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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON INSIDE CITY HALL**

**Errol Louis:** Welcome back to Inside City Hall. Before the break we mentioned that First Lady Chirlane McCray's political ambitions are a topic of discussion. And as we continue to analyze last week's primaries – which saw big wins for Governor Cuomo, Public Advocate Letitia James, and seven challengers to incumbent State Senators – I wanted to talk it over with somebody who knows a thing or two about politics. I am joined now by Mayor de Blasio to get into that and more. Good evening, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good evening.

**Louis:** Before we get into the politics, and I promise you that we will, I wanted to get some updates for whatever you can tell us about – I guess starting with that fire in Kings Plaza mall. I actually was there on Saturday. My car was there for like a couple of hours, very alarming to hear about this.

**Mayor:** Yeah, well obviously there is a full investigation going on to find out what caused it. And we definitely need to understand if it was purely an accident or if there was anything at play. Thank God there were no truly serious injuries, no loss of life. But certainly a lot of our firefighters not only did admirable work, but felt the effects of it. But we need an investigation to find out exactly why. This seems awfully strange to have a fire in a parking garage.

**Louis:** Yes.

**Mayor:** We need an investigation to understand what happened here.

**Louis:** Yeah, and it's one of the more tightly packed ones too. It feels a little dodgy even under the best of circumstances. Let me move on – we're also reporting about a police-involved shooting in Maspeth, Queens. What can you tell us about it?

**Mayor:** I spoke to the Police Commissioner before coming on the air here. Obviously this is another one where we have very, very preliminary information. So we're going to need to have a fuller investigation to be able to give you a clearer picture of what happened. As I understand it, originally it was a call related to a robbery, a 9-1-1 call related to a robbery, and we don't know

enough yet of what played out from there. But we have a full investigation going on right as we speak.

**Louis:** Okay, we'll find out more about that. When it comes to the school buses – that was another one of the big issues.

**Mayor:** Right.

**Louis:** And I understand at least one bus company has been sanctioned or dropped. What was the process, and what has happened to this company?

**Mayor:** Well, Chancellor Carranza has spoken very passionately about this and I agree. You know, my kids used to the school, I mean that's just unacceptable. We've seen problems in different places in the city. District 30 in Queens has been one of the areas that's been bearing the brunt. It's not acceptable for a bus company to not do their job. And if they're not doing their job depending on the details we have the right to sanction, we have the right in some cases to cancel their contract. We obviously have to make sure that there are additional resources available to make sure those kids can get to school. That's what's going on right now – it's determining how to best proceed. But the Chancellor has been very clear that we do not accept that, and we're going to be very tough on any company that does not do the job. And these kids cannot be put through this, it's not fair to them or their parents.

**Louis:** There is the basics of picking up and getting kids to and from school. There was a related issue that came out about whether or not the DOE itself or through its contracting process was paying sufficient attention to the background checks of the drivers and the bus attendants.

**Mayor:** And that also very much concerns me. Again as a parent who used to have my own kids on the buses, of course there have to be very careful background checks. And we're going to review that whole situation and we will not allow, going forward, there to be any absence of background checks. It's not acceptable. So I think for years, school bus service has existed with these private companies. By in large it's worked. There's always been a good share of complaints. This year has been very troubling the way it started out. Again it might be particular about one or two companies. But it begs the question of bigger changes we need to make in our approach to school bus service. We have to make sure there is those background checks, we have to make that any company that is not providing this service is gone or is deeply sanctioned. We have to look at every alternative we have. That's exactly what's going on now, and we'll certainly have a lot more to say on that in the next few days.

**Louis:** Okay, let's get back to primary day last Thursday. What happened with Dante? What happened with your son?

**Mayor:** I spoke to him directly about it, in fact I heard about it. Because he said, 'Geez, a strange thing happened to me.' And then after some of the hubbub I went back and asked more specifically as the Board of Elections put his signature up on screen and everything else. He said he came in with a card, which I held in my own hand because I left it for him. It said his name, it said his address, it said where he voted, it said which AD/ED, and it said he was a Democrat, and

he presented it at the right place expecting to get a Democratic ballot. They gave him a ballot, he's walking towards the machine, he looks at it, there's almost no names on it, he says something seems strange. He went back and he said I don't see the names of the people I'm – I thought were going to be here on the ballot, for Governor, Attorney General, whatever, and they then gave him a Democratic affidavit ballot instead of just giving him a Democratic primary ballot, which makes no sense in the world. He did not request it –

**Louis:** Right.

**Mayor:** He simply showed them the fact that he had what appeared to be the wrong ballot, clearly was it was some other party, and instead of just giving him the right ballot, they pull out an affidavit ballot, which makes no sense in the world. I don't know why a supervisor or someone didn't step in.

**Louis:** Right, right.

**Mayor:** I mean life will go on, but again, it's another example –

**Louis:** So – so with the affidavit ballot he had to sort of fill it out, put it in an envelope and give it back to them.

**Mayor:** Yeah, yeah. It's another example of why the Board of Elections is broken. It can't serve people properly and it's discouraging people from voting. We need legislation in Albany that will professionalize the Board of Elections. I mean look, my kid voting in person for the first time – this is the other part of the story that maybe wasn't clear – he had voted from college previously. This was the first time in his life that he ever went into polling site in his life –

**Louis:** With his home address as Gracie Mansion?

**Mayor:** Yes. And this is a kid who, you know, he's studying political science, he cares about the world, he wants to be involved, and he can't even get the opportunity to vote normally for his first time ever. So, I imagined his was easy compared to a lot of other people I heard that had, you know, the wrong – were told to go elsewhere or were not given a chance to vote on the machine who had been voting for a long time. It's broken and it needs to be fixed. And we know early voting, we need same-day registration, we need a host of other reforms that would make voting easy.

**Louis:** Well, yeah, I mean we can start with the basis like give the guy the right ballot. Do you vote from the same address?

**Mayor:** No, I have voted, as has the rest of the family, from our address in Brooklyn and at one point after Dante did jury duty, he checked a box I think not realizing it would lead to him being associated with his mailing address at Gracie Mansion, and it's fine. He came in, he voted there. But we historically have been associated with our Brooklyn address and I'm sure he will be going forward.

**Louis:** Okay, alright. Your first reaction to the primaries, what – where were you on primary night?

**Mayor:** I was at Gracie Mansion.

**Louis:** Okay.

**Mayor:** And – because I had to leave, I had to get up at 5:00 a.m. in the morning to go to the climate conference in San Francisco, so I thought it was probably good not to go out frolicking to different political events. I was deeply moved by that election. The turnout, you know, is what I'm hearing, I think this is right, about twice the amount – double of what was four years earlier – the energy that you could feel in the campaigns, the defeat of the IDC, obviously, I think is a signature moment for our party and our state, and it was such a thorough message from the voters. I feel very, very good about what happened and look it speaks to me, as a progressive, we have seen election after election, certainly in New York City and New York State, but around the country where the progressive wing of the party is asserting itself. I think that's good for the Democratic Party. I think that's the future of the Democratic Party. I think it was a very good night.

**Louis:** At the top of the ballet, the Governor – was that something you expected? Is that something that comports with what you just described? I mean what he said to reporters the day after the primary, he said look, there is a progressive wave and essentially I, the Governor, am riding the crest of it.

**Mayor:** Look, I – I don't want to interpret anyone else's words, I just will give you my own sense of things. The – I think it's quite clear from what happened earlier in the season in this city and this state and what's happening now that progressives have the energy and are drawing out voters and are animating this whole process. There is a – look the fact that turnout doubled is I think is directly connected. Of course the response to Trump but also the growth of a progressive, activist movement in response to Trump that's reaching down to the grassroots. And I saw it, I was out there for Zellnor Myrie in Brooklyn and for Jessica Ramos in Queens, I saw a ton of grassroots energy, so I think that's a big part of what happened. Every election is different, and everyone is about the specific candidates and the specific office, but from my point of view it was a very good night for the progressive movement writ large.

**Louis:** Okay, I've got more to ask you about, we're going to do that after a short break.

[...]

**Louis:** We are back Inside City Hall, I'm joined once again by Mayor de Blasio. Just to round out some of that primary night, that whole event – have you spoken to the Governor or to Cynthia Nixon since then?

**Mayor:** I've spoken to the Governor but I have not spoken to Cynthia Nixon.

**Louis:** What's going to be different up there now and what would be your advice or any specific legislation you might recommend or request from the State Senate?

**Mayor:** Well look I think this is not only important progress for the kinds of representatives we are going to have in the State Senate. You know I think we have a group now that is going to really represent real Democratic values, obviously not people who would align with the Republicans and conclude with the Republicans as the IDC did. I think you've got some dynamic new leaders that are going to bring new energy to the State Senate. Look I'll give you a great example – I'm going to be focusing on strengthening our rent laws, you know we have a chance now to do the single most important thing we can do for affordable housing in New York City which is to have stronger rent laws that help us keep people in affordable housing longer, that stop folks from losing affordable housing because of MCIs, Major Capital Improvements, for an example. That law is broken, needs to be fixed. We have a chance now to do something that was never possible with a Republican State Senate and actually go affirmatively in the direction of stronger rent laws. That's going to be seismic for the city.

**Louis:** When you say stronger rent laws, you mentioned MCI – Major Capital Improvements. Does your concern or would your wish list include vacancy decontrol, luxury decontrol?

**Mayor:** Absolutely. Yes, everything – look the whole construct now makes it tragically easy for people to lose their affordable housing and then that affordable housing lost forever. Things like luxury decontrol, vacancy decontrol, unfortunately just steadily reduced the amount of affordable housing. I will say, because we have been producing a lot more, thankfully there has been a counter pressure where we have nowhere near the net loss that existed just a few years ago. But the idea would be the City keeps producing new affordable housing, creating it, preserving it on a record level while simultaneously, the affordable housing we have is protected and is kept in place for the long term. And the MCI thing in particular bugs me because the notion that – it basically incentives landlords to make some improvements so they can jack up the rent a whole lot and keep the rent up high for a longer period of time. That's absolutely unfair. So we have a chance to right those wrongs. Not only because we are well on our way to a Democratic Senate but because we have more progressive, you know grass roots candidates, true Democrats, true progressives who are getting elected in this wave we just saw on Thursday. For New York City, where the number one issue is affordability, that's part of why I am so excited about the results of Thursday, I think this gives us the kind of group in the State Senate that will make that change.

**Louis:** I mean, you also do want them, the landlords, to also have an incentive to like you know put in new plumbing and not wait for the whole building to fall apart.

**Mayor:** Sure and pay – that's fair. If you say I put in some new plumbing and I'm going to adjust the rent levels to help pay for that for the period of time it takes to actually pay for that. That's great but the way MCIs are structured now, it's a permanent increase, well beyond the cost of any improvement – it's a boondoggle for landlords.

**Louis:** Okay, let me play – we told you folks that we were going to play some of this. This is the ad by Max Rose, the Democrat who’s running on Staten Island and he mentions you very prominently in the ad and not in a good way. Let’s take a look at some of it.

*Max Rose: Look, I’m running against Dan Donovan but the truth is he’s not the only one doing a lousy job. Mayor de Blasio acts like Staten Island doesn’t even exist. And we need to get rid of all the leadership in D.C., Republican and Democrat. Now saying that won’t do much for me with the establishment but look around, the traffic, the drugs – what’s the establishment doing for you? I’m Max Rose and I approve this message because it’s not just Donovan –*

**Louis:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** [Inaudible]

**Louis:** I don’t know if it’s – not necessarily free but first of all what do you make of that?

**Mayor:** I’ve never met this guy and I guess he doesn’t know much about what’s happened in the last year four-and-a-half years with my work on behalf of the people of Staten Island. Pre-K has seen a massive increase in Staten Island, more than almost any part of the city. We’ve done a lot to improve Staten Island ferry service, we’ve been repaving roads on Staten Island at a record pace, and I hear from a lot of Staten Islanders that they appreciate that. So, look nothing surprises me in campaign season.

**Louis:** Well, but here’s something I did want – the minute I saw that, the question that popped into my head was Nancy Pelosi, when Democrats were on the verge of losing control and disaster was at hand for the Democrats in Congress, told members of her conference you can run with me, you can run against me, do whatever you have to but just win. You’ve talked multiple times here about the importance of the Democrats winning control of Congress, important for New York City, important for the politics that you support. Well there’s a Democrat – can you live with that if that’s what it takes for him to win?

**Mayor:** Look, again I’m never surprised by anything in a campaign. I don’t know the guy, he’ll say whatever he wants to say, I’m just saying I hope the facts are clear to the people of Staten Island who I do care about deeply and that’s why we’ve taken a whole series of actions to try and help the people of Staten Island. I was out there a couple of months ago for the week we did in Staten Island. We did a whole series of announcement to try and address quality of life in Staten Island. I think there is a difference between politics and governing. I just want the facts to be clear on governing. Whatever position he wants to take politically, God bless him, that’s his choice. But the facts on governing are a little different.

**Louis:** Okay, very interesting. And interesting and mature approach this.

**Mayor:** Let’s try maturity.

**Louis:** Your years in the business have, yes give you some –

**Mayor:** You see these grey hairs, I earned them Errol, I earned them.

**Louis:** You earned them, you earned every one of them. Every time there's an ad, you get another grey hair. Let me ask you about the First Lady – Chirlane McCray said today that she's not opposed to the idea of possibly running for Borough President. It's not the first time that her possible intention to run for office has come up. Doesn't it now open sort of a new line of questioning that you will be asked repeatedly, when she does an event like the one she did today, are you putting her front and center, is this in effect, government resources being used to advance her political possibilities?

**Mayor:** Well people are going to ask the question but if they just look at the facts they will see that that's outlandish. Chirlane has been front and center from day one of the administration. We made that very clear at the beginning that she's my partner is everything I do. She's the number one advisor, she's the person I listen to the most. And you know she started particularly with the Thrive Initiative three years ago – taking a very vibrant leadership role on a whole host of things and making a whole host of announcements, has nothing to do with any potential political future. As she said, she has not made any formal decisions about her future but she's a prominent leader in this administration and of course she is going to be the person who makes a certain number of announcements and leads key efforts.

**Louis:** I raise this issue because I couldn't think and we were you know kicking it around in the political unit, saying when was the last time that we had somebody who was the spouse of a sitting official who you know – other than the Clinton analogy which is not quite the same thing because Bill Clinton was leaving the presidency when Hillary Clinton ran for the first time. The expectation would be or the one possibility would be that like others in New York politics, you might naturally let it be known or perhaps in political discussions outside of government, sort of try to clear the field to make her path into politics easier. It's what you would do for an ally.

**Mayor:** Well first of all we are in a different reality than I think people have seen. First of all this partnership is particular – I think there has been some examples of an elected official and their spouse working this closely together but there are relatively few. And Chirlane and I have our own particular version of it and on a very big stage obviously. So we are in a little bit of uncharted territory. The decisions about our future, you know she has not said she is definitively running for office at all. She's been open about the fact that she thinks more and more women should for office and she said she can't say that without considering herself, it would not be consistent. But she has not made any formal decisions. And you know I think the other salient point here is she's been a prominent, important leader of this administration from the beginning, including having a very strong public profile on a host issues, starting with mental health and the Thrive initiative. We are just going to keep doing what we are doing. You know if it gets to the point where she makes a formal decision and there's an announcement we will cross that bridge. But I think this is something people should get, not in the negative sense used to, in the sense of I think people should get used to it in the positive sense. There's a lot of change happening in our society. You are going to see more and more of these partnerships. I hope you will. I think you will. And it's a beautiful thing, I think it's a positive thing because you know we are both equally devoted to public service and we are both giving to the city and I think it works the way it is.

**Louis:** Okay fair enough. Before you go, your predecessor Mike Bloomberg, big story in the paper today that yet again I don't want to use the analogy of you know Lucy and the football but once again –

**Mayor:** Far be it from us.

**Louis:** Actually you know what? There's something new here where he's being talked about not just as a possible candidate for president but as somebody who would try to be a leader in the Democratic Party. What do you think about that?

**Mayor:** I respect Michael Bloomberg – there are some areas where I agreed with him quite a bit in some of his policies that I've been proud to continue. There are other areas where I disagree with him fundamentally and some things that you know we have made major, major changes on. I think it is certainly more coherent to talk about running as a Democrat but I think it is also fair to say I'm not sure that his particular demure, his particular approach fits the Democratic Party of today. I think that's what a lot of people are saying today. It's like is it a more practical step than running as an independent? Yes. Does he it this moment in this nation in this Democratic Party? I'm not so sure.

**Louis:** Billionaire blue? No? Okay, we'll see.

**Mayor:** Trademark that.

**Louis:** Thanks a lot. I want to talk to you next week about the Mayor's Management report which came out today, haven't had a chance to look at it but I will. Until then we will see you next week. Let's take a short break here.

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