous conscious, decency, goodness in saying this is the right thing to do. And the Speaker of City Council, Corey Johnson has made it a priority. And I believe that these plans will be done.

Lehrer: I guess the suggestion behind the question and the people who raised it is that you might say that when asked a question directly like this but you are not getting out there as proactively as some people think you should, either at some of those community meetings or in other ways, really making this more front and center or yourself more front and center on the issue.

Mayor: I think the question is what will help get it done? The, you know, I'm sure you are familiar with the process that we are going to go through now with the City Council and communities. It's the same process we go through on any other major land use decision. If the Council members involved, I mean it's their district, I want to respect them – if they say hey, will you come out and talk to members of my community about this? I would do that, absolutely, in a heartbeat. But I want to respect that it's a process that they play a central role in. They have to do it the way they want to and believe is right. City Council ultimately has to vote. Haven't gotten that request so far but if I got it, of course I would be there.

Lehrer: And we talked earlier this week on the show about the rocky transition for 16 and 17-year-olds who have just been moved out of Rikers into juvenile detention facilities or one particular facility under the new state law that finally separates them from adult inmates. There have been reports of fights as you know, and injuries including of corrections officers and now I read the officers have been given permission to use pepper spray which originally I guess they didn't want to do with facility, with those minors. Is someone blowing this transition?

Mayor: No. Look this is a huge piece of work. It's the right thing to do. I want to emphasize that. You know, it was a real mistake that this state was one of only two in the entire United States of America to put juveniles in adult correctional facilities. That was astounding that New York State took so long to address this issue. And I want to commend in particular Speaker Carl Heastie and the Assembly that lead the way on this. So this was the right reform. No one said that such a huge reform was going to come easy but I am absolutely convinced that we will get it right. We will have a secure facility that can ensure rehabilitation while keeping order. Look, we've been very clear that there's going to be serious consequences even though these are younger people. If they do anything that's physical assault on each other or on an officer, there will be additional charges, there will be additional consequences, additional restrictions. As you said the pepper spray will be used on a limited basis. But it is another tool to protect our officers and to make sure it's an orderly environment. We are going to get this right but this is a sea change and as with any sea change, you know it takes a little while to get everything to be what we want it to be.

Lehrer: [Inaudible] in Washington Heights, you're on WNYC with the Mayor, hello [inaudible].

Question: Good morning. Thank you for taking my call. So my name is [inaudible] I am the president of 600 West, 161st Street Tenants Association and I would like to ask the Mayor, how can we get your help to stop Alma Realty from making our rent stabilized apartments from becoming fire stairs because DOB job number 103-239-657 allows Alma, GVS to not obey the New York State [Inaudible]-231. We were informed by the Borough Commissioner Rebholz that additional fire stairs could be used but the owner Alama has not presented that plan. It seems that

they are only interested in safety in just as chopping up or rent stabilized apartments to supposedly create their fire stairs.

Mayor: [Inaudible] thank you for raising this. I don't know the specific facts about your building. I do want you to make sure to give you information to the folks at WNYC so we can follow up. Look there have been a number on instances around the city – it pains me to say it but it's the blunt truth where landlords have not been respectful of the rent stabilized tenants. And the work of protecting rent stabilized tenants and rent stabilized apartments belongs to the entire city government. It's not just our Housing Department, it's also the Buildings Department, other agencies as well. So if the landlord is in anyway undermining rent stabilized tenants or rent stabilized apartments we have to address that very energetically and there has to be consequences. So I don't know the details of your building but I will make sure that some senior folks right away follow up with you and we figure out what we can do to address this.

Lehrer: [Inaudible] thank you very much, we will take your information off the air. And Maria in Morningside Heights, you're on WNYC with the Mayor. Hi Maria.

Question: Hi there. I told the screener I was calling about bike lanes but I could comment about absolutely everything else. In fact one thing I've always wanted to ask about is the lawsuit that dictates that the City has to find homes for homeless people – it seems incredible to me, how can we possibly house anyone who walks into New York City and wants a home, even if they have only been here two days? So that's one thing. And the other was the bike lanes on Amsterdam and Columbus Avenue are virtually always empty when I'm on either of those roads and now the DOT wants to extend further up Amsterdam which is two ways of traffic and Amsterdam and Columbus are truck routes. So I'm asking the Mayor to please intercede and not have any more bike lanes put on routes that have bus lanes and truck routes because it is just too chaotic, it's insane.

Mayor: Well, Maria, I don't know if I agree with your sense that that's a one-size-fits-all way of looking at things. I think the answer when it comes to bike lanes is, each situation is different and needs to be analyzed to see what the impact it. Look, part of addressing global warming, part of addressing congestion is to get people to every other form of transportation besides private vehicles. The previous caller raised the issues of congestion and climate change. Another thing I want to say is, you know, we took a very strong stance – I did, the Council did earlier this year – capping the for-hire vehicle, the Ubers and the other for-hire vehicles and creating, finally, a more rational approach to how we're going to address them, going forward – something I wish we had done years ago when I proposed it to the City Council, but we finally got that done. My point in that is, everything we're looking at now is how to reduce the emphasis on the private automobile. Bike lanes are part of that and they clearly have worked on a level of vast increases in bike usage. Now, that doesn't mean every single bike lane works the way it was originally planned, and we have to keep looking at the facts, and, in some cases, making adjustments. So, what I'll do, if you'll give your information to WNYC, we'll have people get you the facts on what's happening with those bike lanes, what the usage levels are. We'll look at them as well. If they're not being utilized efficiently, we'll ask questions about what that means, but I think a lot of times it's important to understand that you put something like that in place and over time it

gains more and more of a constituency and, again, gets people out of their cars. And so this is – we’re sort of looking at the long-term impact here.

On the question you raised about homeless – the facts are pretty clear, the court case that you referred to correctly that guarantees that people get shelter, it does not guarantee permanent housing, it guarantees temporary shelter. But it really overwhelmingly applies to people who are from New York City – very few people come here from somewhere else and benefit from that. There’s been a concern and I understand it – a common-sense concern – hey, are we “attracting people?” That has not been the case. I’ve asked this question many times. The facts are, the people who end up in shelter are people from New York City.

Lehrer: And is that clear? I’ve heard the discussed on a national angle – that there are several cities that have similar policies to ours, not every city does, and that people do come from outside to get homeless services. Does the record not support that?

Mayor: Not that I’ve ever heard. Now, I’ve spent a lot of time talking to my colleague mayors about this and actually the folks we should feel particular sympathy for are the mayors on the west coast who clearly have a variation on that problem. There’s a huge number of people who come to their cities, often warm places – literally, physical warm because of the weather – and live there without having a home. And those cities do not have the kind of right-to-shelter rule we have here. They don’t have a lot of homeless shelters. So, if you’re in San Francisco, L.A., a lot of other places – you’ll see a really visible street homelessness problem, which I think is horrendous and something we would never want to see here. But that’s because of climate, not because they offer shelter. Not many cities I know of offer shelter the way we do, and it’s a really imperfect situation, but one thing we can say is, it is a humane approach and more and more – I want to remind all of your listeners – more and more, homelessness is not about mental health challenges, not about substance abuse challenges, it’s working families who cannot afford to make ends meet. This is the bigger thing we’re trying to work on, raising wages, raising benefits. We’re finally going to have a \$15 minimum wage in this State and City. We’ll finally have stronger benefits like paid sick leave, paid family leave, we’ve all fought for that. More jobs are being created, more affordable housing is created – that’s how you get to the root cause of homelessness, because it is an economic problem, first and foremost now. But the bottom line is, at least in this city we have a decent approach where if someone – if the bottom falls out of their lives economically, we catch them when they fall and then we help them get back to some other kind of housing, and that helps us keep the levels of street homelessness down. We’ve got a lot more we’ve got to do to get people off the streets but our situation is entirely different than what you see in some other cities in this country where unfortunately they have a vast street homelessness problem.

Lehrer: Related to her question about how the streets are organized, have you taken a position yet on which way you would like the BQE repaired around the promenade in Brooklyn Heights?

Mayor: Yeah.

Lehrer: You have? Because there are two options out there, right?

Mayor: There's two options and they're both painful. And again, I learned a long time ago, New Yorkers like to be leveled with and they like a straightforward answer. This BQE is one of the lifelines of the City. It has to be fixed. If we don't get to work fixing it soon it will be out of service and that would undermine everything. That would undermine mass transit because of the buses, it would undermine everyone's ability to get around, trucks' ability to get around, you name it. And so, what we're trying to do is get ahead of it. There's basically two options that I've been briefed on – one would cause a huge number of vehicles to go through the streets of Brooklyn and clog up residential areas and business areas, and I think that's extraordinarily problematic. It would also take longer – several years longer to achieve the change in the BQE. The other approach is kind of the pull-the-band-aid off approach. It would involve putting an additional deck above the existing BQE – that's where the traffic would go while everything underneath was fixed once and for all, and for the long-term. And it's a painful approach, it will definitely create a lot of inconvenience for people. I don't want to for a moment undermine – or, underestimate what impact it would have. It will definitely have a big impact, but I think it's the way to address the bigger problem once and for all and as quickly as we can do it.

Lehrer: Couple of things really quick that you'd probably like to have a chance to weigh in on. One is, today is the deadline for voter registration in New York City, in New York State, as you know for the November election. It's also the deadline to change a party registration for next year's election, that's how backwards New York State's voting laws are – you have to do it October of this year to vote in a primary that's different from your current party this year, but do you want to give a shout out to New Yorkers who aren't registered yet?

Mayor: Yeah, absolutely. Today is the day. And I don't think we've ever seen an election that has generated so much passion. Get in the game, have an impact, make your voice heard. If you aren't sure how to register, call 3-1-1 or go online at voting.nyc. You can do this today, but this is the last day so please do this right away. We've been promoting for weeks now that people – they have a chance to participate here. And then I'd say two other related things – that we need to do a lot better at making it easier for people to vote. So, there'll be a couple of important referendum items on the ballot this November here in the City. You're going to have to flip your ballot over to vote in these referenda. One will empower the City to do a lot more to reach out to every-day New Yorkers to let them know when and where to vote, because that's been a consistent problem with the Board of Elections. And two – will actually reduce the level of donations that can be given to candidates and increase the amount of public financing and help get money out of politics, which I think will encourage people to want to participate a lot more. The other big thing this spring, in Albany, let's fix our voting laws. We should have same-day registration. We should have early voting and-or vote by mail. We should certainly allow people to switch party on a much more reasonable timeframe. Why should anyone have to wait a year-out to be able to switch parties? It's something they should be able to do if they choose to. All of these changes can be achieved this spring and I hope there's going to be a lot of focus on Albany because it's a chance to finally bring New York State's voting laws into the 21st Century and to stop excluding people. Two million people, Brian – two million people eligible in New York State and not registered. It's staggering.

Lehrer: And I'll give you a chance before November 6th to make a robust case for those referendum items that you support. I noticed – did you notice that two guys named Michael just

switched their party registration at the deadline this week to Democrat – named Michael Bloomberg and Michael Cohen? The Bloomberg guy to run for president possibly as a Democrat? What do you think about either of those switches?

Mayor: I didn't hear about Michael Cohen, I'm not sure what he's trying to achieve there. I think he's got his own problems. I said yesterday, you know, I do want to give Michael Bloomberg a lot of credit for challenging over these last few years – challenging President Trump. I think he's been an important voice opposing a lot of what Trump has done. I appreciate his generosity in supporting Democratic causes, but, at the same time, I think someone who has not been a member of the Democratic party for the last 20 years is not going to be what Democrats are looking for this year. I think there's a tremendous wave in the Democratic party. People want to really achieve change and they want Democrats who are uncompromising, who are going to address inequality, who are going to be forceful, consistent Democrats. That's where I think this part is going, I think you see it all over the country. So, I absolutely have respect for him, but I think wrong time, wrong place.

Lehrer: Do you want 10 seconds to gloat about the Red Sox?

Mayor: I would never gloat. You know, I said to people that whether it was the Yankees or the Red Sox – the bigger problem is the Houston Astros. And I say that with a lot of humility – that's an incredibly good team. I'm proud of my team but they have a huge challenge ahead.

Lehrer: And I say, as a Yankee fan, that a lot of people are blaming the manager this week for the lack of pitching changes, but the Red Sox were just the better team, they just are. Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor. As always, talk to you next week.

Mayor: You're a magnanimous man, Brian.

Lehrer: Talk to you next week –

Mayor: Take care.

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