



**THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
STATEN ISLAND, NY**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 23, 2018

CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON INSIDE CITY HALL

Errol Louis: Welcome back to Inside City Hall. As we told you earlier, Mayor de Blasio is working from Staten Island all this week as part of City Hall in Your Borough. He joins us now from Richmond County Bank Ballpark which is home to the Staten Island Yankees. Good evening, Mr. Mayor, good to see you.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: It's good to see you Errol.

Louis: I wanted to start with some of what's going on there. It's very notable that the democratic nominee for Congress, Max Rose issued a letter asking you to do a few things. And I guess I wanted to tick those off, fund a new Cromwell Recreation Center to replace the one that collapsed in 2010.

Mayor: Well, look, I saw his statements and in fact that's one of the things we're going to be talking about with residents of that community at a town hall meeting on Wednesday night. You know I got here today, I took the ferry over – did an event with the Borough President and Councilmember Borelli on a real serious health issue out here, which is deer, ticks, and Lyme disease, spent some time with Councilmember Borelli and his district in the South Shore. But we're going to be doing a lot of things this week. We're going to offer people a chance to come up at Borough Hall at our resource fair and talk about any issue they want to. At the town hall meeting we're going to be talking about health care issues on Staten Island, a whole host of things coming up this week to address the real issues facing people in this borough.

Louis: One issue I'm sure you know you're going to be asked about is whether or not there could be a ferry from the South Shore of Staten Island since getting across the Island can easily take up 45 minutes to an hour after which the real commute starts. Any prospect of that happening?

Mayor: Well, we're going to make that decision this year for sure. And I look forward this week to speaking with elected officials. I am going to be seeing Borough President Oddo shortly. I am sure we're going to be talking about it. He's been very, very focused on that issue. One of the

things I hope to achieve this week is to get a very specific understanding of what people are hoping for, what kind of ridership levels they think there would be, where physically we could look at – there's also going to be issues about other parts of the city that are looking at potential ferry service. And I want to gather information from all five boroughs and make a decision later this year on you know the potential expansion. Because let's face it, NYC Ferry has been a real success, about twice the ridership level as we expected so far and there is definitely an argument for expanding it. But we have to make that decision on a citywide basis later this year.

Louis: We've got something coming up, new topic, Mr. Mayor. The speed camera legislation that failed to pass Albany means that it's going to sunset as early as Wednesday. That can be over a hundred cameras that will not be renewed, automatic speed cameras near schools. What's the – do you expect a resolution in time to actually end that potential crisis first of all I guess I would ask?

Mayor: You know Errol, I am really sorry to say I do not expect action by the State Senate in time. I mean in 48 hours these speed cameras will no longer be active. There is I should tell you upfront. There is 20 mobile cameras, not the fixed cameras that are a hundred or so that we talk about. But 20 mobile cameras that still are allowed under the law for another month or so. We're going to keep using those. And I remind all motorists, if you're around a school, one of those mobile cameras could be present. And if you speed in a school zone, it could lead to very serious ramifications. But look, I don't know why the Senate hasn't come back. It's been almost a month since they went out. This is a very straightforward thing to fix. It's clearly been proven; the speed cameras reduce speeding by about 60 percent in the areas of schools. They protect our kids. The Assembly acted, the Governor said he was ready to sign such a bill. We need the Senate to come back. So, after Wednesday I think a lot of people are going to let their feelings be known about the fact that our kids are vulnerable. We still have summer school for several more weeks, and then you know we're really only about six weeks away from the new school year. So the Senate has to come back and address this issue once and for all.

Louis: Okay, we're going to take a quick break. We've got more to talk about. Stand by Mr. Mayor; we'll be right back with the Mayor in just a minute. Stay with us.

[...]

Louis: Welcome back to Inside City Hall. I'm joined once again by Mayor Bill de Blasio. And Mr. Mayor you go the bad news along with the rest of us about the deep job cuts at the New York Daily News. I'm wondering if like so many other New York industries, this was ever one where the City offered or had the possibility of creating incentives or other forms of support?

Mayor: You know Errol, let me just say outright – this is really disturbing what this huge corporation has done to the people of New York City and what they are doing to journalism. Remember, it wasn't that long ago that Gothamist was shut down, DNAInfo was shut down. This is a very dangerous trend to see different outlets that really look out for a whole host of our interests as New Yorkers and delve into a whole host of neighborhood issues, suddenly being decimated. And it's all in the name of greed. That's the ferry in the background. It's all in the name of greed by a huge corporation. I think the productive thing is to look for someone who or some company that will purchase the News and focus it on local journalism and focus it on doing its job rather than trying to make into a money maker at all costs. There are people still and

we've seen this – I think Los Angeles is a good example, we've seen this in other parts of the country where local people step forward, who really love their city and believe that local journalism is crucial to our democratic society and it wasn't just about making a buck, it was about the good of the city. And so I think we need to put our energy into trying to find someone who will step forward and take the Daily News away from Tronc because Tronc has clearly given us the sign of things to come. The Daily News is not going to get stronger under Tronc it's just going to be chipped away and chipped away.

Louis: I got to mention that in some of your private emails that we got in the lawsuit for those Agents of the City emails – you mused at one point about whether it would be better, I guess for you, for your administration if the Daily News ceased to publish on paper and went to an all-digital format.

Mayor: Look I've certainly been open about some disagreements with the Daily News and I think every elected official can be frustrated with media but the bottom line is I understand what a huge impact they've made to protecting, you know our democracy and addressing the everyday lives and issues of New Yorkers. I want to see all outlets do that with integrity but my central concern has always been the corporate structure behind our media and how it is profit driven and is not interested in the needs of the people. And you are seeing a prime example here where really good journalists are being let go in the name of making more money instead of the question of what's going to create the highest quality journalism and you know the best examination of the issues. So a company like Tronc is really not interested in quality journalism. They are just interested in making a buck and I actually don't believe that they belong here in New York City.

Louis: Okay well let me switch topics and ask you about one of our other big stories today which is the lawsuit that was filed today, not against your administration – it's a federal lawsuit alleging an unconstitutional intervention by the State in the form of some provisions that would loosen or change the standards by which ultra-orthodox in particular, yeshivas are considered to be meeting or not meeting educational standards. One of the things that came out of the press conference from that today was you were paired with Senator Felder as in some ways, equally responsible for what they say is a coddling of yeshivas that are clearly not meeting educational standards.

Mayor: Well you know, it never surprises me when advocates present a warped view of the world and I think this is one here. Look, the underlying notion that all of our schools have to provide a quality education to our kids – I believe in that very strongly whether it is public school, private school, religious school of any background – they are all our children, they will be the future of our city, they all need a good education.

I believe very strongly in that. I know the State Education Department believes in that. We've been working with them on a full investigation of the yeshivas and very shortly we'll be sharing all that information with the State Education Department so they can decide on the next steps.

But what we've been doing in the meantime – Errol, I've been very public about it – is we have been pushing the yeshivas through a variety of means to improve their approach and I have found, often, working with the Orthodox community that a strong dialogue and a respectful dialogue gets things done.

And I think we've seen in a number of schools real progress in terms of strengthening the curriculum. So, I'm not about the words and the political stances. I'm about the results for these kids and I think our approach is helping to strengthen these schools for these kids.

Louis: When can we expect your report, here – again, this is something that was estimated to take two months and we're going into three years now.

Mayor: Well, again, it's again because one – there are a lot of complex issues to look at. Two – we have to get access to the programs and some were more forthcoming than others. And three – in the meantime it was an opportunity to have a different kind of dialogue about what had to happen in some of these schools to improve them.

And sometimes that dialogue is best handled in a quiet fashion rather than a loud or accusatory fashion. I think it's yielding some real results. But I can safely say very shortly these results of the investigation are going to be provided to the State Education Department so they can fully see everything we found and then decide how they want to proceed.

Louis: Mr. Mayor, a different topic, there was a story in the New York Times over the weekend suggesting that while New York City is not holding youthful offenders in solitary confinement they are also increasing, or your administration has increased, the number that are being sent upstate to jurisdictions where they do end up in solitary confinement. I was wondering if you had a response to that.

Mayor: Yeah, that's a very rare occurrence, Errol. Look, this administration – and I'm very proud of this – we ended solitary confinement for younger inmates, in fact, all the way up to 21. You'll remember that this is the whole tragedy, the Browder tragedy, was all about this – the notion that a lot of people including young kids – teenagers – were kept in solitary that had a horrible impact on their psyche, on their mental health, and in fact instead of helping to rehabilitate them caused the opposite impact. A lot of proof to that.

And we did something no previous administration had done and most other jurisdictions in the country haven't done which is to say no more solitary confinement for juvenile offenders or any offender up to 21.

I think that was the right thing to do but occasionally we have to remove a prisoner from our correction system because there's an immediate threat to them, something that requires them being moved to another jurisdiction temporarily. That's a very small number of prisoners each year.

In that instance, we don't get to dictate the terms to another correction system but clearly – you know the position of New York City is clear on solitary confinement or punitive segregation. And we're doing everything we can to make sure that that is understood elsewhere, that they should really change their policies too and mirror what we've done.

Louis: If you hear about instances of abuse, would you request that they send the offender back to New York where you have a different standard?

Mayor: Look, we obviously believe in our standard but the decisions made – very occasional, I can get you the exact numbers but it's a rare instance – the decision to move an inmate out of our system is because we believe their safety is compromised and it makes sense to get them in another setting for a period of time.

So, I think that's the paramount consideration and that really supersedes the other considerations. Clearly we believe in our standards and we want to make sure that they're implemented for our inmates. But this is something we'll look at and see if there's any actions we can take to improve upon it. But I do want to emphasize, I think it's a rare instance.

Louis: Let me, in our last couple of minutes, ask you a political question. There have been a number of candidates who are running in the city this time who are endorsed by the DSA – the Democratic Socialists of the America. The word socialism that candidates used to flee, you and I are old enough to remember when that was just not something you wanted on your banner or on your materials because it would raise a lot of issues that most candidates did not want to have to work through. Things seem to have changed. Is that a healthy development as far as you're concerned?

Mayor: Oh, absolutely. I think it speaks volumes to what's changed in our society and where we're going. The concept – look, whether you consider yourself a Social Democrat or a Democratic Socialist as Bernie Sanders calls himself, I mean they're very similar ideas. A lot of it would be comparative for example to what a lot of western European countries have for their governments or particularly Scandinavian countries, for example.

But the notion that those words used to be taboo in our political process was horrible. It was a residue of McCarthyism and really represented something that was strange in America because you looked at other English speaking countries, you looked at our closest allies they were – they had socialist parties, they had labor parties. There was nothing taboo about it.

I think we're maturing. I think our culture is changing obviously since the fall of the Berlin Wall and then end of soviet-style Communism. There's been a re-evaluation. And I think what you're seeing – you certainly saw it after the 2016 election, a lot of younger voters in particular – they're not scared of a word like socialism. A lot of them see what the DSA is talking about and find it sympathetic.

I think it's healthy and I think it will allow us to have a better politics and it certainly, from a progressive point of view, suggests that the era of red-baiting is over from the point of view of a lot of younger members of the electorate and I think that's going to really be helpful in terms of moving progressive policy and having a more honest debate.

Louis: It's too late for you on one level because you're not running of election this year but do you consider yourself a Social Democrat or Democratic Socialist?

Mayor: You know, I've always said – people ask me about my influences. I say one part of it is Social Democracy, sort of European-style social democracy. One part of my influence is the New Deal of Franklin Roosevelt which I think was the closest thing to an American version of social democracy. And then another big influence for me was liberation theology because of the work I did related to Central America.

So, I'm kind of influenced by all those things but look, I think the social democratic model is something that we should keep moving toward. I mean you look at Canada. It is a great example where they have universal health care. A nation that borders us – the nation most similar to us on the Earth but they have a health care system that's far superior and much more inclusive. That's a version of social democracy. I think a lot of people in this country find that very appealing.

Louis: Okay, we're going to leave it there for now. We'll wish you the best of luck on Staten Island and we'll talk again next week. Thanks for joining us.

###