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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: First, just bear with me, because I do need to talk about the storm situation that's coming on. I want all New Yorkers to be prepared. We have a serious storm coming and I want everyone to understand, this could bring some very dangerous conditions. One of the things we've learned in the past in New York City is never underestimate storms, and do not assume because the early reports are limited that things won't change quickly – so, we're preparing for a major winter snow storm.

Let me give you the update that as of this moment the storm will be starting later on tonight, continuing through tomorrow evening – Thursday evening. The heaviest snowfall will be tomorrow morning – so, right at the time leading into rush hour and that concerns us quite a bit. The projection right now from the National Weather Service is only four to six inches of snow, but the upper-end projection is nine to 12 inches, and that's as of now. Again, we have seen those projections change very rapidly in the past. So I want people to start thinking about the fact that right now the National Weather Service says we can get as much as a foot of snow, heavily concentrated in the morning rush hour. Those numbers could change for the worse.

We expect strong winds as well. So, we're going to have blizzard-like conditions in the morning in New York City. Everyone has to take this seriously. Whether you're driving, whether you're walking, these are going to be tough conditions to move around in. People should right away start thinking about changing your routine, if you can. If you don't need to be on the road, you shouldn't tomorrow morning. If you can use mass transit as an alternative, that's better. If you don't need to be out walking around in these conditions, please avoid it or keep your time outside to a minimum.

It will also be very cold. Right now – tomorrow, we expect cold temperatures; Friday, even more. We expect that by the end of Friday, going into the evening Friday, the wind chill – including the wind chill, we'll be at negative-20. I want everyone to hear that loud and clear – for Friday evening, including wind chill, we're projecting the effective temperature of negative-20 in New York City. Everyone needs to take that very, very seriously. The wind conditions are going to make travel hard as well. We do expect intense wind gusts.

A couple of other updates – we are canceling alternate-side parking for both Thursday and Friday in New York City. So, if you don't need to be out moving your car on Thursday and Friday, don't. If you can make precautions today, put your car in place today so that you don't

have to move it those days – that would make a lot more sense. That’s why we wanted to get that announcement out right away.

Parents should stay on the alert – we do know right now that all Thursday field trips are being canceled in our school system. I don’t have further updates on the schools yet, but parents should keep aware of what’s happening with our schools. We’ll have updates as the evening progresses.

I also want to say, our Sanitation workers will be moving to 12-hour split shifts, starting at 7 pm tonight. We’ll have 693 salt spreaders, 1,500 plows – so, an all-out effort. And Code Blue will be in effect. As of now, Cold Blue is in effect and will be through tomorrow morning – that’s been the case for several days. We continue an aggressive outreach effort to get homeless folks off the streets. We want New Yorkers to know, if you see a homeless person in need of help, call 3-1-1, we will send help to get them in right away.

Bottom line is to take this storm very seriously. Very cold temperatures – definitely a major amount of snow – could get to be a lot more. Wind gusts up to 40 miles-per-hour – this is serious stuff. Asking all New Yorkers to take precautions – lookout for your neighbors as well.

Let me just say that in Spanish. Just a quick summary in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

So, wanted to give you that update on the storm. And let me just see before I go into the Governor’s speech and the Albany agenda if there’s any quick questions on the storm upfront. I just want to see if there’s any of those and I’ll take them.

Please –

Question: [Inaudible] up here in Albany, cause I live right here.

Mayor: I don’t know the impact on Albany, honestly, so I don’t want to speculate. But if it’s anything like this, obviously a very serious storm. Just want to see if there’s any questions on the storm – okay, let me go into the response to the Governor’s speech.

So, I was struck in particular by the focus on the federal tax plan. I think this is a smart and important move by the Governor and his administration to look for any way that could lessen the blow of the Republican tax bill. We all agree the bill passed in Washington, signed by President Trump is going to disproportionately hurt New Yorkers. We’ve talked about 600,000 New York City taxpayers who are going to see on average a \$5,000 increase in their taxes – double taxation at its worst. It’s going to hurt people all over New York State as well. So, I’m glad the Governor is looking for creative alternatives that may provide a solution. We all agree – as he said, this is a complex undertaking, but one the City is certainly ready to support and join in, because if we can find a way to protect New Yorkers from this double taxation exposure, we want to do that. So, I appreciate that part of the speech in particular.

Also want to focus on the important initiatives to take on sexual harassment head-on. I think it’s very important that the State of New York lead the way, and the City will also be actively

involved in a host of measures to in every way inhibit a culture of sexual harassment. And I think showing that there will be clear ramifications is very, very important.

There were many ideas put out in the speech. Obviously, we need to get more details on a number of them. We'll be analyzing the speech more in the next couple of days and have more to say as we do that. But, in the meantime, I want to emphasize what we'll be focusing on, very quickly, in terms of our agenda in Albany for this legislative session.

We definitely focused on education aid. We want to continue the progress we've made in our public schools. We have our highest graduation rate ever. We've had continual progress on test-score improvement. We want to go farther. We need to see State education aid continue to expand. We particularly are interested in using that aid to address some key strategic initiatives, such as creating the 3-K program on a universal basis.

A set of things related to affordable housing – all of them are continuing actions from the last couple of years, but areas where we need to see more results – funding for NYCHA; that was in the budget two years ago, we're still waiting to see some of that funding reach the people who live in public housing. The supporting housing plan – as everyone knows, the City of New York is committed to, and is funding, and is acting on and implementing a plan for 15,000 supportive housing apartments. The State has a plan for 20,000. We need to see that plan take off and start to have an impact on the ground in New York City so it can help us address homelessness. And then the broader affordable housing plan that was put together at the end of the legislative session – again, we're looking for action, we're looking for results that will help us address the huge affordability challenges in New York City.

The other points that we'll be focused on, obviously in terms of public safety, one of our biggest priorities will be an expansion of speed cameras around public schools. Vision Zero, once again, set records in 2017 for reducing traffic related fatalities. We've seen Vision Zero make people safer. We've seen the NYPD make the City the safest big city in America – unprecedented lows in crime, and, particularly, in homicides. You'd have to go back to the 1950's to see a time where New York City was this safe. We need to continue that progress. One of the things that would help us the most, again, is those speed cameras around schools to help us protect kids and community members.

And in terms of saving money in what everyone admits will be a tight budgetary environment, and allowing us to get more done with less, the design build concept being applied fairly to New York City – that's something we've been fighting for, for years. I think it becomes more important than ever. This year, given that we will see tight fiscal conditions, design build is a common sense way to help us save the taxpayers money, and get more done more quickly. So, we'll be making that a top item on the agenda.

And finally, electoral reform – I was heartened to hear the Governor speak about it in the speech. We're going to focus on it intensely, and we're going to be organizing people all over New York City to put pressure on their legislatures, on the Governor to get this done, and, obviously, working with allies all over the State. New York State, unfortunately, is lagging behind the rest of the nation. It's very hard to vote here. This is underlying a lot of the problem's we're still facing. We don't have a good functioning democracy in this State. We have to fix it. The

Governor's statements today are certainly a step in the right direction. We want to see action by the end of this session. That will be a top priority for New York City.

That's some quick updates – and now, over to you guys.

Question: I've got two questions –

Mayor: Yes, sir.

Question: One is about the [inaudible] State park in Brooklyn [inaudible] in Jamaica Bay [inaudible].

Mayor: We will work with you to get all of the details. I sat down with the Governor at length on Friday and we talked about a number of items that were in the speech. That was one of them. It's current federal land that the State would take over.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: It's an area of federal land fronting on Jamaica Bay, next to – or near, Starrett City and Spring Creek. But in terms of the exact area, they'll get back to you.

Question: Did it strike you when the Governor was talking about how much New York gives to Washington and doesn't get back enough – that you have the same issue with New York City giving to Albany and not getting back enough.

Mayor: Well, obviously. Look, I'll start with something that I think is important to say – the well-being of New York City is connected to the well-being of the State, and the well-being of the State is connected to the well-being of New York City. It is really good for New York City when update does well, and when the suburbs do well, and vice versa – when New York City is thriving, it helps everyone. So, I'm very committed to seeing us all work together. That being said, there should be a recognition that New York City contributes so much to the State in terms of revenue, and a recognition that we have to continue our progress in New York City – and that's the central point. I think that you can absolutely make the parallel – your point is well taken – the Governor said if the federal policies undermine progress in New York State, it will hurt the country equally. If federal or State policies undermine progress in New York City, that ultimately is counter-productive. So we're certainly going to be mindful of that.

Question: Mayor, were you surprised that there were no major details about congestion pricing plan, and just talking to some of the Republicans already today, they said that they're not going to vote it. I mean, I know you've been against this when it was first suggested [inaudible] thoughts on that [inaudible].

Mayor: Well, look, we got a little bit more today, but obviously we still don't have a plan so it's impossible to comment on a plan that doesn't exist. I think there are serious fairness issues when it comes to congestion pricing. I think any plan would have to address those, but we haven't seen that yet. I believe fundamentally – I've said it before, I'll say it again – the best way to address the longterm needs fo the MTA, and particularly the subways, is a millionaires tax. And I ultimately believe, despite the conventional wisdom, that it's achievable because we've called

for a millionaires tax that focuses on New York City income earners and does not ask anything of people outside of New York City. It's a way that we can solve our own problems. So, I'm going to keep working for that because I think it's the right solution. But no, I don't think we've seen enough now to know what any congestion pricing option may look like.

Question: [Inaudible] schism in the Democratic party, and Cuomo's plans to heal that [inaudible]

Mayor: Look, it has to be addressed immediately. It's time for all people who call themselves Democrats to act like Democrats and join the majority, it's as simple as that. And I think everyone should have a common understanding that, that needs to happen now. It's not something to put off any longer.

Gloria?

Question: Mr. Mayor, the Governor mentioned the possibility of withholding funding from municipalities that are not addressing the homelessness issue [inaudible] do you have any details about that [inaudible] what can that mean for New York City [inaudible]

Mayor: Look, it's the first I'm hearing of it so I don't want to read too much into it. The bottom line is New York City has the biggest homeless outreach initiative of any city in the country. Look, homelessness is more and more of an economic problem. It has everything to do with income inequality. It has everything to do with the rising cost of living and of housing, particularly intensified by gentrification. More and more homeless people are working people. That's true of our shelter population. Street homelessness obviously is more often folks who have mental health or substance abuse problems.

But, the reality is New York City has the biggest outreach initiative in the nation. A lot of other cities are struggling with homelessness have not mounted these types of effort. We are going all out. And in the last year and a half we've gotten a thousand people – almost a thousand people to come in off the streets who were street homeless, who were out there 24 hours a day, to come in and stay in and not go back out.

So we think we've got something powerful here. We have seen real progress with our Safe Haven initiative, and we made an announcement yesterday about the expansion of that, smaller facilities that really do help encourage the homeless off the street. NYPD is playing the most active role it's ever played in addressing homelessness. Both in terms of supervising shelter security and now working in joint teams with our homeless outreach workers to go out and address the issues person by person.

So, I think any objective look at New York City's efforts in terms of street homelessness would acknowledge that this is the right direction. It needs more support. It needs more time to take hold. And we certainly want to work with the State on that.

Question: Mr. Mayor?

Mayor: Yes?

Question: Mr. Mayor, the Governor spoke a couple of times about need for progressives to be more than just [inaudible] theoretical progressive [inaudible] actual progressive [inaudible] did you get a sense that he was taking a dig at you here [inaudible]

Mayor: I never try and read into the Governor's comments. You should ask him directly if that's your question. But what I'd say is this, I believe, I'll give you my version of the reality, I believe that progressives need to deal with fundamental human needs in the lives that people live.

I was so honored to have Bernie Sanders swear me in on Monday. He epitomizes to me the fight for real tangible change in peoples' lives. Making sure everyone has healthcare, making sure that wages and benefits go up, the basics. This is what I believe in as a progressive.

And if you think about New York City today, the fact that we have steadily improved peoples' wages and benefits with things like paid sick leave, the fact that we've gotten pre-K and after school programs to parents for free on a universal basis which is taking a huge expense off their household budgets. These are the kinds of things that actually change lives. And that's the kind of progressive I am.

Question: Mr. Mayor, one of the first things you mentioned was education. He mentioned it but very, very briefly and I'm wondering if [inaudible] disappointed [inaudible] speech [inaudible] couple of other things as well [inaudible]

Mayor: Look, it was a long speech. I certainly was not looking for additions. So, you know, I think it's – that's fine. I think in terms of education – education is a supremely local reality. And I'm very proud of the progress we're making in New York City. What I asked from the State is consistent support financially and otherwise so we can keep making the progress that we make.

I don't expect the State to set local education policy. We have mayoral control of education. That works. It something I hope we can see in other places going forward because it's been proven now. Since mayoral control of education came in the graduation rate in New York City has increased by 50 percent in 13 years. It's unbelievable.

But, no I did not expect more. I think the Governor focusing on increasing education aid, that's what I wanted to hear.

Let's see if there's anything else.

Question: Mr. Mayor?

Mayor: Yes?

Question: Last year the Governor proposed in his budget several ideas that would have shifted money from the City to the State to fill holes.

Mayor: Yes.

Question: Are you – do you have any reason to believe we'll hear about any more of those in two weeks. Are you concerned about those?

Mayor: I'm always concerned about those. Look, I had a good long talk with the Governor on Friday in person. We've spoken several times since. At this moment it's in the vein of what you see is what you get. You know, I don't see that at this moment. But you're exactly right, we are ever vigilant. The budget proposal is coming up and we'll look at it very closely.

Look, in truth, in the last years between Washington and Albany, New York City continues to be affronted with unfunded mandates. And this is happening to a lot of other localities. And unfortunately what's happened with President Trump and the Republican Congress is they keep pressing downward different responsibilities. They keep pushing all sorts of areas of human need down, forcing localities have to deal with more and more, and giving us fewer resources. So we are going to very mindful if we see anything like that happening and certainly going to work intensively with a legislature if we do see that, to stop it.

But look, in the glass half-full category, I'm happy to have heard speech not include something like that as was true in previous years.

Question: Mayor, one quick question –

Mayor: Yeah?

Question: I don't know if this is [inaudible] to get involved with, but more on Ocean Parkway in Brooklyn, about making turns on the service road, can you talk about that and let me know what your position is?

Mayor: Yeah, I actually used to represent part of Ocean Parkway in the City Council so it's very personal to me. We believe fundamentally I want to separate the City's actions and the State's actions, we believe fundamentally in Vision Zero. So I take full responsibility for the speed limit on Ocean Parkway, which some of my fellow Brooklynites disagree with, but we have proven – God Bless America – we have proven that it's been a big contributing factor in reducing crashes on Ocean Parkway and reducing deaths and injuries. And Ocean Parkway was actually a place that had had way too many fatalities and injuries.

So on the speed limit, that's us and it was the right thing to do. And I've been in town hall meetings and talked to my fellow Brooklynites about this at length. The turn signal issue has been one, far as I know, generated by the State and is one we did not have as part of our Vision Zero strategy and we had concerns about how it was implemented. I know our DOT Commissioner spoke the State and asked them to reconsider and consider other options. I don't know where that stands today but that was done separately from our Vision Zero approach.

Question: Yeah I was not talking about the speed limit, but I just meant about making the turns to the service road when a service road, if there is an oil truck delivering oil or if there is an emergency vehicle, an ambulance or something –

Mayor: I got it. You are proving that all politics is local. Ok. Yes?

Question: Mr. Mayor, could you tell us about a pay-roll tax –

Mayor: I'll do two, go ahead.

Question: - the pay-roll tax [inaudible] income tax something the Governor brought up today.

Mayor: That's what I started with. I think it is encouraging idea. I think it's a complex idea and the Governor did say in his speech that it was complex but I am heartened to hear him and his administration looking at trying to see if there is a creative solution. Look, we want to protect New Yorkers from an unfair tax bill, and if there had been any sense in Washington of fairness and decency towards people all over the country, they never would have taken State and Local Deductibility. We've had it for over a century in this country.

But this was all about a strategy to take money and give it to the wealthy and corporations, that's what happened. I think it's great if the Governor and the State can find a way to focus on pay-roll tax that passes muster legally that could save New Yorkers a lot of money, we are certainly ready to work with them to see if we can get that done.

Yes, [Inaudible]?

Question: Mayor, as you – I just want to go back to homelessness funding with the supporting housing program, and as you take, you start your second term and you know this an outstanding issue, are you concerned that the possibility of these cuts will make that more difficult, I mean, have you gotten any more concrete detail about how he is going to do this.

Mayor: When the “he's going to do this”, what are you referring to?

Question: What he said today about cutting funding to –

Mayor: Again I did not hear any detail or anything that had any shape there. If the question is outreach efforts to reduce street homelessness, New York City has the strongest initiative in the country. I'm sure when the State looks at it they will come to the same conclusion. So I'm just not going to make any assumptions. Last call.

Question: I'm wondering if factors ever change for 2018 might be improving your ability to negotiate with the Governor, improving your relationship, having a common fight, [Inaudible]

Mayor: Being liberated, is that what you are saying? I'm feeling very liberated.

Look, I think the simple way to think about this is to not look for too many tea leaves. Always have said I'm ready to work with the Governor when he proposes things that are good for New York City, and if he does something that is going to hurt the people of New York City, I'll take him on. And that's how I'm going to look at each and every issue. That is going to be unchanging.

I think there are going to be times like on this question of the payroll tax, certainly generated by the Trump era, where absolutely they are going to be shared interests and we are going to want to work together. I'm ready to do that any time I see that. There is obviously other areas of

difference, I just think you should – I'll call them as I see them and I think you guys should call them as you see them rather than hoping for too clean a trend. I think it's going to be issue by issue.

Thanks, everyone.

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