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RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON WCBS 880

Michael Wallace: Mayor de Blasio joining us live on the news line. We'll be telling you how non-union employees in New York City will now be able to receive six weeks of paid paternal leave, beginning next year. The mayor is going to sign an executive order to make that happen. Mr. Mayor, good morning. Thanks for joining us.

Mayor de Blasio: Good morning. Happy holidays.

Wallace: And same to you.

Debbie Rodriguez: Happy holidays to you.

Michael Wallace: Tell us how this going to work, and why this is so an important an issue to you.

Mayor: Well, I appreciate that. Look – it's for folks who work for the City of New York, but are not in our municipal unions, so it's about 20,000 city employees. They're now going to have six weeks of paid parental leave. That would make us among the very few cities in the country that offer that much. When you combine in vacation time, and sick leave, and other opportunities that folks could tap into, that could mean as much as 12 weeks for new parents. And it's important – look, it's important humanly. I – I remember vividly when Chiara was born, you know, Chirlane had to go back to work soon after. We always looked back and wished that she could have had more time with Chiara right after she was born. We did a little bit better in terms of the time we had with Dante. I think for all families, it's a crucial, precious time, and it's the beginning of life for a child. It's a crucial time for a parent to have time with that child. So we're going to try and make that available to more and more folks. And for our city employees who are in labor unions, we're going to offer those unions the opportunity to start bargaining with us to get this to be a benefit that their workers can have.

Rodriguez: So for now, how will this program be paid for? Is it going to cost people in the city, taxpayers more, Mayor?

Mayor: No, it will not cost taxpayers more, I'm proud to say. You know, with our non-union employees, we were able to take some other resources and apply it to this priority, so there's no impact on taxpayers. If the union members want to take advantage of this, it will be part of the collective bargaining, like anything else. We'll have to find some savings to cover it. But there's been a lot of enthusiasm so far from unions, because a lot of their members want this opportunity – by the way, men and women alike. They want this opportunity when there's a new child in their life, to start that child's life the right way.

Wallace: Moving on to another topic, Mr. Mayor. You announced last week the new strategy for tackling the city's homeless problem, putting some units out there. How's that been going in the early weeks here?

Mayor: We feel very good about it. Look – this is going to be a long fight. There's no two ways about it. Homelessness has been a problem in New York City for thirty, forty years now, going back to the Koch administration. But we finally have the tools we've needed for a long time. What we call HOME-STAT – it's

our new initiative – literally means every day, there will be city officials going through all the key places in the city where there's been homelessness challenges – particularly in Manhattan, from Canal Street to 145th Street – every day, going through the streets, literally canvassing all the streets to see what's going on. We'll have a daily count, daily sense of what's happening. We'll have outreach workers available, who can get to any particular site within an hour, to address any challenge. Any New Yorker will be able to call 3-1-1 and report something, and know it will be responded to promptly. Obviously, on top of that, if there's any instance where there's illegal activity associated, NYPD is now going to have a specially trained unit for dealing with the homeless, that's going to have training in mental health and other challenges, that will be able to deploy quickly to address issues. And finally, you know, we've got three or four thousand people on the street – living permanently on the street. We obviously need to get those folks to help – [inaudible] you can get them off the street. We're going to have literally a personal profile for each to determine what they need; what kind of help, whether it's mental health services, substance abuse – what will get them off the street long-term. There will be a specific case worker to help figure out their path, connect them back to their family, whatever it is – they got to the street somehow. There's a path from a normal life to the street. We have to figure out the path off the street and back to a better life.

Rodriguez: Mayor de Blasio, today and tomorrow are huge travel days, because of Christmas coming up on Friday. A lot of people are going to the airports, and they're worried about security. I'm putting my teenage daughter on an airplane Monday, and – and we're fearful. What's being done in terms of security, to make sure that everyone's safe?

Mayor: Well, there's extraordinary efforts – and you know, in the city, we're vigilant all the time. NYPD is doing an extraordinary job. And, you know, there were concerns after the attack in Paris, for example, and San Bernardino. A lot was done to show that we had very, very strong response out on the streets. We have our new anti-terror unit, our Critical Response Command – 500 plus officer that we included in this budget last June, specially trained to prevent terrorism and to deal with anything that might happen – a more heavily armed, better trained, dedicated force. But look – in terms of what we've seen since those attacks elsewhere, we had a lot of reinforcement around the Thanksgiving Day Parade – it went very, very well. We had a lot of presence around the Rockefeller Center tree lighting – that went very smoothly. There will be plenty of protection at the airports, plenty of extra officers out at any major public events – obviously, looking forward to New Year's Eve as another example. There will be plenty of presence, including some very well armed officers. So I would say everyone should go about their business. I – I've said this a lot of times – we're not going to let anyone intimidate us. We're not going to have any of these very vague threats change our way of life. There's lots of great security presence, and a lot of people watching out for your daughter and everyone else.

Wallace: Alright, on a lighter note, Mr. Mayor, all of New York wants to know – did you and Governor Cuomo exchange Christmas cards?

Rodriguez: You asked? You're bad, Michael.

[Laughter]

Mayor: You know, I – I wish him and his family a Merry Christmas. We did not exchange cards, but this is a time of good will toward everyone, so – [inaudible]

Rodriguez: No – lots of good Italian food on your Christmas table?

Mayor: Always, always.

[Laughter]

Mayor: You know, unfortunately, my mom passed away a few years ago, and she – I can say this with no fear of contradiction – she was the finest Italian cook I ever met in my whole life. No one has ever surpassed her eggplant parmigiana. So, it won't be as good as that, but there will be a lot of good Italian food.

Rodriguez: Okay. I'm going to be craving that all day now. We wish you a Merry Christmas, and thank you so much for joining us, Mayor Bill de Blasio.

Mayor: Merry, Merry Christmas.

Rodriguez: To you, too.

Wallace: Thanks, Mr. Mayor.

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