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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT GOVERNORS ISLAND

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank so much Clare. And, Clare, I appreciate your passion for this place. Senator Schumer and I got a guided tour from Clare, who was also the driver of our golf cart, doing it all. But the passion Clare has for what Governors Island is and what it will be is striking because this is a place of amazing possibilities, but it takes a great leader, and Clare, thank you for your energetic leadership of the trust. Let's thank her for all she does.

[Applause]

I want to speak very quickly about what this means, and then I have the honor of bringing forward Senator Schumer, but let me just thank everyone who's here, everyone who's a part of this. I know it's been a labor of love for so many people. I came out here years ago with then Deputy Mayor Alicia Glen and Carl Weisbrod, who was the head of our City Planning Commission, and they talked it with extreme passion of what could be, and since then, Deputy Mayor Vicki Been and Clare and her team, and Ben Furnas, our Sustainability Director and Climate Director, Jainey Bavishi, our Resiliency Director, their teams – everyone has pulled together a truly revolutionary vision for this island, and I want people to understand, it's one thing to have a beautiful place in our harbor that people can enjoy. It's another thing for this place to lead us to the future, and that's what we aspire to here. That here in the place where New York City as we know it today literally began, this island, that this will be the place that leads us to the future. This will be the place that solves the greatest crisis facing New York City and humanity, which is climate change. And we look around the world, we see important work being done for sure, but we don't see enough speed. We don't see enough urgency. We've lost a lot of opportunities along the way, and thank God at this moment, we have President Biden in office. We have as our Majority Leader Chuck Schumer - we have people who understand the climate crisis and are doing something about it. But still, this world lacks the solutions, the focus, the energy we all need together across all nations to make the changes just in time.

Now, if you want an idea that will span all nations, come to New York City, because nowhere on the globe is there a place where everyone comes together in one place, all the peoples of the world in one place, more than New York City. If you want a single place that can create a great idea, and it be a shot heard round the world, come to New York City. When we do things, the entire world pays attention. If you want the greatest talent to determine the climate solutions of the future, come to New York City.

So, this Climate Solutions Center here on Governors Island, that we envision will be a difference maker, not just for New York City, not just for the United States of America, but for the whole world. The Climate Solutions Center here will solidify New York City's leadership as a center of innovation as a place to create solutions like no place else on earth. It will add to our economy and our strength as a global center. There are so many reasons to like what is going to happen here on Governors Island. It's going to go beyond anything previously imagined many, many folks here today have contributed to this. We've had a real partner now in the federal government, which is a joy. We've had a partner in the City Council, and a really special thanks to Council Member Margaret Chin, who has been with us every step of the way. We have resources that could be so powerful as President Biden's vision unfolds the resources to make a difference.

So, I'll conclude with this. We have a chance to lead. New York City has never shied away from a chance to lead. We have a chance to show the globe the path forward. The climate solutions of tomorrow will be developed right here on Governors Island, and that to me is exciting. It's exciting for the future of this city, it's exciting for our children and our grandchildren and their lives being all they should be. So, let's realize today we're starting something of profound importance, and as we do, we have to remember none of this would have been possible if it weren't for people like Chuck Schumer and Jerry Nadler, who saw the opportunity to make Governors Island something that will contribute to our future, and to get it into the hands of New York City, where it could prosper

and thrive as an extraordinary asset for all of us. So, building a recovery for all of us must include this work here on Governors Island, and it would not have been possible had Chuck Schumer not been there at exactly the right moment, as he often is, to save the day for New York City. He did it again recently with the stimulus. We literally can't thank him enough. My great pleasure to introduce the Majority Leader of the United States Senate, Chuck Schumer.

[Applause]

U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer: Bill said, you could either wear a coat or a tie. So, anyway, it's great to be here today. I want to thank everybody up on the platform with me, including my dear colleague, Jerry Nadler who has done such a great job for New York in so many different ways, and of course our State Senator Brian Kavanagh who represents this island and has worked hard for it as well, as well as Ms. Newman, and so many others who worked for Governors Island day in, day out. It's such an amazing, beautiful spot. I learned something a few minutes ago. I asked Kavanagh, how big is it? And of course, he took out his iPhone. I don't have an iPhone, as you know, I just have a flip phone, and he said 172 acres. It's big and it's amazing, and that gives us tremendous opportunity. So, I want to thank I want to thank everyone here and I particularly want to thank the Mayor. This is his vision, and it's a great vision. I love doing things that will keep New York City the number one city in the world on into the future. Not just look at what we have to look at today, which of course we do, but look at what's going to be happening down the road and how can New York City lend its greatness and its diversity, and its ambition, and its energy, and its intelligence to making that happen, and then by doing that, creating even more jobs and more action here in New York, and this is one of those ideas. So, I'm really excited about it, and I thank the Mayor. Governors Island, as everybody knows, is one of the crown jewels of our city. The island though, here's a little history, the island was once in the middle of New York's bustling oyster trade. How many knew that?

Mayor: We're in the wrong place to ask that question.

Leader Schumer: It was a key part of the old harbor defense system. Yes. Anyone know that? Yeah, there you go. I told you, New Yorkers are smart and on the ball. Later became home of the US Coast Guard and hosted a summit between... Newman knows, Gorbachev and Reagan right here. Jerry and I worked hard to get the federal government to turn it over to the City and guess how much it costs, who knows that? \$1 divided between the City and State. Was it 50 cents - 50 cents? The City now runs the place, but I don't know, then it was divided between the City and State, but we worked very hard to make this happen. For years, the federal government had resisted, but wasn't doing anything with the island, and so we pushed very hard, Jerry and Carolyn Maloney in the House, and guess who pushed with me in the Senate? Another question. Hillary Clinton, my junior Senator at that point. In any case, so we got this done. Now, this is a great idea. The only caveat was we maintained a broad public purpose for this precious space. And so you've had a whole lot of ideas what to do with this island. Everyone has an idea. Some of them are good and some of them are not so good, but I can't think of one no more urgent, no more urgent public purpose than the calamitous challenge of climate change. It's going to affect all of us and every living thing on our planet, and let me just say, it's going to particularly affect New York City because we are on the ocean. We have lots of waterways and we're a dense city. So not only do we want to look at how we deal with climate change, but to have focus on the coasts and on urban areas, which is going to be a major, major need, and this center can fulfill that need, not just for helping New York City, but for helping cities around the world. You know, one of the – I am a strong advocate of bold action in Washington to deal with climate change, and we've made some real progress in the Senate on methane, on HFCs, my proposal for clean cars is moving forward. We're proposing that we get all our buses to be clean. There's so many things that we want to do, and have done, get the lead out of the pipes, everything.

But this city has particular needs, and I remember when we crafted the Sandy bill and got \$60 billion for New York. We had to make sure that everything was resilient. That if God forbid there was another Sandy, and the likelihood is unfortunately there will be at some point, that we be prepared and whatever we built would be resistant to the next Sandy, and we did. Jerry worked on that with me, and we got that done, and so we have some real practice in building resilience. We also have practice in what happens when an urban area is affected by climate change. Because when Sandy occurred, I remember a day later walking in these big yellow boots up to my thigh at NYU, they had – the whole place had been flooded and all their machines were gone. So, we have experience, and we can take that experience and turn it into knowledge and propagate that knowledge. It's a great thing. One little example for me. So, I'm – I believe strongly in bold action for climate change, but I'm lucky. I have a beautiful little

grandson, two and a half years old in two weeks. I ride my, as you know, I ride my bicycle all around the city. I'm not one of these spandex guys going at 40 miles an hour and scaring the daylights out of you. I go slow and I stop and talk to people, and I see what's going on. But one of my favorite rides is by the Brooklyn waterfront, not this part, south, the wetlands. There's a beautiful bike path along the Belt Parkway. It's one of my favorites, and about two weeks after Noah was born, I was riding, my first ride after his birth, and it hit me if we don't act, no one will ever see this beauty that I was able to enjoy regularly because the oceans will rise and that'll mean the southern part of Brooklyn around the waterfront there will be flooded.

So, we have a lot to do, and this center gives us a real, real hope that we can get that done. You know, John Donne, the great poet wrote. He said, memorably, "no man is an entire island of itself. Any man's death diminishes me because I'm involved in mankind." Well, he's right. This island is not an island. It's going to be a fount of knowledge that spreads all over the cities of America and the world, all over the globe telling us how we can prepare and deal with the crisis of climate change. So, I'm proud to be part of this announcement. I'm proud to have gotten the Mayor money. The Mayor kept reminding me help Albany, but when you help the city, help them directly.

Mayor: That's right.

Leader Schumer: And we did.

Mayor: And you did.

Leader Schumer: To the tune of about \$6 billion, which gives the city the kind of flexibility it needs to do things like this, and that's a good thing. So, we'll keep working for the city. We'll keep working for climate change and anything I can do to support this wonderful idea as the Mayor and his crew, try to transform it into reality, I'm there. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you.

[Applause]

I have two things to say in response, first of all, everyone, \$6 billion because Chuck Schumer was there to protect us and our interests. Let's thank him again for what he did for this city.

[Applause]

Thank God. He was there. For a second Chuck Schumer I was going to officially authorize you to take off your jacket there. So, you're way ahead of me.

Leader Schumer: I'm very [inaudible] –

Mayor: That's right.

Leader Schumer: I'm usually not so stylish, but I thought this was sort of stylish.

Mayor: It was a nice one. You did good. I know the Majority Leader has important work to do, and he has to leave us shortly, but we know he is with us on this project, and we'll be all the way to completion and that is a blessing. And he mentioned, Congressman Jerry Nadler is also one of the originals. One of the people made it possible for Governor's Island to be part of New York City's future. And no one appreciates our waterfronts more, and our potential more as a water facing city, no one understands that or has done more to protect that heritage and that future than our Congressman Jerry Nadler.

Congressman Jerrold Nadler: Well, thank you very much, Mayor. I'm so glad to be spending this beautiful day on Governor's Island. There is really nowhere better to enjoy the New York summer than here, even if it gets too hot sometimes. Now I love visiting Governor's Island, and I know so many other New Yorkers do too. Anyone can come here to enjoy the beautiful green landscape, to escape from the constant activity of our bustling city, and to spend time with the people they love. And now with Governor's Island set to serve as the home for New York's

Climate Solution Center, people will soon come to this island from all around the world to create the solutions to what is clearly the most pressing crisis of our day. There is no threat more existential to the future of New York or to the future of the world, than that posed by the climate crisis. As Superstorm Sandy and Hurricane Irene demonstrated, our city in particular is deeply vulnerable to the dangers of rapidly rising tides. Now, as we endeavor upon the vital and urgent work of better preparing our city for the challenges of the coming future, building a hub of climate action and research in our city is not just necessary. It's imperative. Governor's Island will be the perfect home for this project, which will work to make us safer New York for our children while generating the thousands of green jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in economic impact. And we'll work to make not just a safer New York, but a safer world because the entire world is threatened by the climate crisis. There is no more existential crisis facing humankind than the climate crisis. I applaud Mayor de Blasio and the Trust for Governor's Island for leading this bold step to address the climate crisis and particularly to reaffirm New York city's position as a global leader on this vital, vital issue. Thank you.

Mayor: You heard from Senator Schumer that we have a very knowledgeable member of the team here. He represents this island in the State Senate, and he is known as someone who really cares about the facts and the details and getting things done, and he's going to be one of the people that helps us make sure this Climate Solution Center comes to life and benefits all New Yorkers. My pleasure to introduce Senator Brian Kavanaugh. I'll take your jacket.

State Senator Brian Kavanaugh: I'm neither wearing the jacket nor the tie, but it's a great pleasure to be here. You've already had, you know, a terrific rundown of the history of the island and the background of this project from our great Senior Senator, and Congress Member, and the Mayor, and, of course, Clare Newman. I just want to add my thanks and congratulations to the trust and to the city for getting to this point. You know, this is a – the island has been said a long-storied history, but it is fitting that at this moment in our history where our planet is facing one of the great challenges of all time, climate change, that we are dedicating this island to a center that will come up with real solutions to that. And, you know, at a moment when, you know, we are coming out of one, at least in our part of the world, coming out of a major global health crisis that we re-commit to the crisis that was here long before us, that is literally systematically destroying the planet of – the habitability of the planet we live on in climate change. So, we have great hopes for this. It was a long road here, you know, there are many who had some concerns about the bulk and height of this project and the trust made some – and the city made some compromises on that. But I do want to thank our community board which is represented here of [inaudible] and also, you know, the many organizations that have already brought about a significant change in this island, you know, the Harbor School and the Billion Oyster Project, and Earth Matters on the environmental front, and I know we have the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council represented by Diego here. And you know, those are really terrific incisions that have already begun the role of opening this up to the important, wonderful public purposes, the elegant serve, and I do want to thank Clare and Sarah and the other folks at the trust really who have been constantly responsive to our concerns, you know, as we call to make sure that the processes are inclusive as possible, including folks in Brooklyn who are just off the shore of this island. But again, we have, we have great hope that as this process – it is a request for expressions of interest, I think it is fair to say it is likely they're going to be quite a lot of interest and expressions of interest in building this project. So, we look forward to this project continuing down the road of making sure that we're – it is living up to the values of environmental sustainability and making a real difference in the world while respecting the wonderful role the island already plays in being a beautiful gem of open space right in the middle of our harbor. So, thank you.

[Applause]

Mayor: Thank you, Brian. You mentioned the people of Brooklyn. I want to thank you for that as a Brooklynite, and Clare help me, is not that body of water between Governor's Island Brooklyn called the Buttermilk Channel? Which is really one of the most poetic place names in all of New York city, the Buttermilk Channel, okay. Is the Harbor School in the house? Come on, Harbor School. I know it's hot out. Let's hear something.

[Applause]

Amazing New York City institution, the best of New York City, the best of our schools and our harbor and everything together and bring up a generation of leaders in the fight against climate change. What could be better than that, Principal Chetirko, come forward. Let's hear it for the Urban Harbor School.

[...]

Let's thank Melody. Good job, Melody and unnamed prompt guy. What's your first name? Antwan? Let's give Antwan some love here too.

[Applause]

Okay, everybody. So, we'll conclude with this. The future is right here. This is where it's going to happen. I'm so happy to be with all of you, the students of the Harbor School and the team from the Harbor School, you're building the future, and this Climate Solution Center is going to save our futures. Literally, one of the places on the globe that saves this planet for the rest of us. So, the future starts right here on Governor's Island. Thank you, everybody.

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