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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES FIRST-IN-THE-NATION GOAL
TO DIVEST FROM FOSSIL FUELS**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you, everyone. Everyone I am so glad so many people are here, so many people who are a part of this movement over the years to change the way we do things in this city and I hope soon in this whole country.

Let me tell you, Damaris, first of all, I'm so moved by what you have devoted yourself to – and so many other people on the Lower East Side who were there for their neighbors. I remember those days after Sandy in the Lower East Side. I remember how desperate it was. I remember how much fear and confusion there was and this was a tragedy that was wrought by the actions of the fossil fuel companies.

Let's be clear. That's where it came from and it hit home here in New York City and it was devastating but people stood up and supported each other.

Let's thank Damaris for all she does and all the people in the Lower East Side has done.

[Applause]

And Damaris said it was a wakeup call. If you lived through those days in New York City, you knew that something fundamental had changed, that we could never see climate change as an abstraction. If there was any deniers in New York City before Sandy, I don't think there were any deniers after Sandy because it was abundantly clear what climate change was doing to this city – one of the great coastal cities of the world.

By the way we also feel a tremendous deep solidarity with the people of Puerto Rico and to see the devastation of Hurricane Maria in a place that is almost like the sixth borough to us, we feel that very, very deeply.

So, the jury has come back. We all know it in this room. Climate change is real. It's a painful, horrible reality but today we talk about how we break the cycle, how we as a city, how we as a people, how we 8.5 million strong will no longer participate in a system that endangers our very own people. And it's time to do something different in New York City, isn't it?

[Applause]

We're going after those who have profited and what a horrible disgusting way to profit – a way that has put so many people's lives in danger. It's time that they are held accountable. It's time that things change in the way we do business because the way we've been doing it up to now does not make sense anymore.

Now, I want to thank everyone who's here. You're going to hear from a number of people here today. I particularly want to thank our City Comptroller Scott Stringer who's been a great partner in this work.

[Applause]

And we're going to talk about our divestment and we're also going to talk about the litigation that we will undertake. And I want to thank the lead on the litigation and the person we depend on to go into court and win on behalf of people, our Corporation Counsel Zach Carter. Thank you Zach for all you do.

[Applause]

I also want to thank the Director of my Office of Pensions and Finance, and the Chief Pension Investment Advisor for the Mayor's Office John Adler. Thank you –

[Applause]

Our colleagues in elected office sitting behind me who have been great strong voices in favor of these changes, State Senator Liz Krueger. Thank you.

[Applause]

And two dynamic progressive new members of the City Council, Council member Carlina Rivera, thank you.

[Applause]

Council member Justin Brannan, thank you.

[Applause]

Also a very special thank you to a great former mayor – former Mayor of Toronto, now head of the North American C40 climate leadership group David Miller, thank you so much for your work.

[Applause]

All that applause was heartfelt but the next applause should be thunderous which is for all the advocates and activists who brought us to today.

[Applause]

Rome wasn't built in a day but it is being built now so well done everybody.

So let's talk about that wakeup call one more time. Sandy took 44 lives here in New York City, unleashed \$19 billion worth of devastation in a matter of hours. That is the face of climate change. That's what it means in human and real terms. That's why we have to do everything we can to stop it.

This building we're in here – this building bore the brunt. You see how close it is to the water. This building, even though there were steel doors outside and there was sand bags and all sorts of protection that we thought would mean something, this building was left with 20 feet of standing water when Sandy was over – 20 feet.

It took years to fix the damage in just one building. So let's be clear – this is a fight we're in the middle of right now. Make no mistake, we're fighting for our lives and we can't depend on anyone else to do for us. This city is standing up and saying we will take our own action to protect our people. We're not waiting. We're using our tools, our power because we can make a big difference.

And we hope that when we act others will follow because they see the biggest city in this country decisively moving forward.

[Applause]

Last night the City of New York filed a lawsuit in federal court against five investor-owned fossil fuel companies most responsible for global warming. They are ExxonMobil, BP, ConocoPhillips, Shell, and Chevron.

The City of New York is taking on these five giants because they are the central actors, they are the first ones responsible for this crisis, and they should not get away with it anymore.

[Applause]

We are seeking billions of dollars in damages to protect us against extreme weather and rising seas and to fortify New York City against future storms.

And I want to be clear about this Sandy may have been seen as an act of God but let's be clear, it didn't happen by accident – it didn't happen by accident.

For decades big oil ravaged the environment and big oil copied big tobacco. They used a classic cynical playbook. They denied and denied and denied that their product was lethal. Meanwhile they spent a lot of time hooking society on that lethal product, and think about how cynical and

dangerous that is knowing the damage that was being caused, having all the evidence in the world, and yet using all the tools at their disposal to deepen the crisis for their own profit.

Were they punished for these destructive actions? No.

They were rewarded to the tune of trillions of dollars. Well, today the nation's biggest city says no more. They won't be rewarded anymore. It's time for them to start paying for the damage they've done.

[Applause]

It's time for big oil to take responsibility for the devastation they have wrought. And that alone will take us forward in a powerful way to know that we will use the full power of the court system to get justice but that's not enough if we don't act to change our own approach to investment.

And this city has a lot of investments. Comptroller will tell you that. This city is a big player in the investment world. And so today we announce that the City of New York will divest from fossil fuel reserve owner companies.

[Applause]

Approximately 190 companies. And if you want to know what that means in dollar terms – we expect to divest up to \$5 billion in investments and that sends a message.

[Applause]

We will be the first major American city to take this action. No major American city and for that matter no American state has taken this decisive action. It is possible because there was a partnership on this issue amongst the stakeholders.

You're going to hear from the Comptroller – his role was absolutely decisive – and the trustees as well and our colleagues in labor and of course our Public Advocate. Everyone worked together to make the change.

[Applause]

And I'll introduce our Comptroller in a moment but I wanted to say I guarantee you Scott Stringer thinks every single day about how to invest wisely on behalf of the people of New York and how to protect our pensioners and there is no contradiction between fulfilling those responsibilities effectively and protecting our Earth at the same time.

[Applause]

And here's a crucial point and it makes sense both from the perspective of the environment and the perspective of investment – we must stop investing in the fuel of yesterday, start investing in the fuels of tomorrow.

[Applause]

This is one of a number of steps we are taking to address climate change.

We will, in New York City, reach an 80 percent reduction in emissions by 2050. We are committed to it. We are accelerating our efforts. We will honor the Paris Agreement regardless of the actions of our national government. We will mandate that major buildings cut their emissions or experience major fines if they don't.

[Applause]

And we never make the mistake of waiting on our national government to act when it's unwilling to. This city is acting. We want other cities to act. We want other states to act.

Together we can make a huge difference. And we know New York has a special responsibility. We know we – and we say this as New Yorkers with pride but also with humility – we're a beacon to the world. People watch New York City.

That means we have to get it right. We have to show it can be done. And today we take that step. We're going to lead in this city. We're going to lead the fight against climate change as if our lives depend on it because they do.

[Applause]

A few quick words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, I want to thank our Comptroller for his vision, for his leadership, for feeling this issue personally. He feels it as a public servant. He also feels it as a father of two young children. And what he's doing today is going to send a message all over this country to a lot of people whose hands are on the trigger of those investments who will be making decisions in the months and years to come, when they see that Scott Stringer has acted it's going to speed the day when others follow.

Let's thank our Comptroller, Scott Stringer.

[Applause]

[...]

To my brother and sister activists, persistence is a virtue.

[Laughter]

Proven once again. I want to introduce my Senior Director for Climate Policy and Programs, Dan Zarrilli who is now going to go over with you some of the key features of the steps we're going to take.

Senior Director of Climate Policy and Programs Daniel Zarrilli: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. It's a real pleasure to be here and it's also my pleasure to say thank you to our host for having us in here today, Bob Townley the Executive Director of Manhattan Youth.

This is really – please applause for our host.

[Applause]

This is truly a historic day in New York City's fight against climate change and I'm certainly proud to share the stage here with such amazing leaders who are committed to this fight. And I also want to call out Eric Goldstein the Senior Attorney and New York City Environment Director for the Natural Resources Defense Council. Thank you, Eric.

[Applause]

And Loren Blackford the President of the Sierra Club Board for being with us here today. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

Let's talk plainly, the burning of fossil fuels is the single largest contributor to human-caused climate change period. This simple fact was denied and buried for decades by fossil fuel companies. Today New York City is ending that decades long pattern of deception and denial by holding these fossil fuel companies to account for the damage they have caused and we're taking prudent steps to protect the financial interest of New Yorkers.

What does this look like? Well, first we begin divesting our pension funds from fossil fuel reserve owners – those companies that own the oil and gas on the ground. This is a case where the prudent action to protect city pensions also lines up perfectly with good social policy to fight climate change.

Fossil Fuel securities have consistently underperformed the market in recent years and the outlook for fossil fuel investment continues to be poor. In total, the city's five pension funds hold roughly \$5 billion of securities across nearly 190 fossil fuel reserve owners.

Now, the two largest pension funds, NYCERS and teachers retirement system, together represent approximately two-thirds of that total. And by working with the trustees here today NYCERS and teachers will pursue divestment immediately consistent with prudent practice and in line with their fiduciary responsibilities of course.

And this involved many steps. There's going to be additional analysis. We're going to have to pursue the trustee resolutions and ultimately the actual process of selling the securities. The goal is to complete this divestment process as soon as possible and by the end of 2022.

The remaining three funds are encouraged to begin that process of divestment as quickly as is practical as well.

Make no mistake, this move is the single – is one of the most significant divestment efforts in the world to date.

Second, we've filed suit against the five investor-owned fossil fuel companies that have contributed to climate change and I'll repeat those again – ExxonMobil, BP, ConocoPhillips, Shell, and Chevron.

These companies knew as far back as the 80s and perhaps earlier that burning fossil fuels would have ruinous impacts on the planet's atmosphere and that it would change our climate, exposing the globe to sea level rise, increased heat, and severe storms.

While the impacts of that climate change are no longer theoretical, it's not just happening far away, it's here and it's now.

Seas have risen, temperatures have increased – we're already spending billions to protect this city and much more will be needed to [inaudible] to protect New Yorkers. And that's why the city's lawsuit, filed last night in federal court, is seeking billions in damages to ensure that our city will be able to withstand these impacts.

We know this is a tough fight. It could extend over several years but the facts and the law are clearly on our side and we intend to vigorously pursue our claims and secure relief.

With these efforts, we're taking the largest combined action by any city or state to confront the growing climate crisis, to work for climate justice, and to demonstrate the global leadership necessary to win this fight against climate change and against fossil fuels and the damage they have caused. Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be here today. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

[Applause]

Mayor: Thank you.

Now I want you to hear from some of the folks who sounded this alarm earliest, who spoke most passionately for the change – sorry I got to turn that on – some of the folks who sounded the alarm earliest, who spoke most passionately for this change.

Remember social change is made from the grassroots up, not from the top down. And it starts with voices who point out a place that we never thought of going before and show us the way.

And one of the strongest and the loudest, one of the great environmental activists of our time Bill McKibben.

[Applause]

[...]

Mayor: We're going to take questions on this announcement.

Yes?

Question: Have you specified an amount that you're seeking to recover? And best case if you recover that amount tomorrow does it become general revenue, or is it going to be set aside exclusively for remediation in communities like this one?

Mayor: So, I'm going to start on that – any type of litigation question I think it would be good if Zach Carter came up, and Dan if you just sub out for him for a moment on any litigation questions. So he will add or adjust to anything I say.

Have we specified an amount? No. By definition it would be in the billions. Specific focus is on addressing the impact of climate change and protecting ourselves going forward. We have a \$20 billion plan already underway, but we know the need is much greater than that. So that would be the focus of the damage payments we receive.

Want to add anything?

Corporate Counsel Zachary Carter: No, that pretty much sums it up. The –

Mayor: Get the microphone closer.

Corporate Counsel Carter: Sure. Certainly the magnitude of past expenditures in dealing with the resiliency issues and remediating from the devastating effects of Sandy has been in the billions. We certainly forecast that similar expenditure will be necessary going forward. There's no explicit amount specified in the lawsuit, but that's an amount to be determined in the course of the litigation.

Question: A couple of question, again on the litigation – lawsuits tend to take a very long time, so I'm wondering if you have any sense of how long this will play out? I know you just filed it, but certainly tobacco lawsuits took a very long time. Is there – how much a parallel is there and how long do you see this going forward?

Corporate Counsel Carter: I don't think of it as a parallel. I just think of it as a fact of this kind of litigation is there will be fierce resistance to this lawsuit, and it's going to take a while for it to be resolved.

Mayor: And just a quick comment, and then you continue. I think the tobacco analogy is important. It did take a while for sure, but there was tremendous material positive impact from those lawsuits. There was real damages paid, and those were used to have a very positive impact on public health. I also think everything is connected. The tobacco lawsuits were crucial to changing the public's understanding about tobacco, and one of the great things my predecessor did here with the smoking ban in a number of public areas that we built on – that's directly related to the culture change and the attitude change that those lawsuits helped to foster. So these actions today – both of them – we see as crucial to changing the assumptions. If we no longer assume that the fossil fuel companies are innocent – in fact, if we identify them as guilty – it changes the reality. If we no longer assume we have to invest in them, it changes the reality. And that can spread like wildfire. Continue.

[Applause]

Question: Just to follow up, you know you were a part of the US Conference of Mayors and as you've talked about you're hoping that this sets a precedent for other cities. Have you started any conversations with mayors of other major cities? Is there a potential that anyone could join this lawsuit with the city?

Mayor: I will say at the outset our lawsuit has particular characteristics and Zach can speak to that, but the answer of are we going to encourage others to file their own version? Absolutely. Not only through the US Conference of Mayors but working with C-40, and having C-40 represented here – also a great organization that was fostered by my predecessor Michael Bloomberg. C-40 is a tremendously effective tool, not only for working with US cities but with cities elsewhere. So yeah, we're going to start this process now because of course it was important to prove intention, prove that we were going to put our money where our mouth was as a way to start coalition building. And so that's what we wanted to do first. Now we'll start that effort.

Zach, do you want to speak to the first part or are we good?

Okay – well, but on the first question was – again, I think we may need a little elaboration?

Question: The initial question was on the timing of the lawsuit –

Mayor: Right, on the other – the reason our lawsuit is a little different than what other places may do.

Corporate Counsel Carter: Our – the theory of this lawsuit is it exploits our nuisance laws, and that both in terms of public and private nuisance we believe that's a cause of action that has – that gives up certain strategic advantage in litigation.

Mayor: Okay, yes?

Question: Could the trustees or any of the processes that will begin now on divestment, could they ultimately flop the divestment?

Mayor: I'll start and pass to the comptroller. Right now we know there is a majority in NYCERS – that pension system – and a majority in the teacher's system ready to take this action.

New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer: Anything that we do – any action we take, any proposal we make just like the proposal the mayor and I are going to make tomorrow has to be brought before the trustees and has to be vetted and discussed. I think the mayor made a compelling case in the fact that Michael Mulgrew is here and other trustees that we're talking to – that there really is an energy behind this effort, and we're going to work with the trustees to get this resolution approved on Thursday working with the teachers, working with the Public Advocate, and other trustees to make that case. I'm very confident going forward there's a lot of support within the systems.

Mayor: And those two boards are – comptroller, 2/3rds of city assets in those two boards? Is that right?

Comptroller Stringer: Yes.

Mayor: 60%

Yes, Willie?

Question: [Inaudible] elaborate on it. The mayor is talking [inaudible] fait accompli. My understanding is what's happening now is you begin a study of possible divestment, which then could be acted on. But could you please explain the process?

Comptroller Stringer: So I would disagree that the mayor is characterizing this as a fait accompli. What the mayor has said, I think, is we need to set goals, and we need to – we need to push, there's an urgency of now. And that we have to be prepared to think in a bigger, bolder way. You know, my job as comptroller, sometimes to the chagrin of the mayor on other issues as we can appreciate, I have to be a bit of, you know, the nay-sayer. And the one who makes sure we dot our i's and cross the t's. We know that in our meetings, and so the mayor expects me to play my role as comptroller, but I also have to say a mayor who is willing to challenge the norm and create an opportunity for us to create a pension fund that both meets the fiduciary needs of the retirement security of 350,000 trustees and another 350,000 that will someday – I'm sorry, retirees – and those that will be retirees. We believe we can do both. We can meet the fiduciary needs of our retirees and at the same time we can also recognize that if we don't take some action there's a very good possibility that we're going to be in a position where a lot of these investments will be stranded assets underground that we will never be able to realize. We need to study this for – examine this further. That is what we're doing with our trustees. We are going to begin a process. It's a process that I think is responsible, reasonable, and I can assure people that we will do this through the lens of being a fiduciary. And I said in my remarks this is a journey. It's complex. It really hasn't been done on this level before, and we are going to work and report back to people in the city who care about this.

Question: [Inaudible] you are now starting a study essentially of this issue?

Comptroller Stringer: We are examining the goal of divestment within a five year timeline. We will engage consultants. We will discuss this with the trustees on Thursday, and we will develop a plan.

Mayor: I want to just – I'd like to jump in with one point and then to Michael. The phrase "where there's a will, there's a way." Everyone is ready to do it. Everyone wants to do it. The comptroller just made a crucial point. These investments – not only do we believe that they facilitate a system that's very bad for the Earth, we believe they are decreasingly valuable. The very point the comptroller made – an industry whose assets are not going to be reachable ultimately. So of course there's a formal process. Of course there will be studies, votes, etc. But the people who are the decision makers have already decided the direction we want to go in.

Mulgrew: We started our process already on fossil fuels two years ago, but we've been – at times throughout our history the teacher's retirement system has divested from certain industries. It goes all the way back to when we first – we were the first pension fund to divest from South Africa under apartheid. And just recently, our most recent one was under the gun manufacturers. We know how to do this work. We believe we are good citizens, but the trustees have the ultimate responsibility, and they know how to do this work. The members of the United Federation of Teachers passed a resolution over two years ago that said we wanted our trustees to start the process of looking at the possibility of divesting, and we're pretty clear that we can meet that goal. But they do their work very responsibly. They're very good at it. They get a lot of outside people looking at every little thing they do, and they are more than happy to move forward with this process.

Comptroller Stringer: And let me – can I just also mention in the last four years we have divested our holdings from coal and we went through a process. We divested from private prisons and went through a process, so I just want to associate what Michael is saying. We have some experience in this.

Mayor: Amen.

Okay, who's back – down and right?

Question: [Inaudible] for the comptroller – you identified up to \$5 billion worth of funds. First question, how do you anticipate reallocating these funds? And second, you identified up to 190 companies. Are you engaged with these companies? Are you talking with management?

Comptroller Stringer: It's 194 companies, and look, we have an engagement governance practice in our office. And we have had success with that, but I think you can also engage but you can also divest, and that's what we're going to examine in a very serious way. I can tell you that there are different strategies. You know we do a lot of work on diversity – corporate board diversity where we're now part of a coalition we built to integrate the corporate boards that we have investments in. I think today is about taking a much bolder stance to really start moving these companies that are just resisting our efforts.

And we also want to make sure that we have a sustainable portfolio that will meet the retirement needs of our people.

Mayor: Okay, who else over here? Gloria?

Question: Comptroller, this is a little bit of a change in position for you, I believe. It also puts you at odds with the State Comptroller who thinks we should remain invested in these companies. Can you just talk a little bit about why you had a change of position and whether or not you have a disagreement with the State Comptroller?

Comptroller Stringer: So, first things is I haven't changed my position or my approach. We have been looking at this for many years. The truth is we can't – as a fiduciary, I have to be the one at the table that takes a slower approach. Many advocates who I praise in the private prison efforts for example, came to me and said can we make history on private prison divestment?

I came back two years later and said we have gone through a process with the trustees. We have looked at this through the lens of being a fiduciary and within two years were able to do that.

We divested from coal when I first became Comptroller. My role in this has to be – you know I can't always go to the rally and say to the crowd, we're going to do this. My role is to work with our retirees, with our labor leaders, so that we can come to relationships.

I get paid to protect the retirement security and at the same time think broadly about this.

In terms of the State Comptroller – he has a view but I also have a good relationship. We work very closely together and I think the both of us are going to continue to have a conversation about how we work together on these efforts.

And look I'm very pleased that the Mayor and I have come together and said let's lead on this issue in an international way. And we're going to reach out to treasurers and comptrollers around the country just like the Mayor is going to talk to his elected colleagues, and we're going to continue to work with advocates on this issue.

Mayor: Okay, going back. Yoav?

Question: Mr. Mayor, I have a question on each initiative. On the pension fund, you said actually that the City will divest from these companies. The press release says it's a goal. I'm just wondering, you know, since you are just starting the process of studying the issue, if it turns out that it's not fiscally responsible perhaps at this moment, do you still – do you still intend for the City to divest in these companies?

Mayor: Yes. No, I'm very comfortable with where we're going. You just heard about the previous divestment efforts that were thoughtfully handled all of them for powerful reason – fighting apartheid in South Africa, getting out of private prisons, getting out of the coal industry.

These were all the right thing to do for all sorts of moral reasons but they all had to be put through the prism of our fiduciary responsibility.

And each and every time a path was found. There are many other important and good things to invest in and I would dare say given again what we're seeing in the fossil fuel industry, there are many better, smarter investments – smarter long term investments especially on behalf of our pensioners –

Unknown: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Thank you. Good example. That's the – housing is an area you will always need more of.

[Laughter]

So, I don't have any concern here. There has to be a formal process. I am convinced that process will yield the outcome that we seek which is to get us out of the fossil fuel reserve companies in the next five years period.

Question: So, where are you getting that confidence on what the results will be? You often say on legal matters that you're not a lawyer. In this case you seem to be saying that you know what the financially [inaudible] –

Mayor: Because this has been studied for two years now. My lead investment advisor has been working on this, John Adler, Comptroller's team, the Public Advocate's team, Mr. Mulgrew's team. Everyone's been looking at this and have become increasingly convinced by the facts that this can and will be done.

So, it's based on real research.

[Applause]

Question: Quick question on the litigation. Is the City going to be required not only to prove that climate change is this but also that these five companies are specifically responsible?

Mayor: As I turn to Zach Carter, now I will not be a lawyer.

[Laughter]

I think we're going to win the argument that climate change exists. I feel really confident about that one and I think it's pretty clear these five companies had something to do it.

So, go ahead, Zach.

Corporation Counsel Carter: I think that there is substantial evidence that's based on materials that are in the company's own files that the scientist they depended on clearly had advised them

that fossil fuel production at the rate that they were producing it and exploring and unearthing it, had a direct impact and potentially catastrophic impact on the environment.

So, I don't think that's going to be a matter that's much in dispute based on the evidence that's already available.

Mayor: Wait, who hasn't gotten a chance yet? Okay, Erin.

Question: Two things. First of all, just to clarify on the five funds [inaudible] the other three [inaudible]?

Mayor: Wait, say that louder.

Question: The other three, you had mentioned that two of [inaudible] other three, are you unclear on whether they have [inaudible] –

Mayor: We're going to be having those conversations. I'm sorry – we're going to be having those conversations obviously starting with the biggest to constitute a clear majority of our investments made sense and we had strong quick agreement there. But the Comptroller can speak to the others as well.

Comptroller Stringer: So, we have five separate pension funds and again we are bringing a resolution for tomorrow and we will begin engaging with all of our trustees and again this is part of the process. We can take anyone after the presser who wants to just talk to us about the process, we'd be happy to put our professional staff on the phone so you can understand this. But it's not something that we're not going to engage everybody starting tomorrow.

Question: Okay, technically, Mr. Mayor, you mentioned the companies [inaudible] addiction or dependence among the public on [inaudible] products. Do you have any plans to try to reduce your own fossil fuel usage particularly driving?

Mayor: I've already said that first of all in terms of the home I own, we've been doing that steadily and will continue to. In terms of the car I drive, it's a hybrid. The City – as you know, we're moving the whole City car fleet to electric. There's all sorts of things that I'm doing personally and the City is doing – we'll continue to do. So, that's the answer to that.

Question: [Inaudible] I'm just asking, in the interim, wouldn't a congestion pricing plan help reduce emissions while encouraging more people to take mass transit?

Mayor: I think I've spoken to this issue many, many times, and I respect the all sorts of different views on this. I've been clear about why the plans I've seen to-date I don't think are fair. I think the underlying motivation is very good, but I don't think the plans are fair. If there are new plans, I'll look at them. There has not been a new plan from Albany yet. So, we're here today to talk about some things that we know will have a really big impact, but I'm always willing to look at other models if they're put forward. Yes?

Question: To that point, on congestion pricing, can you see [inaudible] Manhattan as a way to prevent climate change?

Mayor: I think reducing car-usage for sure is a way to fight climate change, and I think there's a lot of different things we have to do on that front. We have to, first and foremost, improve the number of options, and the quality, and the amount of mass transit. We're doing that with NYC Ferry, with Select Bus Service, with CitiBike, with Light Rail to come. All of those pieces are crucial. And I think what we've done with Vision Zero has been done for safety, but it's also a reminder to people that if you're going to drive, you have to drive responsibly. And some people might think differently about driving if they have to drive at a responsible speed. So, we have to do all of those things. That was a larger life truth there. Look, the notion of limiting car usage into Manhattan – again, there's definitely arguments for it. The only way I get comfortable with that is if I see a plan that I think is equitable – haven't seen that yet.

Question: Have you heard anything back from the fossil fuel companies regarding the lawsuit?

Mayor: We just started – Zach, anything since last night?

Corporation Council Carter: We filed last night.

Mayor: Just last night – so, the answer is no.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: I like the way you think.

[Laughter]

Question: I guess my question is, you mentioned at the outset, this building was flooded during Hurricane Sandy [inaudible] 100 year storm seem to be coming every five years, this building and this community might get swamped at least twice more before there's a successful outcome on either of these [inaudible]. [Inaudible] nearer term that's going to save [inaudible]

Mayor: You know, the \$20 billion plan that we're undertaking right now is the best tool we have in the here and now. That's been moving steadily all over the five boroughs, and it's, you know, made us safer than we were five years ago. Are we where we need to be? No, we have a lot more to do. I would also argue at the end of that \$20 billion, we're going to have to do a lot more. And what should be happening now, separate from everything we're discussing here – there should be a federal vision for protecting coastal America. Right? Real simple idea – the federal government should be investing to protect the places where a huge percentage of the population is. There is not even the beginning of a federal plan to protect coastal America. We talk about infrastructure – we'll see if anything ever comes for the infrastructure discussions. But how many horrible storms have ravaged huge swaths of the American population without even the semblance of a proactive federal response? So, we need to fight for that. Bluntly, I think it's going to take some changes in the federal dynamic to get us to that, but we'll fight for it either way. And if you take the combination of what we're spending now, what we should fight for on the federal level that

someday I believe would be reachable, what we hope to achieve through litigation – all of these pieces add up. And, you know, I think every city, every state is going to have to, down the line, constantly invest to the amount it can because this is going to be a problem that's going to be with us for decades.

Last call on this announcement – first, way back. Media questions only – I can't see everyone well enough, so media questions only. Media question? No? Okay, media questions only – Willie.

Question: [Inaudible]

Corporation Council Carter: Yes, sometime today if you call the office.

Mayor: Thank you. And last call – did you have another? Yes?

Question: In terms of this [inaudible] there's [inaudible]

Mayor: It's a very intelligent and forward-looking question. I think I can say, morally, we know exactly what we feel about what these companies have done to the earth. I think it's well documented. We – I don't ever want to see this city feel that kind of dependency. So, one, they should make up for what they've done to us. Two, the real solution for us and for so many other places in the country is a federal vision to address the issue. There's no private source of funding that possibly replaces an actual federal plan with real resources. So, I think we can work on both at the same time.

Alright, thank you. We're going to move now to other off-topic questions.

[...]

Mayor: Okay, everybody – other topics. Grace?

Question: It was announced today that [inaudible] chief of staff [inaudible] and she's the wife of Jonathan Rosen, who is one of the companies that represents [inaudible] with business with the City. Do you have concerns about that and how she [inaudible]?

Mayor: I do not have any concerns. She has been the chief of staff to the budget director for the previous four years – obviously, a crucial, central position that touches all aspects of City government. She has handled that reality with full understanding of the ethical standards that need to be applied. Eric can get you the details on the specific ways she's handled her post up to now, but we've been careful to ensure that whether there's anything that might require recusal that there will be recusal.

Question: Will she [inaudible] –

Mayor: Again, any time where it's appropriate to recuse, she will recuse. But I don't want to speculate on how that is put together. There will be a recusal process in her new role.

Question: And when she does recuse herself, will that be publicly disclosed?

Mayor: I don't know. That's something we've been doing up to now. We can see if that's something that makes sense to do. But, the point is, there will be a clear standard that will be applied.

Question: [Inaudible] national conversation about sexual harassment and assault in the workplace, last month some Council members discussed [inaudible] legislation that would require City agencies to disclose those complaints they get. Do you have any plans to audit [inaudible] complaints of sexual assault in the workplace and do you have a sense of how many complaints there were in 2017? Did they go up? Did they go down? Did they stay the same?

Mayor: Okay, I just want to ask everyone, as we embark on a new term, try and do one question set, and another question set just so I can remember them all. I will not cut you off, I just need to hear them. On the first one – I have not seen the legislation. Obviously, I agree with the intent of the legislation. I haven't seen it, so I'd have to see the legislation to know how we're going to handle it. On the second one – no, I do not know of the specifics agency by agency. I am pleased to say this has not been a phenomenon that I have heard coming up in our administration in any significant way, thank God, and it's something we take very, very seriously, and we would address very seriously in each instance. Zach, on the question of how we audit or review – I don't know the answer – maybe you have something to say on that.

Corporation Council Carter: Obviously, the City has sexual harassment policies that apply across all agencies and we have a system of EEO officers that are required to be provided the resources to conduct internal investigations and make reports in all agencies. But beyond that, I can't give you a sense in the aggregate of activity that's moving in one direction or the other.

Mayor: Okay, other questions – okay, let's go way back.

Question: Can you give us a sense of what [inaudible]

Mayor: Say again?

Question: Can you discuss – what will you be discussing in Maine this weekend [inaudible] national effort.

Mayor: No, it's not tied to the effort to support progressive candidates and movements around the country. This is very personal. And I'm paying my own way. My aunt turns 91 today – my aunt Jean Wilhelm – and she is in this amazing city. They call it a city, it's really more of a town called Eastport, Maine – the eastern-most city in the United States of America, for your factual knowledge. And when she moved there, she got very involved in helping to develop and arts center there, and it's an extraordinary facility in this small city. And I wanted to go to be with her after her birthday, and to salute her contributions to the town, and to support the work of this art center that she did so much to help foster. So, this is a labor of love.

Yes?

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: I think, in a good way, the pressure's building on Albany. As you know, the State government gives itself the right to use design-build to save ultimately billions of dollars and move public projects much more quickly. And I think the more the taxpayers understand about this issue, the more they're going to demand that the City have the same right. It's become more and more of a topic of discussion, and I've talked about it with the Governor, the Senate Majority Leader, the Speaker of the Assembly. Everyone knows we consider this a crucial item. So, there's more work to be done, but I can certainly say momentum is building.

Question: There's a lot of trash around the City right now – when can people expect those piles of trash [inaudible]

Mayor: Yeah, the question's absolutely accurate. We had a tough situation between the snow storm, and the holidays, and specific days when pickups weren't happening. We expect it all to be cleared out by the end of this week.

Yes?

Question: Mr. Mayor, can I get your reaction to the charges against Assemblywomen Pamela Harris, specifically the idea that [inaudible] Hurricane Sandy recovery program that was supposed to be going to people in the district.

Mayor: Look, while acknowledging that there always has to be due process, the notion that a elected official would steal from a program intended to help victims of a natural disaster is pretty cynical. So, again, we'll let the due process system carry out its work, but it was pretty shocking.

Question: Mayor, do you have any reaction to the identification of a suspect in the decades-old rape of a woman in Prospect Park [inaudible] in light of [inaudible]

Mayor: Thank God they found the perpetrator, and my understand was that happened with newly available technology. I don't know the history though, so I really can't comment on what happened when the case first came to light.

Any other questions? Yes?

Question: Can you talk [inaudible] sexual harassment question. Would the City be willing to release some sort of list [inaudible] in recent years [inaudible]

Mayor: So, I'm going to turn to Zach on the legal considerations of that. Look, I would say, to begin, I think we have sent a very clear message from the beginning administration – we won't tolerate sexual harassment. And that is about our values, that is about the law. And certainly since the clear majority of the senior leadership positions in this administration are held by

women, there's special focus from that leadership in making sure that no such behavior occurs. And I am, you know, while being always watchful and vigilant, I am happy to say I have not seen that kind of behavior. But in terms of what is appropriate to release, I'm very open to the right kind of transparency, but, Zach, tell us what the ground rules need to be there.

Corporation Council Carter: There's going to be a balance that has to be struck between the kind of transparency that permits the public and the press to assess whether or not government is responding appropriately to allegations of sexual harassment or the sexual misconduct in the workplace, but because of the nature of those kinds of allegations, and because you don't want to see a person who may be the victim of sexual harassment twice victimized – one by the person who's created a hostile work environment, and then the public [inaudible] of having that allegation exposed – if they choose not to make it public. We have to find ways to accomplish both at the same time. And also, frankly, respecting the due process rights of folks who are accused, not all of whom are necessarily going to be guilty of the allegations.

Question: Just to quickly follow up on that, so can the City compile those numbers of complaints – just pure data without any names necessarily associated. In other words, how many employees per agency [inaudible] complaints, how they were adjudicated or not adjudicated? Does the City compile that data currently?

Corporation Council Carter: I think that on an agency-by-agency basis there's a way of compiling that data. But in terms of compiling in a way in which it was systematically reported in the aggregate for the entire City, as opposed to an agency-by-agency basis, I don't believe we can.

Question: Mr. Mayor, last month you signed a law [inaudible] online voter registration system by 2019. [Inaudible] violation of State law [inaudible]

Mayor: I've spoken to the Governor about it. I applaud the fact he put it in the State of the State. We've got a lot of work to do in the legislature. It has to be considered an urgent priority, and I think the way we make it an urgent priority is by building a movement to achieve it over the next six months, and we're going to be actively doing that. Change is inevitable on this issue – guarantee it. New York State cannot be at the back of the pack forever. We have to break the back of the resistance in the political class. So, what the action we took locally was to try and create additional pressure, and we also think it's a functionally very important step. As to the reality – we don't do things we don't think – we obviously would not do anything we thought violated State law. Zach, I don't know if you have an initial comment, or you want to follow up. But when we passed that law with the City Council, we believe, of course, it was compliant with State law.

You want to add, or no?

Corporation Council Carter: No.

Mayor: Okay.

Question: Another question for Zach Carter on the sexual harassment issue. [Inaudible] do you [inaudible] quantifying the amount of money [inaudible] settling sexual harassment claims against City employees. Is that something you would publicly release?

Corporation Council Carter: I don't believe that the statistics are classified necessarily that way. It's not impossible to do a review to catalog how many claims are settled and what amounts in that category. But in terms of whether or not they exist in a form right now as I speak, I don't believe so.

Mayor: So, I just want to summarize – and I know you might have a follow-up on the previous question, so I'll come back to you, and then we've got a couple more – we need to examine this whole area of concern and figure out everything we can do. First of all, you're asking – both of you – very pertinent questions, but I want to be clear about – I am not familiar with the specifics about how we handle the personnel issues. I do know we need to make sure the City of New York is doing everything we can to stop sexual harassment in our workplaces – both the City's public workplaces, but also in the private sector. And we need to figure out what is the maximum transparency that we can achieve while respecting confidentiality, due process, etcetera. So, I want to put the affirmative on all of these questions. We want to do more. I think it's fair to say, this City, and the whole nation, have been awoken to the extent of the problem in particular in the last few months. We need to come forward with bigger solutions, and we intend to do that.

Question: Just one quick follow up on electoral reform – good government groups have often said that to make this possible it needs to be funded in the Governor's budget. Have you gotten any indication from the Governor that these initiatives will be part of his budget address?

Mayor: I can't speak for him on that, again he put it in the State of State, you'll have to ask him if he intends to do it through the budget process or not. Again, I am less – I don't mean this to be flip – I'm less concerned about anyone or another actor in Albany on this one.

I'm more concerned with building the kind of movement that becomes irresistible. I think there are so many people in this state who are sick to their stomachs at the notion that it is so hard to vote, that there is two million people in New York state who are eligible and not registered. I mean these are obscene realities that have to be overcome. It's not going to happen top-down, it's going to happen bottom-up and I particularly think the energy that came out Bernie Sanders' campaign and the frustration that so many people felt in the state who were part of that movement, will be crucial to changing this reality.

It's got to be a campaign issue in 2018 in this state. Everybody, I don't care if you are running Assembly or Senate or Governor or Comptroller or anything, needs to be asked will they commit to the package of reforms that the City has put forward, and very similar to some of the ideas the Governor has put forward? We need to all hold people accountable right now, but it will happen, because our current system is absolutely outmoded.

Question: Mayor, when did you – when did the plan to release the results of your monuments commission? And then a follow up on that.

Mayor: Very, very soon. Very, very soon.

Question: When you initially announced it you did it in a tweet with a second tweet that said the first thing removed would be the [inaudible] –

Mayor: And I've said that that was one of the very, very rare instances where my team did not interpret my intent. I thought I had clearly communicated that tweet. It was not accurate at the time.

Question: Much later, you said that –

Mayor: Right.

Question: Why did you not immediately correct that so the public would know that that [inaudible] –

Mayor: Very fair question. I think at the time I just didn't realize it hadn't been corrected. So, I said to people when it was brought to my attention that that was not what I said. I think you are absolutely right, it should have been corrected instantaneously, when we finally realized it hadn't been corrected, we did. Okay.

Question: Mr. Mayor, do you think the Governor has – deserves a challenge from his left in the primary this year?

Mayor: I'm not going to get into the 2018 partisan political dynamics at this point. At some point I will have something say about it, but I don't have anything say about it right now.

Question: Are people coming to you actively to seek your advice on that?

Mayor: Again, I talk to all sorts of people about all sorts of things, but I'm just not getting into the specifics. Because Yoav is so urgently raising his hand, then Gloria will finish. Yoav you seem almost like a puppy dog with this desire to ask this question. Go ahead.

Question: It actually was just a follow up on a few questions. It sounds like you are open to having the City compile statistics regarding allegations of sexual assault within certain [inaudible] –

Mayor: Again, I don't want you to put words in my mouth. I want to put my own words in my own mouth.

We have to address this problem across the board in this city and in this country. I want New York City to do all we can do, both in terms of our own workforce and the private sector workforce. We need to figure out what that is and we obviously need to figure out what the legal requirements are, so we will have more to say on that shortly.

Question: Are you giving any instructions for that to start now?

Mayor: That broad instruction that I just gave to you has certainly been given internally. Yes, Gloria?

Question: [Inaudible] PBA's lawsuit this week regarding the release of body-worn camera footage. [Inaudible] response to it and for you Mr. Mayor as well, them using this 50-a argument. And additionally, is it part of your Albany agenda and do you think – are you going to be doing work to make sure this law gets changed?

Mayor: Yeah, 50-a has to change. It does not provide sufficient transparency. You know, Commissioner O'Neill spoke very clearly last week on the fact that we need to make this change. Commissioner Bratton before him spoke clearly about it, I believe in it, we're going to fight for it. This is another one where we have to create more momentum, there is a whole lot of activists who care about improving police-community relations and care about civil rights. They need to be a part of this and it needs to be a statewide effort and we're going to fight for it now and we're going to keep coming back until we get it done.

I will start on the other issue and pass to Zach, we feel we are on very strong legal footing, the way we have constructed our body-camera initiative and it necessarily requires transparency, and that transparency as you've seen already I think has been very important for the people of this city. And we do not believe legal claims being made by the PBA have merit.

Corporation Counsel Carter: Alright, with respect to whether or not we believe that body-worn camera footage is covered by 50-a. It is our position is that it is not covered by 50-a, as body-worn camera footage is not a personnel record as that term is understood under 50-a. Now, to the extent that this may sound different from positions that we have been forced to take in other areas in terms of the application of 50-a. What we've been – we've said consistently is that where an appellate court has ruled that a certain item, a certain document is a personnel record, we are bound to follow that precedent. And that is the position that we've consistently taken. No appellate court has ruled with respect to body-worn cameras, so therefore we are in a position to conform our legal position with that of the Mayor and the police commissioner with respect to affording the maximum possible transparency to the respect to the release of body-worn camera footage. We do not believe that 50-a applies.

Mayor: Thank you very much. Thanks, everyone.

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