

# New York City Independent Budget Office



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## 35TH ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM

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November 13th 2024

In partnership with

**NEW YORK**  
**LAW SCHOOL**

| Center for New York  
City and State Law



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## 35TH ANNIVERSARY AGENDA

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8:45 AM

**Registration & Breakfast**

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9:10 AM

**Welcome Remarks by Anthony W. Crowell  
& Louisa Chafee**

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9:30 AM -  
10:45 AM

**Panel 1: Empowering New Yorkers: The 1989  
City Charter**

Stephen Louis (Moderator), Ruth Messinger, Richard  
Emery, Esmeralda Simmons, Gretchen Dykstra

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11:00 AM -  
12:15 PM

**Panel 2: The NYC Budget and the Creation of  
the IBO**

Dean Fuleihan (Moderator), Jumaane Williams,  
Gale Brewer, Doug Criscitello, Preston Niblack

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12:30 PM

**Lunch served till 2:00 PM**

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1:00 PM -  
1:45 PM

**Keynote Address by Errol Louis**  
"Inside City Hall" host for NY1

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2:00 PM -  
3:15 PM

**Panel 3: Serving and Investing in  
Communities**

Ross Sandler (Moderator), Brad Lander,  
Donovan Richards, Jennifer Jones Austin, Liz Fine

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3:30 PM -  
4:45 PM

**Panel 4: Data Giving Power**

Louisa Chafee (Moderator), Mark Levine, Pauline  
Toole, Ronnie Lowenstein, Donna Lieberman,  
DeNora Getachew

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5:00 PM -  
6:30 PM

**Cocktail Reception on 5th floor**



# Errol Louis

**Political Anchor and Host of  
"Inside City Hall"**  
*Spectrum News NY1*

Errol Louis is the Political Anchor of Spectrum News NY1, where he hosts "Inside City Hall," a nightly prime-time show that focuses on New York politics.

He regularly interviews top political and cultural leaders, and has moderated more than two dozen debates, including races for mayor, public advocate, city and state comptroller, state Attorney General and the U.S. Senate. He was also a panelist in a 2016 Democratic presidential debate in Brooklyn between Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders.

Additionally, Louis is an adjunct professor of Urban Reporting at the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism.

Prior to joining Spectrum News NY1, Louis served on the Daily News' editorial board, and still pens weekly opinion columns for the newspaper. He also hosted a weekday talk show on AM1600 WWRL.

A graduate of New Rochelle High School, Louis attended Harvard College, where he graduated with a B.A. in Government. He also earned an M.A. in Political Science from Yale University and a J.D. from Brooklyn Law School.





# Anthony W. Crowell

**Dean, President and  
Professor of Law**  
*New York Law School*

Anthony W. Crowell is New York Law School's 16th Dean and President and Professor of Law, serving since May 2012. He has taught state and local government law at NYLS since 2003. He also serves as Faculty Director for NYLS's Center for New York City and State Law.

As a first generation student and a longtime New York City public servant, he proudly reintroduced NYLS as New York's law school. His management philosophy is rooted in his experience as a senior executive in New York City government for more than a decade, where he served as Counselor to Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. He also served as Executive Director, Counsel, or Commissioner of six Charter Revision Commissions. Under his leadership, NYLS has repositioned itself as a law school for the 21st century lawyer and a leader in New York City and State government.

Dean Crowell also serves as a Commissioner on the New York City Planning Commission and on the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Brooklyn Public Library. He is Chair of the New York State Independent Review Committee for Nominations to the Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government. He is a member of Board of Directors of the Citizens Union Foundation and is a member of the NYC Bar Association's New York City Affairs Committee. He also serves on the Executive Committees of the Association of American Law Schools and the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities in New York, and on the Board of the Congressional Award Foundation in Washington, D.C.







## Louisa Chafee

**Director**  
*NYC Independent Budget Office*

Louisa Chafee became the Director of the New York City Independent Budget Office in March of 2023. Louisa is a government policy and operations expert, with over two decades of leadership experience in both government and the non-profit sector.

She served in the Office of the Governor of New York, as Deputy Secretary for Human Services. She served in several key positions in New York City government, including Executive Director for Management Innovation at the Office of the Mayor, and also served for many years as Senior Vice President for External Relations and Public Policy at the UJA-Federation of New York.

Chafee received a B.A. from Macalester College and an M.P.A. from NYU's Wagner School of Public Service. She resides in Brooklyn with her husband, daughters and their dog.





# Frederick A. O. Schwarz, Jr

**Chief Counsel**  
*Brennan Center*

Frederick A. O. (“Fritz”) Schwarz, Jr. is chief counsel of the Brennan Center. Since graduation from Harvard Law School in 1960, Schwarz has had an uncommon career in both private practice and public service. Following a year’s clerkship with the Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, Schwarz worked under a Ford Foundation grant as assistant commissioner for law revision for the government of Northern Nigeria.

Since 1963, Schwarz has practiced law with the firm of Cravath, Swaine & Moore, where he was a litigation partner with a broad and varied practice. Retired since 2001, he remains Senior Counsel with the firm. In 1975–76, Schwarz served as chief counsel to the Church Committee of the U.S. Senate, which was formed in the wake of the Watergate scandal to investigate illegal intelligence gathering by federal agencies including the CIA, the FBI and the NSA.

Schwarz also served as New York City’s Corporation Counsel under Mayor Edward I. Koch, from 1982–1986. In 1989, Koch appointed Schwarz as chair of the 1989 Charter Revision Commission. Schwarz also served as Chair of the New York City Campaign Finance Board from 2003-2008, and continues to serve on the Board of Directors for both the Vera Institute for Justice and the Natural Resources Defense Council as Board Chair for many years. He also chaired the board of Atlantic Philanthropies and the Fund for the City of New York.

Schwarz has written three books. *Democracy in the Dark: The Seduction of Government Secrecy* (The New Press, 2015) focuses on the question of government secrecy. His other books are *Unchecked and Unbalanced: Presidential Power in a Time of Terror*, written at the Brennan Center with Aziz Huq (The New Press, 2007), and *Nigeria: The Tribes, the Nation, or the Race – The Politics of Independence* (MIT Press, 1965).

Schwarz has been awarded the New York State Bar Association’s Gold Medal for distinguished service in the law, and the Ridenhour Courage Prize “in recognition of his life-long commitment to strengthening democracy and the rule of law.”





Moderator

## Stephen Louis

**Distinguished Fellow**  
*New York Law School*

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**Counsel to New York City**  
*and State Law*

Stephen Louis, Distinguished Fellow and Adjunct Professor in State and Local Government Law and Counsel to the Center for New York City and State Law at New York Law School, is spearheading and participating in a number of new initiatives and expanded programs at the Center. He has been a member of the NYLS adjunct faculty since 2013, co-teaching State and Local Government Law and Legal Journalism. He previously served as an adjunct professor at Columbia Law School.

Professor Louis had nearly four decades of experience working in local government law at the New York City Law Department. As a member, and later as chief of the office's Legal Counsel Division and Executive Assistant Corporation Counsel, he provided advice to five mayoral administrations, ten Corporation Counsels, and numerous elected and appointed officials, including City Council members, Comptrollers, Public Advocates, Borough Presidents, Charter Revision Commissions, and heads of every City agency. He has worked on virtually every area of municipal law, providing legal advice in support of local policy initiatives. In addition to counseling, he and the attorneys he supervised were responsible for drafting federal, state and local legislation on behalf of New York City and its agencies in the drafting and promulgation of agency rules. He also worked for several years at the law firm of Lord Day & Lord, Barrett Smith, in its real estate department, drafting and negotiating leases, construction agreements, and city capital funding agreements.

On behalf of the New York City Law Department, he served on the Board of Directors of the County Attorneys' Association of the State of New York, including a term as President, and represented the City at the International Municipal Lawyers Association. He has served on several committees of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, serving as chair of its Government Counsel committee.





Panelist

# Ruth Messinger

**Global Ambassador**  
*American Jewish World Service*

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**Former Manhattan  
Borough President**  
*City of New York*

Ruth W. Messinger, President of American Jewish World Service (AJWS) from 1998 to July of 2016, is currently the organization's inaugural Global Ambassador, continuing her crucial work of engaging rabbis and interfaith leaders to speak out on behalf of oppressed and persecuted communities worldwide. She also works as a social justice consultant and as a teacher and facilitator for rabbinic students and for women social justice entrepreneurs.

Additionally, she works independently on issues affecting our newest New Yorkers, the immigrants and asylum seekers coming to New York to escape oppression and establish a better life for themselves and their families.

Before her 18 years at AJWS Ruth had a 20-year career in public service in New York City as a City Council member and Manhattan Borough President. She was a strong advocate for children, public education, campaign finance reform, gay rights, community policing, neighborhoods and small businesses. She maintains many connections to and involvement with urban issues.

Ruth has been honored for her leadership with awards from many national organizations and seminaries. She is an active member of her congregation and serves on the boards of Aegis Trust and the Interfaith Center of NY. She holds a B.A. from Radcliffe College and an M.S.W. from the University of Oklahoma; is married to Andrew Lachman, a retired educator, and has three children, eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.







Panelist

## Richard Emery

### Founding Partner

*Emery Celli Brinckerhoff Abady Ward & Maazel LLP*

Richard D. Emery is a founding partner of Emery Celli Brinckerhoff Abady Ward & Maazel LLP. His practice focuses on commercial litigation, civil rights, election law and litigation challenging governmental actions. Mr. Emery enjoys a national reputation as a litigator, trying and handling cases at all levels, from the U.S. Supreme Court to federal and state appellate and trial courts in New York, Washington, D.C., California, Washington state, and others. While a partner at Lankenau Kovner & Bickford, he successfully challenged the structure of the New York City Board of Estimate under the one-person, one-vote doctrine, arguing in the U.S. Supreme Court and resulting in the unanimous invalidation of the Board on constitutional grounds. Before then, he was a staff attorney at the New York Civil Liberties Union and director of the Institutional Legal Services Project in Washington state, which represented persons held in juvenile, prison, and mental health facilities. He was also a law clerk for the Honorable Gus J. Solomon of the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon. He has taught as an adjunct at the New York University and University of Washington schools of law.

Richard Emery served as Chair of New York City's Civilian Complaint Review Board from July 2014 to April 2016. Mr. Emery was also a member of Governor Mario Cuomo's Commission on Integrity in Government, sat on Governor Eliot Spitzer's Transition Committee for Government Reform Issues and subsequently, Governor Paterson appointed him to the New York State Commission on Public Integrity. Mr. Emery was a member of the New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct from 2004 to 2017. Mr. Emery is a member of the City Club, which addresses New York City preservation issues. He also is a founder and president of the West End Preservation Society, which has achieved the landmarked West End-Riverside Historic District.

His honors include City & State NY's 2016 Responsible 100 Award; Landmark West's 2013 Unsung Heroes Award for his preservation work; the 2008 Children's Rights Champion Award for his civil rights work and support of children's rights; the Common Cause/NY, October 2000, "I Love an Ethical New York" Award for recognition of successful challenges to New York's unconstitutionally burdensome ballot access laws and overall work to promote a more open democracy; the Park River Democrats Public Service Award, June 1989; and the David S. Michaels Memorial Award, January 1987, for Courageous Effort in Promotion of Integrity in the Criminal Justice System from the Criminal Justice Section of the New York State Bar Association. Mr. Emery has been named a "Super Lawyer" since 2006. He was named to Lawdragon's "500 Leading Civil Rights & Plaintiff Employment Lawyers" list in 2023.





Panelist

## Esmeralda Simmons

**Founding Executive Director**  
*Center for Law and Social Justice*

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**Member of Civilian**  
*Complaint Review Board*

Esmeralda Simmons is an accomplished lawyer and public servant who has spent decades fighting for human and civil rights on the federal, state, and municipal levels. Ms. Simmons founded the Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College, a community-based racial justice advocacy center that focuses on legal work and research on civil rights and domestic human rights violations. Recently retired, she advocated for equity in public education, voting, policing, and the child welfare system as the Center's executive director for 34 years. Through the Center, Simmons provided community organizations with legal counsel and research assistance.

Before founding and directing the Center for Law and Social Justice, Ms. Simmons served as First Deputy Commissioner at the New York State Division of Human Rights, where she developed and led the implementation of policy in support of New Yorkers' human and civil rights, and as an Assistant Attorney General for the State of New York. In addition, she has served on several major public boards in New York City government, including the NYC Board of Education and the NYC Districting Commission.

Ms. Simmons also volunteers her skills and currently serves on the board of directors of UPROSE, a climate justice organization; the Council of Elders for African Cultural Heritage; and Little Sun People, an African-centered early childhood education center. In the recent past, she has served on several boards of national organizations: the Applied Research Center (now "Race Forward"); Vallecitos Mountain Retreat Center; the Child Welfare Fund; and, the Poverty and Race Research Action Council (PRRAC).

Ms. Simmons has served as counsel or co-counsel on numerous major federal Voting Rights Act cases and election law cases and has secured victories before the United States Supreme Court. She is a member of the Metropolitan Black Bar and American Bar associations, Ile Ase, Inc., and the New York Voting Rights Consortium.







Panelist

# Gretchen Dykstra

**Former Director of  
Communications and Community  
Relations**  
*1989 Charter Revision Commission*

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**Author**

Gretchen Dykstra does not have a classic “career path”, but rather a rich professional life. She taught in a middle school, worked as a freelance writer, and taught English at a college in Wuhan, China from 1979-1981. Back in New York, Gretchen worked first at the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and then became director of communications and outreach for the historic NYC Charter Revision Commission of 1989. She ran the Times Square BID, the not-for-profit organization that helped clean up Times Square in the ‘90s. She served as Commissioner of the Department of Consumer Affairs for Mayor Bloomberg, and then became founding president of the 9/11 Memorial Foundation. She quit that job within a year and turned to writing.

Her first book, *Pinery Boys*, was about the grandfather she never knew; her second one, *Civic Pioneers*, profiled innovative municipal leaders in 12 different professions in eight different cities at the turn of the 20th century. *Echoes from Wuhan*, a memoir about her years in China followed. The University Press of Kentucky released *Lessons from the Foothills* in September 2024. She’s now working on a piece about Berea College’s innovative environmental work.

She has served on many boards including GMHC, Save the Children, the Center for an Urban Future, and she was a volunteer tutor — and loved it---at the Bard Prison Initiative. Gretchen lived in NYC for four decades, the Hudson Valley for one decade, and in mid-June moved back to her hometown, Haverford, PA.



Moderator

## Dean Fuleihan

**Senior Fellow**  
*CUNY Institute for State and Local Governance*

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**Chair**  
*Independent Budget Office Advisory Board*

Dean Fuleihan is a Senior Fellow at the CUNY Institute for State and Local Governance providing budget, finance and policy analysis to governments, public institutions and non-profits. Dean served as the New York City First Deputy Mayor from 2018 through 2021 under Mayor Bill de Blasio with direct operational and policy responsibilities for education, criminal justice, labor, the New York City Budget, climate and sustainability. Dean was the Director of the NYC Office of Management and Budget from 2014 through 2018, building the City's reserves and funding major policy initiatives including Universal Pre-K.

He was Executive Vice President for Strategic Partnerships at the University at Albany College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering from 2011 to 2013. For more than 30 years, Dean held senior staff positions in the New York State Assembly, including both Secretary to the Speaker for Program and Policy and Secretary to the Assembly Ways and Means Committee. In addition, Dean serves as Chair of the Advisory Board of the NYC Independent Budget Office and as a member of the New York Financial Control Board.





Panelist

# Jumaane Williams

**Public Advocate**  
*City of New York*

Jumaane D. Williams is the Public Advocate of the City of New York. Previously, he served on the NYC Council representing the 45th District from 2010-2019.

Public Advocate Williams is a first-generation Brooklynite of Grenadian heritage. He graduated from the public school system, overcoming the difficulties of Tourette's and ADHD to earn a Master's Degree from Brooklyn College. He began his career as a community organizer at the Greater Flatbush Beacon School and later served as the Executive Director of NYS Tenants & Neighbors. There, he fought for truly affordable, income-targeted housing across New York City and State.

In the NYC Council, then-Councilman Williams championed landmark legislation that fundamentally transformed public safety in NYC. Jumaane sponsored the Community Safety Act, reforming the City's Police Department by addressing the abuse of Stop, Question, & Frisk. As former Co-Chair of the Council's Task Force to Combat Gun Violence, he helped create New York's Crisis Management System, which funds Cure Violence Groups that work to reduce shootings through a multi-pronged approach. He also served as Chair of the Committee on Housing and Buildings, where he helped to pass dozens of bills.

As Public Advocate, he has continued the fight to advance equity and combat injustices, while redefining the office's role as legislator, community organizer, and voice of the people. In his first three years in office, he has passed more legislation than any previous Public Advocate, and nearly as many as all predecessors combined. He has led the fight for true public safety, deeply affordable housing, and transparency and accountability in City government as an activist-elected official who brings the voices of everyday New Yorkers to City government and makes New York a truly progressive beacon for all.





Panelist

# Gale Brewer

**Council Member, District 6**  
*City of New York*

Gale A. Brewer represents the 6th Council District and chairs the Committee on Oversight and Investigations. The committee has a far reaching mandate to examine the mayoral administration, its policies, and delivery of city services. Under her leadership, the committee held oversight hearings on costs of the migrant crisis, responses to climate emergencies, proliferation of unlicensed cannabis shops, operational challenges in family court, maintaining the municipal workforce, and many others. Council Member Brewer is a member of the Budget Negotiation Team as well as the Committees on Finance, Higher Education, Immigration, Consumer and Worker Protection, Governmental Operations, and Rules, Privileges, and Elections. She recently passed bills to prevent lithium-ion battery fires, expand the city's tree canopy, and protect hourly workers.

As Borough President, she submitted over 190 ULURP recommendations; allocated \$213 million in capital funds (and more in operational and cultural dollars) to non-profits, schools, and parks; secured a competitive grant of \$20 million from the State of New York for revitalization of Chinatown; appointed over 1000 people every year to Community Boards, school boards as well as many other boards and trained them in ethics, land use, budgeting, open data, proposal writing, conflict resolution, and other issues; and opened the first storefront district office for the Borough President on 125th Street in Harlem. She convened task forces on construction safety, African immigrants, small business, faith-based entities and real estate, affordable housing, the closing of Rikers Island jails and other matters.

Before being elected Borough President, she represented the 6th Council District from 2002-2013. Her legislative highlights included laws guaranteeing paid sick leave for most hourly employees, requiring all City data be published online, and protecting domestic workers from abusive practices.

Prior to elected office, she served as Chief of Staff to Council Member Ruth Messinger, NYC Deputy Public Advocate, Director of the city's Federal Office, and Executive Director of the Mayor's Commission on the Status of Women. She worked on a research project regarding non-profits at the CUNY Graduate Center, and she worked for a private firm that focused on creating affordable housing. For many years, Gale Brewer has taught at CUNY and Barnard College.

Brewer has an MPA from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and did her undergraduate work at Columbia University and Bennington College. She lives with her husband Cal Snyder, and they have a grown son. In the past, she had many foster children.







Panelist

# Doug Criscitello

**Program Integrity Fellow**  
*Arnold Ventures*

.....  
**Founding Director**  
*Independent Budget Office*

Doug Criscitello is a program integrity fellow at Arnold Ventures, a philanthropic organization, where he leads research into U.S. government agencies and programs to identify and advance solutions aimed at ensuring taxpayer dollars are used smartly. His work aims to help agencies deploy public programs in ways that maximize prospects for meeting intended program objectives while minimizing taxpayer risks.

Before joining Arnold Ventures, Doug served as the executive director of the Golub Center for Finance and Policy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he led research and educational initiatives to improve financial decision making by government officials. Topics of study included evidence-based budgeting, innovative finance, and the cost and performance of credit and insurance programs. Previously, he served as chief financial officer at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, nominated by President Obama, where he directed the planning and execution of the department's budget and financial management program.

The common thread of his career is public sector budgeting. Before HUD, his prior position in government was as the founding director of the New York City Independent Budget Office, a municipal government agency modeled after the Congressional Budget Office to provide nonpartisan, objective research and analysis of NYC's budget. Early in his career, Doug spent a decade in the U.S. government focused on budgeting for credit, insurance, and disaster relief activities at the Small Business Administration, the Office of Management and Budget, and CBO. Doug has also worked in the private sector as a service provider to the U.S. government at JPMorgan Securities and Grant Thornton.

His most recent publications include a [retrospective on the 1974 Budget Act](#) (2024) and a consideration of the U.S. government's [growing role as a lender](#) (2023). He currently is a [contributor to Forbes.com](#) where he writes on issues at the intersection of finance and policy.

Doug is a fellow at the National Academy of Public Administration and a SAGE at the Partnership for Public Service. He completed both his undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of Rochester.





Panelist

# Preston Niblack

**Commissioner**  
*Department of Finance*

Preston Niblack was appointed commissioner of the Department of Finance by Mayor Eric Adams in December 2021.

Mr. Niblack served as deputy city comptroller for budget from 2016 through 2021, responsible for monitoring New York City's budget and fiscal condition, analyzing and reporting on the City budget, and issuing reports on various budgetary and economic issues.

Prior to joining the Comptroller's Office, Mr. Niblack was a senior advisor in the New York City Government Affairs Division of Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, and served as a trustee of the Citizens Budget Commission.

Mr. Niblack served as director of the Finance Division for the New York City Council under Speaker Christine Quinn from 2008 to 2014, leading negotiations on the City budget on behalf of the City Council and developing legislative and policy initiatives in budget and tax policy, housing, economic development, and other areas.

Prior to this role, Mr. Niblack was deputy director at the New York City Independent Budget Office for eight years, and a senior analyst for two years. He also worked as an economist in the District of Columbia Office of Tax and Revenue and was employed from 1986 to 1995 as an associate social scientist at the RAND Corporation in Santa Monica, California, and Washington, DC.

Commissioner Niblack has a Ph.D. (1994) and MPA (1986) in Policy Sciences from the University of Maryland School of Public Policy and a B.A. from Middlebury College.







## Ross Sandler

### Founding Director

*NYLS Center for New York City and State Law*

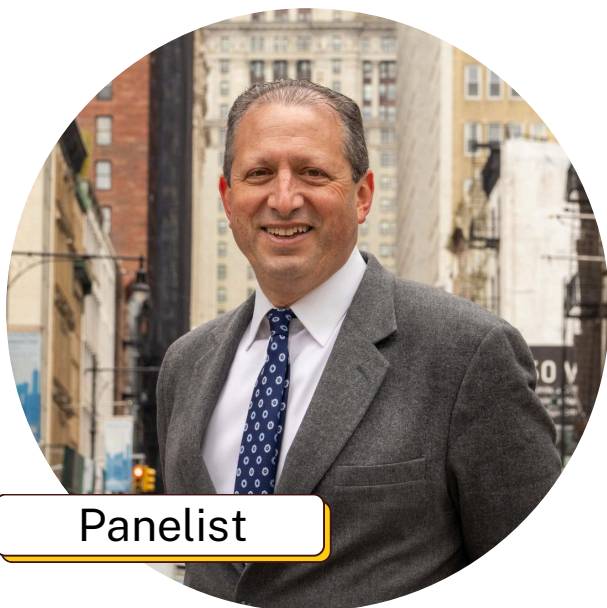
Moderator

Ross Sandler, the founding director of New York Law School's Center for New York City Law, has had a distinguished career spanning public service, academia, and private practice.

Prior to joining NYLS in 1995, where he developed the CityLaw, CityLand, and CityRegs publications, Sandler was a partner at Jones Day Reavis & Pogue. His legal expertise and public service began in the early 1970s as a federal prosecutor in Manhattan, where he led groundbreaking environmental enforcement efforts, notably contributing to the passage of the 1972 Clean Water Act. His commitment to urban issues continued in municipal government, where he served as special advisor for public transportation and later as commissioner of the Department of Transportation under Mayor Edward Koch, spearheading crucial reforms in mass transit and infrastructure.

In addition to his public service, Sandler has remained an influential figure in New York City's legal and governmental spheres through his leadership of the Center for New York City Law and its renowned CityLaw Breakfasts. He is the author of numerous publications on environmental law and urban affairs, including the books *Democracy by Decree* (2003) and *Jumpstart: Torts* (2012), which reflect his deep expertise in government and legal matters.





Panelist

# Brad Lander

**Comptroller**  
*City of New York*

New York City Comptroller Brad Lander serves as the City's chief financial officer, leading an office of roughly 800 public servants in their work to promote the financial health, integrity, and effectiveness of city government. As investment advisor and custodian for New York City's public pension funds, Comptroller Lander stewards the retirement security of over 750,000 current and retired public sector workers, with a prudent, diversified, long-term approach to the City's investments and obligations.

Comptroller Lander also serves as the City's budget watchdog and chief accountability officer. The Office's audits under Lander have revealed billions in underreported and inadequate cost controls within City agencies, while the office's public finance work includes innovative social bonds and tender solicitations that have generated hundreds of millions of dollars in savings, even amid rising interest rates.

And as Comptroller, Lander has strengthened the office's efforts to combat the climate crisis. His Public Solar NYC plan includes an innovative "public option" to scale up rooftop solar and create good green jobs. Under Comptroller Lander's leadership, three of the City's funds have adopted a detailed plan to reach net zero emissions by 2040, among the most aggressive in the nation.

Prior to being elected Comptroller in 2021, Lander spent 12 years in the City Council, where he co-founded the Council's Progressive Caucus and won transformative changes to expand workers' rights, secure tenant protections, create affordable housing, integrate and strengthen the district's public schools, and make streets safer.

Brad lives with his wife, Meg Barnette, in Brooklyn where they raised two children, Marek and Rosa, who still roll their eyes at his dad jokes.





# Donovan Richards

**Queens Borough President**  
*City of New York*

Panelist

Donovan Richards Jr., a lifelong Southeast Queens resident, was elected Borough President in November 2020.

Following the killing of a close friend during his teenage years, he got involved in his community, holding numerous staff positions in the City Council before being elected to the Council in 2013 to represent Southeast Queens and the eastern Rockaway Peninsula.

As a Council Member he chaired multiple influential committees, resulting in historic citywide investments in affordable housing, police oversight, clean energy and infrastructure. As Borough President he has been a tireless advocate for Queens, allocating more than \$276 million in capital funding.

The Borough President formed Operation Urban Sustainability to combat climate change and is vigorously pushing to make Queens a more resilient borough. To support the more than one million immigrants who call The World's Borough home, he established the Immigrant Welcome Center at Queens Borough Hall in 2021. To rebuild the borough's economy, he created the Queens Small Business Grant program for entrepreneurs impacted by COVID-19, secured a commitment from JetBlue to keep its headquarters in Queens, and helps oversee the redevelopments of LaGuardia and Kennedy airports.

Borough President Richards lives in Rosedale with his wife, Tameeka, and son, Donovan III.





Panelist

# Jennifer Jones Austin

**CEO**  
*Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies*

A fourth-generation leader of faith and social justice, Jennifer Jones Austin fights for equity. As CEO of the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA), an anti-poverty, policy and advocacy organization with 170 member agencies and faith partners, she has led and secured monumental changes in social policy to strengthen and empower the disenfranchised and marginalized. Jennifer brings to her work a profound understanding of the link between race, poverty, law and social policy in America, and the role religion plays. Prior to joining FPWA, Ms. Jones Austin served as Senior Vice President of the United Way of New York City; the City of New York's first Family Services Coordinator; Deputy Commissioner for the NYC Administration for Children's Services; Civil Rights Deputy Bureau Chief for Attorney General Eliot Spitzer; and Vice President for LearnNow/Edison Schools, Inc.

Ms. Jones Austin chairs the NYC Racial Justice Commission, the first of its kind in the nation created to develop ballot proposals to revise the City's charter to dismantle structural racism in government functions and ensure equity for Black, indigenous and other persons of color. She has chaired several other influential boards and commissions, including the Mayoral Transition for Bill de Blasio; the NYC Procurement Policy Board; the NYC Board of Correction, where she presided over the promulgation of rules to end solitary confinement; the NYS Supermarket Commission; and the Community Engagement for Brooklyn District Attorney Gonzalez's Justice 2020 Initiative. She was a lead advisor for the NYPD Reform and Reinvention Collaborative, and a member of the statewide COVID-19 "Roll Up Your Sleeves" Task Force created to ensure vaccine information and equitable access in Black and Brown communities. She currently serves as Vice Chair of the Board of National Action Network; member of the Feerick Center for Social Justice Advisory Board; and member of the Center for Law, Brain and Behavior Advisory Board at Harvard University. She also is the scholar in residence at Nyack College and Alliance Theological Seminary Center for Racial Reconciliation (CRR).

Jennifer co-hosts WBLS' "Open Line", guest hosts the nationally syndicated radio program, "Keep'n It Real with Rev. Al Sharpton", and appears frequently on the cable show, "Brooklyn Savvy". She is a returning guest and contributor on the "Karen Hunter Show" and author of *Consider It Pure Joy*. Described as "a story that if not lived would make for a great novel", it is the harrowing account of her year-long battle with a sudden, life-threatening illness, and the power of faith and community to transform desperation into joy. She is the editor of *God in The Ghetto: A Prophetic Word Revisited*, the re-release of her father, William Augustus Jones Jr.'s seminal work deconstructing the "System" of racism, capitalism and militarism all working in concert to continually oppress people of color. Jennifer is a graduate of the Fordham University School of Law, the New York University Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, and Rutgers University. A recipient of numerous awards and recognitions, including two honorary doctorates, she considers the four honors bestowed upon her by her three alma maters especially significant. Jennifer has two children and resides in Brooklyn, New York with her husband.







Panelist

## Liz Fine

**Principal**  
*Liz Fine Advisory*

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**Former Counsel to the Governor**

Elizabeth Fine formerly served as Counsel to New York Governor, Kathy Hochul. She has a long career in public service at the federal, state, and local levels. She previously served as Executive Vice-President and General Counsel of Empire State Development (ESD), New York's economic development agency. She also served as General Counsel of the New York City Council, where she was responsible for all aspects of legal representation for Council and Speaker.

Previously, during seven years at the U.S. Justice Department, Fine was Counsel to Attorney General Janet Reno, and Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General for Policy, among other roles. She served as Special Counsel to the President for President Clinton in 1993, and was a counsel to the Clinton-Gore campaign. She began her career as Counsel to the House Judiciary Committee, working on intellectual property and prison oversight and as a Fellow at Georgetown University Law Center's Institute for Public Representation.

Elizabeth Fine is a graduate of Brown University (B.A.), New York University School of Law (J.D.), and Georgetown University Law Center (L.L.M).





# Louisa Chafee

**Director**  
*NYC Independent Budget Office*

Moderator

Louisa Chafee became the Director of the New York City Independent Budget Office in March of 2023. Louisa is a government policy and operations expert, with over two decades of leadership experience in both government and the non-profit sector.

She served in the Office of the Governor of New York, as Deputy Secretary for Human Services. She served in several key positions in New York City government, including Executive Director for Management Innovation at the Office of the Mayor, and also served for many years as Senior Vice President for External Relations and Public Policy at the UJA-Federation of New York.

Chafee received a B.A. from Macalester College and an M.P.A. from NYU's Wagner School of Public Service. She resides in Brooklyn with her husband, daughters and their dog.







Panelist

## Mark Levine

**Manhattan Borough President**  
*City of New York*

As Manhattan's 28th Borough President, Mark Levine is informed by decades of experience in public service and is driven by a deep care for Manhattan and its people. He is a strong believer in the power of local governance to shape lasting change and continuously improve our city for the next generation of New Yorkers.

Borough President Levine has been working to create a more equitable, more resilient, and healthier city by striving to ensure the policies, solutions, and work of the Manhattan Borough President's office benefit everyday people, especially historically disenfranchised communities. Previously, he was the Council Member for the 7th District representing West Harlem/Hamilton Heights, Morningside Heights, and parts of the Upper West Side and Washington Heights.

In his eight years in the City Council, Mark was a leading voice for tenants rights, public health, and equity in our schools, transit, parks, and housing. As chair of the City Council Health Committee, Mark rose to national prominence as a leader in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to his work in the Council, Mark founded a community credit union in Washington Heights, and he began his career as a bilingual math and science teacher at a middle school in the South Bronx.





Panelist

## Pauline Toole

**Commissioner**  
*Department of Records and  
Information Services (DORIS)*

Pauline Toole has served as the Commissioner of the Department of Records and Information Services (DORIS) since 2014. The Department is responsible for setting and enforcing record management policy for all City agencies, preserving, protecting and making available City government's historical materials, and providing information about government operations to the public.

During her lengthy public service career, Ms. Toole developed the "We Are New York Community Project," which trained 900 volunteers to help 7,500 immigrant adults practice English; launched NYC's successful Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Coalition in 2002, growing it to the largest non-military EITC program in the country; and established administrative operations for the State's Capital Defender Office. She served as Press Secretary to the New York State Senate Minority Leader and staffed the 1993 Commission on the New York State Constitution as well as the City's Charter Commissions between 1995 and 1999.

Toole received her M.A. from New York University and her B.A. from the University of Michigan





# Ronnie Lowenstein

**Former Director**  
*Independent Budget Office*

Ronnie Lowenstein headed New York City's Independent Budget Office from 2000 until her retirement in 2022. Ms. Lowenstein was hired as Chief Economist shortly after IBO began operations in 1996 and in that role recruited the staff and developed the agenda for the agency's work on economics and revenues. She was promoted to Deputy Director in 1997 and her responsibilities gradually expanded to also include IBO's work on the spending side of the budget.

Prior to joining IBO, Ms. Lowenstein was an economist in the Domestic Research Division of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, where she specialized in state and local government finance, and taught economics at Barnard College and the City University of New York. She received her Ph.D. in economics from Columbia University and a B.A. from Guilford College.

Since retiring, Ronnie has been enjoying more time with her grandchildren and exploring New York City — especially its cultural institutions. She currently serves as a trustee on the Boards of Ryan Health and Guilford College. And in their spare time, Ronnie and her husband are renovating an old house in the Northern Catskills.





Panelist

## Donna Lieberman

**Executive Director**  
*New York Civil Liberties Union*

Donna Lieberman has been the executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union since December 2001. She also founded the NYCLU's Reproductive Rights Project. During her tenure, the NYCLU has grown to over 185,000 members, with 8 offices around the state, and become the state's leading voice for freedom, justice and equality, especially for those whose rights are most at risk: people of color, young people, and low-income New Yorkers.

Under her leadership the NYCLU has developed an integrated strategy that combines litigation, public education, advocacy, and lobbying to promote and protect civil rights and civil liberties.







Panelist

# DeNora Getachew

CEO  
*DoSomething.org*

DeNora Getachew is the Chief Executive Officer of DoSomething.org, the thirty-one year old national hub for youth-centered activism and service. DeNora is a native New Yorker; mother of three, including a son she had as a teenager; and a nonprofit leader who leverages all of the tools in her toolbox to create an accessible, inclusive and multiracial democracy that centers the voices of those who least have access to power, including especially young people and Black women.

DeNora is evolving DoSomething to meet the needs of new generations of young digital natives who are coming of age amidst a global pandemic, economic uncertainty, and an intersectional reckoning for equity and justice. DeNora is a democracy lawyer- fighting for free and fair elections and a multiracial and inclusive democracy. She began her career as a legislative attorney at the New York City Council advancing campaign financing, ethics, lobbying and government reform.

Prior to joining DoSomething, she served as the New York Executive Director of Generation Citizen, a national nonprofit transforming how civics education is taught in our country's secondary schools. During her tenure, DeNora doubled the region's revenue and programmatic impact, as well as substantially increased the organization's brand and visibility nationwide. DeNora also led issue campaigns at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law and Citizens Union, a 100-year-old New York good government group, and directed policy for Public Advocate Bill de Blasio. DeNora has shaped state and local law and policy on a diverse portfolio of issues, including campaign financing of elections, education, economic development, ethics, police accountability, social services, and voting reform.

DeNora is Chair of the Board of Higher Heights for America, a national organization providing Black women with a political home exclusively dedicated to harnessing their power to expand Black women's elected representation and voting participation, and advance progressive policies. DeNora is also the President of The Greater New York Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, the nation's oldest and largest volunteer service organizations committed to enriching, sustaining, and ensuring the culture and economic survival of African Americans and other people of African ancestry. DeNora served as an appointee to the New York State Public Campaign Financing Commission, the New York State Civic Readiness Task Force, New York City Public Advocate Jumaane Williams' Transition Team, and New York City Community Education Task Force. She formerly served on Manhattan Community Board 7 (Upper West Side of Manhattan), as well as on John Jay College's Pre-Law Institute Law Advisory Board and the boards of directors of Planned Parenthood New York City Votes, the New York Junior League, and Union Settlement



**New York City  
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**35TH ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM**

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