



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

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

**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY AFTER MARCHING
IN 2015 AMERICA'S PARADE**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: I'm going to say up front that it's an amazing experience to be in this parade. I said for my family there's a special significance, because of everything we experienced. And we're very proud of what New York City is doing now for our veterans. We're proud of our new Department of Veterans Services. We're proud of following President Obama's lead on the pledge to end veteran homelessness by the end of this year.

And I want to emphasize, we've got to get all New Yorkers into the effort of helping our veterans. So first of all, if anyone has an apartment to rent to a veteran – we've got the resources, but we need the apartments – any New Yorker's got an apartment they want to rent to a veteran can call 3-1-1. And we want help on this right away, so we can end veteran homelessness this year.

Second, to all the employers, hiring veterans and hiring their spouses is a real way to honor our veterans. So, a lot of times people say, "What can I do?" Well, there's something every New Yorker can do. Again, if you have an apartment, you can rent an apartment to a veteran. If you have a job, you can give a job to a veteran or their spouse. You're going to get a high-quality employee, but you're also going to be doing something good for our country. So I want to urge all my fellow New Yorkers to honor our veterans through action. With that, welcome your questions –

Question: Mayor, does –

Mayor: I gave him the look first. You may go first.

Question: Mayor, a few hours from now, the PBA and several hundred rank-and-file officers are expected to gather outside of Gracie Mansion. They're not very happy about what they've heard about this arbitrator-proposed contract. What is your message to the rank-and-file, not the PBA leadership? What do you have to say to the cops who are out in front of Gracie Mansion?

Reporter: Mayor, could you take one step back –

Mayor: I want to . . .

Reporter: Take one step back. I'm sorry. We don't want the back of your head –

Mayor: I think the back of my head's fine.

Question: I know, but we want the front of your face.

Mayor: I think the back of my head has a lot to offer.

Reporter: Thank you.

Mayor: Look, here's what I want to say to the men and women who serve us. We're investing in you and we're going to keep investing in you. We believe in making sure you have all the equipment, the technology, the training, the support to get the job done. And that is the first thing to understand. We're going to keep doing that. We have 1,300 more cops coming. We have the best training program we've ever had, thanks to Commissioner Bratton and his team. We have new bulletproof vests. We have more technology than our officers have ever had before so they can be safe and communities can be safe. That's what we're going to keep doing.

In terms of how we approach all our employees, we try to create fairness for everyone. And that's why you saw so many of the uniform unions agree to the pattern we put forward. And it wasn't just their union leaders – their rank-and-file voted for it over and over again. So we believe it's fair. The PBA leadership decided on arbitration. We said throughout that process our door was open. Our door is still open to talk about a long-term contract, but it will be part of the pattern that all the uniformed services have agreed to.

Question: Does that mean they could get a higher raise if they went back to the table?

Mayor: Again, we have a pattern that we are sticking by for everyone. I've been abundantly clear about that. And that's not changing. Every union has specific things that they want to put on the table beyond the pattern, separate issues entirely they want to resolve. Obviously, you saw that in the firefighters' contract, for example. And we were very willing to work with the firefighters on issues beyond the pattern. And as you heard Mr. Cassidy say, he thought the deal that he was able to come to was very fair to firefighters and resolved some issues that have been going back years and decades. The PBA leadership chose not to continue to negotiate with us. They chose arbitration; that was their choice. But our door is always open. We believe the pattern's fair and we're always willing to work with labor on their other issues as well.

Question: Mayor de Blasio, why was your presidential forum in Iowa canceled? Was there a lack of interest from the candidates?

Mayor: Well, it's a couple things. First of all, I want to emphasize – let me frame this, because I think it's important. And I'm going to keep explaining this because it's really important to what I think the future is for this city and this country.

We have to address income inequality. A lot of you said to me in the beginning when I was running, "You can't do it all in this city with city policies." I agree with that. We can do a lot – paid sick leave and affordable housing and lots of ways we can reach people. But we need changes in federal policy.

We need the federal government to have a stronger progressive taxation approach, so we can actually have investments in roads, bridges, subways, infrastructure, education, all the things that will change this city. That's not going to happen without progressive taxation.

We need the federal government to raise wages and benefits, because it still hasn't happened at the state level here and in many other states. So this is why I'm doing this work. In Washington and around the country, people feel the same way. We've got to change the debate, change the political reality, so we can get real changes in Washington that will benefit 8.5 million people here. And I'm going to keep doing that.

The forum was one of many ideas and many approaches. It didn't work, because we reached out to the candidates and they weren't willing to participate. But we have a lot of other approaches that we're going to use that we think will work. The coalition we put together on April 2nd, the coalition we put together on May 12th in Washington, extraordinary cross-section of leadership from around this country. That coalition is growing. We are going to be doing activities all over the country and in Washington to keep pushing the issue of income inequality to the fore. And that's how you change things. So this is a long-run project. This will be years and years of effort. And we're going to keep trying new strategies until we find the ones that we think work best.

Question: On the topic of fantasy sports betting, you may have seen that the Attorney General sent a letter to FanDuel and other fantasy sports companies, saying it's illegal gambling. Your comments on that, saying that New York residents should not participate –

Mayor: I'm not an expert on this topic. I have a lot of respect for the Attorney General and I need to know more about it, but I think the Attorney General's provided a lot of leadership.

Question: Mayor, any lessons learned from the endorsement of Hillary Clinton as the presidential forum is not happening? Some people have said that your foray into national politics has backfired. What's your assessment?

Mayor: I think people who say are not exactly looking at the big picture. This is a beginning of a time of change – I'm absolutely convinced of that. A year ago, some of you remember I wrote an op-ed in the Huffington Post. At that point, candidates – I must say, this included Democratic candidates all over the country – were not talking about income inequality. They were not willing to talk about taxing the wealthy. They weren't willing to talk about Obamacare even. They tried to disassociate themselves from their own president and their own party.

A lot of us believed that that had to change. I believe an amazing thing has happened this last year. The Fight for \$15 movement, you saw it yesterday, has had an extraordinary impact on the discussion in this country, labor has had a big impact, candidates. A whole series of things have come together, including at the local level. You've seen more and more cities pass living wage, higher minimum wage, paid sick leave. We were honored to do that here. Something is changing in this country. This is round one of many rounds to come.

So, I said what I believe. I think the world of Secretary Clinton – everyone knows that, I'm honored to be supporting her. But I said we have to see a vision to address income inequality. And a lot of other people said that to her as well. And I'm very proud of the fact that there were strong voices together, saying "We believe in you," but everyone, every candidate, at every level has to address the most important economic issue of our times. We need to see a vision. Secretary Clinton came forward with an outstanding vision. I'm honored to support her, but this is going to be repeated many times ahead.

So I just want to say, fasten your seat belts, get ready for the long haul. A lot of us – and I mean my fellow mayors, I mean members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, I mean labor union leaders, faith leaders – we are going to be working on every corner of this country to change this nation to address income inequality. We are in this for the long haul. If you look at the difference between 2014 and 2015 – the difference between 2014 and 2015 politically is unbelievable. I've rarely seen so much movement in one year. This is the beginning of something much bigger and I'm going to stick with it.

Question: On the topic of veterans, do you think that Staten Island –

Mayor: On the topic of?

Question: Veterans. Do you think that Staten Island and Manhattan deserve to have a veterans court? They're the boroughs without one currently. And I was wondering if you thought that you'd be willing to increase the budget for those district attorneys offices so that they could open veterans courts..

Mayor: I'm not familiar with what the district attorneys need, so I'd have to hear from them. I've obviously talked to them on many, many occasions and I don't know specifically what they need. I want to make sure we're getting services to our veterans everywhere. And we obviously believe in a five-borough approach to government. So let me get some more information from them and I'm happy to come back to you.

Question: Mr. Mayor, we saw you drinking out of what looked like a Starbucks cup.

Mayor: That is accurate. Rich, you are an intrepid reporter. Dammit, he figured it out. It was a Starbucks cup.

Question: So, Donald Trump has weighed in on Starbucks not saying "Merry Christmas" on their cups. What do you think of that?

Mayor: I think Donald Trump should lighten up. I think he needs to get out more often. First of all, Starbucks serves every kind of person. I think, by the way, as a company, I give them a lot of credit. What they're doing on health insurance, what they're doing on getting educational opportunities to their workers. Bluntly, when we talk about the previous topic, income inequality, if more companies in America were doing what Starbucks is doing, this would be a very different discussion. But they're a pretty lonely example of a company trying to address income inequality meaningfully. So, I don't care what they put on their cups. I care about what they do for working people, and they're doing the right thing by them. Thanks everyone.

Question: Mayor, what'd you think of Mayor Bloomberg's roast last night?

Mayor: [Laughter] I thought it was first-rate. I thought it was wonderful. And, you know, you always have to say, who does the writing. Maybe some of that was his own original material. But whatever combination of his own jokes and other people's jokes, they were first-rate. I enjoyed it a lot.

Thanks a lot.

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