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RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY IN ALBANY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Why am I here? Because we're working on issues – we're working on issues that matter to millions and millions of New Yorkers. It's – they're really matters of urgency. They're matters of profound importance to millions of the people I represent. And I am encourage by the actions of the Assembly. The Assembly has already acted on mayoral control of education. The Assembly has already acted on rent regulation, including strengthening rent regulation, which we need desperately because we're losing affordable housing constantly in New York City. We need action from the other two parts of the equation. We particularly need the governor to act. We need leadership, and we know the governor has been able in the past to create real change here in Albany and get big things done. This is a moment where we need that leadership. Again, a million rent-regulated units – over 2 million New Yorkers who live in them. Their fate is hanging in the balance. Whether we're going to have a steady supply of affordable housing in our city, or whether more and more people are going to be displaced. More and more people – unable to live in their neighborhoods, unable to live in the city they love. That's what's hanging in the balance on rent regulation.

Mayoral control of education – affecting 1.2 million children and their families. Whether we're going to be able to keep improving our schools and making reforms, or whether we're going to go back to the bad old days that are pretty uniformly understood to have been the bad old days. 421-a – are we going to reform that program, get more for the taxpayers, get more affordable housing created? Or are we going to stay with the status quo that means we don't get our money's worth for our tax dollars and we lose the opportunity to create affordability when it's most needed. That's what's at stake here. Literally, you add up the 2 million-plus people affected by rent-regulation, the 1.2 million school children and their families, the thousands and thousands of families that would benefit from the greater amount of affordable housing we could create. All of that has a huge impact on our city. And all of it hangs in the balance. And I feel a tremendous sense of urgency. People in New York City feels a tremendous sense of urgency on these issues. We need out leaders in Albany to feel a similar sense of urgency. There's still two or three weeks left. There is time to get a lot done. But we need to see urgency and we need to see commitment.

I'd like to remind you on these issues – these are not only hugely important, reaching huge numbers of people. They're not garden-variety issues. Beyond that, there's an extraordinary consensus when you look at it. Mayoral control of education – education is an area where there's tremendous controversy naturally. One of the few areas you can find a consensus in New York City is on mayoral control, and how it has been a success, and a far superior system to that which we had before. You hear strong voices from the business community, the civic community, faith communities, elected officials, Democrats and Republicans alike supporting the renewal of mayoral control on a long-term basis. So here's an issue I would call a consensus issue – certainly a bipartisan issue. Equally with 421-a – here's an issue where I, who has a certain view of government's role, and people in the real-estate community who have a view of the private sector's role – we're able to find common ground. We said we're going to demand more of developers. We're going to get more back for the taxpayers. We're going to create more affordable housing. But we reached a consensus on something that would allow our city to keep growing. Again, a consensus between government and business – the kind of thing we should applaud, and the kind of thing we need more of. And I would argue in the context of New York City, the extension and improvement of the rent-regulation law is a consensus position throughout so much of our city because so many

people are affected. Because we know if we didn't have rent regulation, the city would be absolutely unaffordable for hundreds and thousands more New Yorkers.

So, these are huge issues. They're issues where there's an extraordinary level of support. And we need active leadership here in Albany to get these accomplishments done. Just to sum up – I'm up here working on, of course, mayoral control, rent regulation, 421-a. Obviously fighting for a minimum wage increase as well – absolutely necessary. We're going to lift people out of poverty, which is one of the goals of my One New York City plan. And also, increasingly we're seeing people cannot afford the price of housing in our city at minimum wage. And so, we have to get the minimum wage increased. I'm also here fighting for the DREAM Act. Obviously, yesterday was a tough day for those of us who believe in immigration reform. But here, there's a chance for New York State to lead the way, and make a bold move that would send a message nationally. So, I believe this is a tremendously important moment, and the passage of the DREAM Act would do a lot of good for the people of our state and beyond.

A quick few words in Spanish, and then we'll take questions.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, I welcome your questions.

Question: Mr. Mayor, were you able to secure any commitments today? And the second part of the question is, what is your level of frustration at this point with Albany? You're talking about a lack of urgency –

Mayor: Right. No commitments – we obviously have a number of meetings ahead, but no commitments yet today. I'm quite frustrated that issues of such great importance to millions of New Yorkers still have not been addressed. And obviously there are some talking about the possibility of not addressing those issues, which I think would have horrible consequences. I think if there isn't action on mayoral control of education, if there isn't action on rent regulation, if there isn't action on 421-a, people all over the city, all over the state, will look at Albany and once again conclude Albany is not interested in serving the needs of the people. It would be an irresponsible act. I think this is a chance for Albany to take a step in the right direction, make some common sense moves that would actually help people's lives, and restore some faith in what happens here.

Question: Mr. Mayor, I'm wondering if you could just talk a little about the meeting with the Assembly Democrats. I know they're getting some opposition within the conference to your plan regarding 421-a. They had been talking about a prevailing wage. Have they seem to come around at all to your way of looking at it in terms of boosting more affordable housing?

Mayor: We didn't have a straw poll. You know, it was an opportunity to present my views and take some questions. But I've made clear that the creation of affordable housing is absolutely necessary for the future of our city. Again, we're losing affordable units all the time. People are being priced out of their neighborhoods. We can't go on this way. So we have to have a very robust affordable housing plan. I believe in supporting union labor in every way we can, but when it comes to affordable housing we have to do the construction in an affordable manner. We can't do that with prevailing wage. I've been very straightforward with the building trades about that. We want to maximally involve them, but it will have to be at a wage level that's appropriate for affordable housing.

Question: Would you agree that there's sort of a – there's kind of strange bedfellows there – as you sort of mentioned – between you and the Real Estate Board that you are of one mind on your 421-a proposal?

Mayor: Well, I actually would say it is the product of very clearly draw lines. You know, when I ran for office I made very clear that there was going to be a new day in the relationship between the city government and the real estate community. We were going to demand a lot more. We were going to drive a much harder bargain. You saw that in the first rezoning actions and land-use actions we took. I think our friends at the Real Estate Board have gotten the memo that this is the way things are going to be. This is what the public wants. So it does

not surprise me when we said, look, here's a program that just be reformed. The taxpayer must get more from it. We must create more affordable housing, and we're not comfortable with condos being a part of this program anymore. We think it's important that those who have done well provide some of the revenue we need to create affordable housing. I think there was a clear understanding in the real estate community that that was a new consensus in our city, and something I would work for very, very intensely. And I think they also understand that if we're going to actually keep building in our city, including the affordable housing efforts that they do support and that are often are mixed into other development efforts, that these changes were going to be necessary. So, unusual? Sure. You know – not something we've seen before, but I think it's the product of several years now of setting down a marker. And I think it will be important to the ability to win on this issue because obviously the real estate community is given a lot of credence up here.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Could we do – back there and then – go ahead.

Question: [inaudible] Governor Cuomo. You said earlier that you don't feel like he's being enough of a leader at the end of the session. Did you express that to him? And what was his reaction?

Mayor: I always speak plainly with the governor. We've known each other a long time. You know, I've told him the people of New York City are depending on it and we need to hear his strong voice.

Question: Do you feel that he's been lacking so far?

Mayor: I just – I'm saying at this point it's quite clear we're not where we need to be. I feel a sense of urgency, although I am the first to say there's still plenty of time on the clock. I think we need his leadership. But I'm saying it to both him and the senate, we need action. The Assembly has acted on two of our three most important priorities. That's a good sign. I commend the Assembly. There's been action, but we need to see the other bodies move.

Question: The governor himself has indicted that the political turmoil we've seen here in Albany this year might make straight extenders much more practical with little time left. Are you in your conversations with the governor and with lawmakers getting the sense that there's an appetite to make the kind of changes that you're talking about?

Mayor: I think leadership requires taking responsibility. I think the notion that there's not an appetite is something I reject, meaning I understand it's been a rather unusual situation the last year in Albany. But the people's issues don't go away. We're talking about millions and millions of people waiting for Albany to act. And I'm not going to let Albany off the hook. I don't think they're going to let Albany off the hook. In the end, we all feel bad about what's happened here, but new leadership is in place and that leadership has to act. By the way, the Assembly went through its crisis but they still managed to pass major pieces of legislation. So no, I don't think that's a reasonable excuse. I think we've got mayoral control of education – that's a consensus position certainly in our city, again, across the ideological spectrum. I think it's been proven time and time again around the country. It's time to renew it for a legitimate period of time that allows us to do the work we need to do on behalf of 1.2 million children. If it's not renewed, we're going to go back to chaos and corruption. It's as simple as that. I've experienced it firsthand. You know, I saw what that system was like. I was involved. It was a horribly dysfunctional system. It was ripe with corruption. People worked long and hard to change it. I give Mayor Bloomberg credit for his strong advocacy for change. I give the legislature credit for making that decision. They should have the courage in their convictions to continue mayoral at a reasonable timeframe. I think on 421-a, again, as you said before, here we have something that's been agreed on by a progressive mayor of New York City and the real estate community. That's not every day – that should be a good sign to people it's the kind of smart balanced plan that everyone can buy into. Rent regulation – I don't know many issues that affect over 2 million people anywhere in this country where folks in the state capital think they could ignore the issue. So no, there's no excuse for inaction.

Question: Mr. Mayor –

Mayor: [inaudible] we'll do right to left – hold on.

Question: Would you qualify a simple extender without making any of the changes you've proposed or [inaudible] as an inaction?

Mayor: I'm sorry, on which one?

Question: 421-a and –

Mayor: 421-a – if it is not reformed, we will be wasting taxpayer money and we will lose the opportunity to create more affordable housing. 421-a was originally created – very impressive ringtone.

[Laughter]

Mayor: 421-a was originally created in the years in the 70s when New York City was having a horrible time economically, when it was very hard to attract investment and development. And you know, it was an arguable case then. Over the last couple of decades it's become increasingly clear, we do not need to subsidize typical real estate development – we shouldn't. And we've made some reforms in the past years, but not enough. This plan would literally say if the developer's going to take advantage of that tax credit, they must create affordable housing not just on yesterday's standard, but on a higher standard, both in terms of percentage of units and how far down the income scale they reach. Or they can take a pass on the tax credit and they taxpayer does not have to get involved. It's a reform. We will get more bang for the buck for the taxpayer – more affordable housing created. We'll stop providing a tax credit for luxury condos, which is outrageous. It's a reform that's long overdue. So if we fail to make the reform, we'll be giving away – the state of New York will be giving away taxpayer dollars for no apparent reason, and we'll get a lot less affordable housing.

Phil Walzak: One or two more, guys.

Mayor: Hold on. Hold on [inaudible] we'll give them a couple more. Go ahead.

Question: Mr. Mayor –

Mayor: Woah – woah, right here. Did you have your hand up?

Question: I did.

Mayor: Go.

Question: When you spoke – when you said this to the governor – the real talk – what was his response?

Mayor: I don't ever like to come out of a private conversation and characterize the other person. You can ask him.

Question: We haven't seen him in months.

Mayor: Well, you'll have to ask him about that.

[Laughter]

Mayor: You'll have to ask him about that. But again, I think he heard me loud and clear, we'll see by his actions what he concluded.

Question: Mr. Mayor –

Mayor: Hold on – I'll get to [inaudible]

Question: Considering the limited amount of time and the turmoil [inaudible]. What sort of recourse do you have though if Flanagan, for example, decides that he doesn't want to do anything other than an extender? What sort of practical tools do you have in your toolbox?

Mayor: Well it's a democracy. It's a democracy. So first – look, I'm very hopeful that there's going to be a good and respectful relationship with Senator Flanagan. As majority leader, you know, he and I had our first conversation by phone. It was a very constructive conversation. I look forward to meeting with him later. Obviously, I particularly appreciate the fact that he's devoted a lot of his time in public service to education. And that's, I think, an area where we can find some common ground. But I think the bigger point here is the reputation of Albany is on the line – all the different forces in Albany. And I do think it's a moment of sensitivity. I think a lot of problems have occurred up here. I think people all over the state are disappointed in Albany. And it's a chance for Albany to turn the page and do some things that will actually restore faith and energize people again. And also, again, the numbers speak for themselves – 2 million-plus renters in New York City, 1.2 million school children. Let's think about their parents and extended family. That's going to be two, three, four million people easy. I don't know many leaders of the executive or legislative branch anywhere that ignore millions and millions of people and think it will not have a consequence. So, I believe we are in a functioning democracy. And the voices of the people will be felt very intensely here.

Question: Mr. Mayor, given that these programs – rent control, mayor control – have been renewed somewhat regularly, what makes you think that they would not be renewed this year? I mean, what do you – do you think there's a real likelihood that they –

Mayor: Look, I think mayoral control – established with a real consensus and then renewed for substantial periods of time twice now – and again, I think the jury is back. I don't think it's experimental. I think it's a fixed asset now. I think it's the only system that works, and the alternative is the school board system that obviously was tremendously problematic for New York City and for a lot of other places in the state. So, I think it's time to, in fact, increase the amount of time it's renewed for or to make it permanent. But I think any option of either not renewing it, which would lead again to chaos and corruption – and I mean those words literally – or to renew it even for just one year, which makes it a political football – takes something that is a consensus view – bipartisan consensus view in New York City and turns it into a political football each year. I don't think that's something the public will accept. I don't think the business community will accept it. I don't think the editorial boards will accept it. I think, in terms, of rent control, a simple extender takes us backwards because we're hemorrhaging affordable units. We have to strengthen rent control. As I said, on 421-a, a simple extender means we're burning up taxpayer money.

Question: But do you – what's the likelihood – are you afraid that they would let the [inaudible] expire without even –

Mayor: I don't – it's not about being either hopeful or afraid. I feel tremendous urgency. I know a lot of other people around the city and around the state feel urgency. It's our job to make that clear to folks here in Albany. And I think they will feel the increasing demand for action.

Question: Mr. Mayor, you said that mayoral control is the consensus position but there's a lot of parents in New York City who say that changes – they don't feel as though their voices appropriately heard and we saw a proposal coming out this week from parents asking to, like, restructure the panel so that they are able to appoint more members and the mayor would have less appointees. Another one is to give the CEC's – local [inaudible] final approving of colocations. Are you open, in addition to extending or making mayoral control permanent, some of these proposals?

Mayor: When I say it's a consensus position, I mean, even as you phrase it, begins with the renewing of mayor control. The alternative – I want to start at the beginning – mayoral control versus going back to the old school board and the local school boards. There's no question in my mind – the vast majority of New Yorkers believe in mayoral control as the core concept. And again, it cuts across ideological lines, party lines, business, labor, etcetera. As to how parents should be involved properly and listened to in our school system – I'm a public school parent for the next three weeks. I've had, I think, 14 years under my belt or 15 years under my belt as a public school parent. I absolutely believe in the voices of parents being important to all we do. Our chancellor believes in it. She's spent a lot of time with parents all over the city, with our community education councils, with the parent members of our central PEP. There are lots of methodologies through which we listen to the views of parents. And we changed our teacher contract explicitly to ensure that teachers, every week, are engaging parents on a regular basis. So I think this – our mayor control is very, very different from the previous administrations in terms of the engagement with parents. No, I do not think CEC's should have veto power over colocations. I think that would be a mistake. But I do think there's many good and constructive ways to hear the voices of parents, and we're doing that right now. Last –

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Again, I think mayor control as it is now is working. Last call.

Phil Walzak: Last quick one please.

Mayor: Okay, wait. Okay, two, go.

Question: Following up on that question. Senator Klein has his own proposal for mayor control that would give charter school parents a seat on the –

Mayor: Again, I think our current approach is working and I think it's very inclusive.

Question: Mayor, one of the things you wanted to [inaudible] criminal justice reform. Calvin Butts was on Inside City Hall last night and made some remarks. He's been disappointed in your efforts in that. He says he's been trying to get meetings. I'm wondering –

Mayor: He had a meeting weeks ago. And I've made very clear to him the extensive efforts that we're undertaking to reduce the population at Rikers Island, what we've done with reduction of stop and frisk, with reduction of marijuana arrests, retraining our police force, body cameras. I think he should get more up to date on the facts and he might feel differently. Thank you.

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