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RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOSTS MEDIA ROUNDTABLE TO DISCUSS MID-TERM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good afternoon, everyone. So we will – I want to talk a few minutes about this year, and obviously happy to talk about this year, happy to talk about the half-way point of the term. And then, at the end, we'll reserve some time for questions on any current events, anything you want to talk about off-topic today.

First, let me start with a happy holidays to everyone. It has been a long year, a lot of work. I hope everyone gets a chance to take a little bit of a break and spend time with family and friends and relax a little bit.

Looking forward to the two-year mark now – time has flown – and I feel very good about what's been accomplished over the first two years of this administration.

A number of you have been with us the whole way through. Some of you are newer. I think the fact is if you look at the things we talked about at the outset, the goals we set, the timelines we set, we feel very good about a lot of the core elements of our mission that have been moved forward – a lot of them on schedule, a lot of them on a very big scale. There's a lot more to do. I think my central message about the future is there's a lot of our agenda that we have to deepen and implement more fully going into the third and fourth years. But I certainly feel very good about the progress we've made over the first two years. And it has really given us a foundation for everything we have to do thereafter.

I'm going to certainly today and in the months after today talk about the affordable housing plan a lot, and how we're going to implement that more deeply next year. I'm going to talk about the Equity and Excellence plan in the schools, which has just begun, but is going to have a very big impact on the school system.

So a lot of the major initiatives are going to be implemented even more deeply in 2016, and I'm looking forward to that.

The same ideas we started with animate us to this day. We believe that this city must be devoted to fighting inequality and creating more opportunity for all New Yorkers – and that's what pervades our agenda – and I think we're seeing some real evidence of the impact the city government can make in terms of a tangible impact on reducing inequality.

I've said many times before, no city can do it alone – New York City can't do it alone. We obviously need real assistance from the federal and state government, in particular from the federal government, if we're going to make the bigger changes we need for the long haul. But we are proud of what we've done to create opportunity and to address inequality issues.

I just want to run through a couple of quick areas here.

On the economy, very good news – our all-time high as a city for the number of jobs we have – over 4.2 million jobs now in New York City, literally most we’ve ever had. And just under 200,000 of those jobs have been added since I took office – and we’re very proud of that fact. Unemployment rate now at 4.8 percent, the lowest it’s been in this city since before the Great Recession.

On crime, obviously NYPD has done an extraordinary job – one of the safest years on record. We’re wrapping up right now a 2.5-percent drop in crime across the major categories compared to last year.

We also, obviously, given the world we’re living in, we have stepped up our capacity to fight terrorism. We, in the last budget, as you know, added over 500 officers for our Critical Response Command. That anti-terror capacity is crucial to this city’s safety. We are the best-prepared city in this country in terms of the ability to fight terrorism and to prevent it. And that capacity is growing.

We see, in terms of the growth of our ability to protect our people across the board, the impact we’re going to see over the next year – 1,300 new police officers as a result of the budget that was passed in June. All of them will be patrolling the streets of this city by the end of 2016, as will the over-700 officers who are moving from desk jobs to patrolling the streets as a result of civilianization. So that’s 2,000-plus officers more – the first time that the NYPD’s patrol strength has been increased in well over a decade, and we think that will make a real difference in terms of driving down crime further, and obviously we think it will be crucial to our efforts to bring police and community together, particularly through our neighborhood-policing strategy, which is just starting to take hold, but I think you’ll see a lot more evidence of, in 2016, of this being a very, very productive new path for the city.

In terms of safety, also, obviously Vision Zero – constantly we’re building on it, but we’re very proud of the fact – 60 fewer traffic fatalities – six-zero fewer traffic fatalities at this point this year than two years ago. Vision Zero has been working. We will have the safest year, if all continues on pace – we’ll have the safest year in terms of reducing traffic fatalities and pedestrian fatalities that we’ve had since 1910.

And then on some of the other big initiatives – affordable housing – the plan is on pace. We have more than 30,000 apartments secured and financed already this year. A lot more will happen in the final days of this year when a number of deals get closed. Obviously, just in the last weeks, the Stuy-Town Peter Cooper deal – that’s 5,000 apartments that will be kept affordable. Another close to 1,000 apartments at the Riverton Complex – we just came to a deal on to keep them affordable. So, the plans on affordable housing are on track, and that team has been doing a great job.

Pre-k – you heard we announced a few days ago, 68,500 kids in full-day free pre-k. That is, I think, the number we’re going to see going forward. It’s going to be the standard of average years going forward. That’s going to have a huge impact. When you think about the delta here, 20,000 kids getting full-day pre-k just two years ago, so now we’re almost 50,000 above that. That’s going to be every single year from this point on, so every single year, 50,000 kids getting that strong foundation who weren’t getting it before. I think that’s going to add up and have a very big impact on our city and on our schools going forward.

Obviously, I mentioned before the Equity and Excellence plan for our schools, Computer Science for All, AP for all – the really crucial grade of having – excuse me, crucial goal of having every one of our second-graders reading on grade level over the next ten years. These are our really foundational pieces to turning our schools around. And you’ll see a lot of growth in those initiatives next year in particular.

Very proud of the work we’ve done to support our immigrants in this city of immigrants, and also to show some examples that we hope are helpful in the national discussion over immigration, particularly the IDNYC program, now at 670,000 cardholders and growing. And there’s been tremendous – tremendous partnership with the cultural institutions and many other parts of the city on that effort.

We're about to go into budget season. It's that time again. I can say on the outset of the next budget cycle, we continue to be very focused on fiscal responsibility. We're going to be very interested to see what the impact of the Federal Reserve rate hike will be. But one thing we know for sure, we made a focus at the beginning of getting our employees under contract. We now have 92 percent of our municipal workforce under contract – that's 310,000 employees. So that work led by Bob Linn and his team has been consistently strong, and I think we've really changed the environment profoundly from two years ago in terms of labor relations.

A lot of focus on the physical plan of the city – you've heard some of the figures. 447,000 potholes have been patched in the last two years. In this year alone, 1,137 lane miles of roadway resurfaced – particularly notable, the first comprehensive repaving of the FDR since it was completed half-a-century ago. And that work was on schedule – or ahead of schedule, I should say – ahead of schedule and under budget. And then on the mass transit front, the \$2.5 billion dollars that we have contributed to the MTA going forward to address delays, to address overcrowding, to – that will lead to some station improvements and certainly will advance major projects for the future like the Second Avenue subway.

Now, on the issue I talked about a lot last week, homelessness, we are using a variety of tools. We had previously announced that we, through a variety of preventative measures and measures to get folks out of shelter and back into homes, had seen some of the new strategies working. 22,000 New Yorkers out of shelter into homes because of our rental subsidies programs, because of some of the other investments we made. The efforts we're making to stop people from being illegally evicted are growing. That will ultimately grow to a \$60-million dollar investment, and we think that will be crucial in helping people stay in their homes, and also addressing any of the illegal activity that some unscrupulous landlords may undertake as a result of development happening around the city.

We are very, very focused on some of the big changes that we need for the future to address our homelessness problem. That's why we have the commitment to 15,000 apartments for supportive housing, the 500 new safe haven beds that we are bringing online over the next six months, particularly working with houses of worship – and that number will grow as needed. And, of course, the overall affordable housing plan because, as I've said, so many more folks who are homeless today, are homeless for economic reasons not because of other challenges. So, as our overall affordable housing plan takes full effect, that's going to help relieve some of that pressure as well.

And then, we also talked about, in the last days, the HOME-STAT program. This initiative, I think, will make a huge difference reaching homeless folks on the streets, giving us much better capacity to get them the services they need and a more consistent follow-through and having a clear sense of what each individual needs to get off the streets. That, as I said the other day, will take real work. Let's face it, homelessness is a long-standing problem, a complex problem, but we're going to have more tools in place than the city's ever had to address these challenges.

And this is, certainly, you know, talking about what's happened over the last two years, gives a pretty clear roadmap for where we're going. We're going to deepen the affordable housing effort, deepen the Equity and Excellence effort. You're going to see a number of tangible milestones. We're certainly going to deepen the efforts to both make this city safer and bring police and community together, and I think, again, those 2,000 more cops on the street are going to be crucial to that.

And, we look at the perspective now two years in. These big initiatives have working. Again, remember that to set up things of this magnitude takes a certain amount of lead time – a certain amount of putting the teams together and getting the pieces in place. They really will start to hit their full stride more and more as we go into years three and four. So, there's a lot to look forward to, from my point of view, in terms of taking this vision and making it even fuller and allowing it to reach even deeper into the grassroots in years three and four.

Just want to say a couple of words in Spanish and then we'll open up, again, to any questions about year two or year one plus year two and then we'll do some current events at the end.

[Mayor speaks in Spanish]

With that, welcome your questions.

Unknown: [inaudible] improvement –

Mayor: I'm working on it. I'm working on it.

Unknown: [inaudible]

Mayor: Every day, baby. Every day.

Gracias – muchas gracias. Feliz navidad.

Unknown: En ingles.

Mayor: Alright, if I have to.

Unknown: *Pero español esta bien.*

Question: What have you learned about being mayor now that you didn't know two years ago?

Mayor: I think the – look, this job is simultaneously inspiring and humbling. It is one of the best jobs, I think, in this whole country, in the sense that you get to do so much good and you get to do so much of it quickly. When you look at what our public servants in Washington deal with every day, and how slow things are and how contentious they are, here we get to do a lot and we get to do it in real time. There's obviously been a lot of agreement between the Council and the mayoralty on a whole host of issues. So it's such a satisfying line of work because we can have an impact, we can address issues in real time. But it's humbling because there are so many challenges. And I think it's fair to say that the world gets faster and faster. So the need to have responses and have them quickly is a constant challenge. But, look, I feel very good about the sum total of the two years. I think I feel that the good moments and the tough moments all teach. So I feel better able to confront the next two years than I was coming in the door – there's no question about that.

Question: Is there something you feel particularly personally proud of [inaudible]?

Mayor: Everyone knows my one true love is pre-k. And I – I care about a lot of issues, but this is the one that I really wanted to make sure we did right. And let's face it, it's easy to talk about it today, but when we put it forward as a vision there were plenty of questions about, you know, could it be done fast enough and well enough. And there were a lot, you know, long nights trying to get things to happen. And we didn't – and we were very honest about this – we didn't know what the final number would be because no one ever did it before, so until you get there, you're never 100 percent sure, but, you know, to be sitting here today and have 68,500 kids in pre-k, to me, is such a joy and such a feeling of satisfaction, and such a profound statement about where we're going as a city, because that's all going to have a multiplier effect – a deep multiplier effect.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: More, because, look, the efforts we're making to serve our immigrants – we are very conscious of there being two simultaneous goals – everything we can do on the ground for families, for individuals to show our respect, to show our embrace, to treat all the people of this city equally, so that's why we have IDNYC, that's

why we have a very aggressive translation effort for all our agencies, that's why we have a robust legal services effort to help families with their immigration legal issues even in anticipation, even before the president's executive action is affirmed. We believe the president's executive action will win the day. We believe it will affect hundreds of thousands of people in this city. And so we wanted to be ready to have that – have a very practical impact very quickly. So we're going to deepen all of those efforts. But at the same time, New York City has a leadership role to play with cities around the country to change the immigration debate. It has to change from the grassroots, because it has not been changing enough. It hasn't – what's happened in Washington hasn't yielding comprehensive immigration reform, and the national debate has been very troubling, honestly, particularly on one side of the aisle on these issues. So change must come from the grassroots. We're very proud of the kind of coalition we've built with mayors around the country, all of whom want to do the same kind of efforts and believe in this change. If enough cities act, if enough states act, we will create national change from the grassroots up.

Question: You talked about wanting to improve how you're getting your message out. So what do you want to do in the next two years or [inaudible] immediate future [inaudible]? Is it, you know, [inaudible]?

Mayor: Yeah, it's going to be a lot more being out in communities. Look, I think it's fair to say the first year or two we had to put the program in place, and this has been a very ambitious vision, and it took a lot of work in this building, a lot of work with our agencies, a lot of work with the City Council to put all the pillars in place. But now it's about implementing this vision every day, and it's certainly about going out to communities and talking about it, and both showing people what the vision is and how it's going to affect their lives, but also hearing from them. So you'll see more town hall meetings. You'll see – I'll certainly be speaking in lots of houses of worship and other community settings. I'll certainly be spending a lot of time with elected officials and other community leaders, hearing from them what we can do better. So I think, you know, we've set a very strong foundation. Now I want to sort of return to my roots, as it were, and go much more out to the grassroots.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: That's really original.

[Laughter]

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: I'm not doing Celebrity Apprentice, I'm doing Undercover Boss. I don't – I don't think I could really pull off Undercover – there's not a lot of six-foot-six undercover bosses. So I think – I think that won't work, but I do find, if you go out and talk to people about what their experiences have been, you know, dealing with city agencies, and parents about what their experiences have been in the schools and all that, you learn a whole lot quickly. So I'm going to be doing a lot of that.

Question: [inaudible] how long do you expect Commissioner Bratton to be police commissioner of New York City?

Mayor: I think he's doing a great job. I mean, look, I think he's doing – my answer – I'm – let me – I'll give you a second, but let me just answer the first part. I think he's doing a great job. He and I really see eye to eye about a bigger vision for both safety in this city and police-community relations. I'd like him to be on the job as long as he wants to do it – it's as simple as that.

Question: [inaudible] how long do you expect [inaudible] planning for a successor in the event that he decides that he doesn't want to be here for as long as [inaudible]?

Mayor: Again, he – it's a very personal decision, as you can imagine. And he and I have checked in on it from time to time. Certainly he's made clear he wants to continue for the next few years. We'll talk more about it down the line. I am always cognizant of the talent we have in each agency. So there's plenty of other good, talented people, but I think he's doing an extraordinary job and I'd like to see him keep doing it .

Question: [inaudible] politics of the job, given your background [inaudible] political consultant? And [inaudible] missteps that you've made, regardless of the politics [inaudible] affordable housing roll-out?

Mayor: I hear your question [inaudible] we didn't realize you were such a policy wonk. So –

Unknown: [inaudible]

Mayor: That's right. Look, I do think when you become responsible for serving eight-and-a-half million people, the policy and the politics I certainly see in a very different perspective. When I was in, you know, more specifically political life, it's probably easier, you know, to think about the political imperative and work from that perspective, but when you actually have to start with the substance, the world gets a little more interesting. I'm very proud of the substance – there's certainly been some things, you know, that I want to build on, I want to do better going forward, but I'm very proud of the sum total of the substance. I think on the politics, and the Community Boards are a great example, I don't think that was particularly surprising – meaning, there's a long history of Community Boards being absolutely within their rights to be demanding and often very negative towards development – and I've said from the beginning, I wanted to do development, but I wanted to do it in the way that I thought was right and fair to communities, which was very different from the previous. It's surprised me that a lot of folks have not been willing to embrace that after many years of a different approach to development that turned them off. So that's an example of something that, from your perspective, may have looked surprising – from my perspective wasn't surprising. I think the good work of this team has shown, you know, that there's plenty of leaders in this city who do embrace this vision – you've seen more and more organizations coming forward to support the affordable housing plan. And certainly, when you talk about the people who ultimately be voting on it, including the City Council, we've heard sustained support – with, you know, concerns, with critiques. That being said, I think the answer to your question is certainly there have been times when, you know, there situations that I wish I had handled better. And I think the challenge, of course, is looking at all the components – the substantive components, the political components, the community components, and trying to get it right. At this level of play and at this volume, there's going to be mistakes. My job is to make fewer and fewer mistakes. My job is to, you know, always learn from everything. One thing I do pride myself on is if I make a mistake I try and learn from it. And – so I don't know if the original estimations were, you know, the way to look at it, because I think they had their own stereotypical quality, but I know that I'm learning from each station.

Question: Do you find that you [inaudible] – obviously the buck stops with you, but for political questions and assessing this political [inaudible] – are you – do you find that you mostly rely on yourself for advice in that area or are there other [inaudible]?

Mayor: The folks that I listen to are the same folks I came in the door with – a mixture of folks who, you know, are in the administration, starting with Chirlane McCray, and through, you know, deputy mayors and other senior members of the administration, and then there's a group of outside advisors I've been working with for many years that I value greatly. But the buck stops with me – I think you're right. The mistakes are mine. I mean, I want to be very clear – I have to composite all the information and make decisions. And some of the times, it's also me reflecting on whether I want to, you know, change the status quo or accept it the way it is. And, you know, I think it was clear in 2013 that my mission was to change the status quo in this city. Sometimes, you know, if you create a strategy and communicate it right, you can make those changes more easily, but other times, it's harder. It – you know, I'm going to change my level of belief that a lot of things have to change in this city, that a lot of things should not continue this way, but I also understand the status quo doesn't always yield so easily.

Question: Looking back, you know, six months ago, when you kind of delivered the pretty blistering attack on the governor – do you think that was the right calculation, you know, six months out, and do you think that has helped or hurt the city of New York?

Mayor: The formulation I keep invoking is that when the governor or anybody in Albany helps New York City, I will praise them, I will support them in that, I will thank them, and when they don't support New York City's interests, I'll say it. And I think it was important to put that definition on the table and make that consistent. That's how we're going to continue over the next two years. Obviously we've been able to do some good work with Albany in recent months, and I'm hopeful that that will be the norm going forward, but I think it was important to simply lay down a standard of this is how we'll look at all things emanating from Albany.

Question: Do you think that helped or hurt the city?

Mayor: Again, I'm – I'm satisfied it was the right approach, and there's certainly been some good work we've done together with the governor and with Albany in recent months.

Question: [inaudible] in helping people get back on their feet. I know HOME-STAT is looking for longer-term solutions for people, but in the meantime, people are waiting for it kick in. Why aren't we seeing more smaller, shorter-term programs that could help people now –

Mayor: You will and I appreciate that you went to look at it yourself. So, let me just frame this a little bit – reflecting on what I had talked about at ABNY the other day – simple point, I put a lot of focus, very personally, on the reality of the number of folks in shelter and how we could get more people out of shelter, how we can do a better job of prevent people of going into shelter – that's where the, obviously, the overwhelming numbers are – at this point almost 58,000 people. Think about the 22,000 who were in shelter and have gone out – that's where our numerical and human challenge is, first and foremost.

The reality of street homelessness – which has been, you know, with us for decades – is clearly more complicated. You're right. For – to get some people off the streets, it will take a long effort, a lot of individual, hands-on work but we have moved aggressively on the safe haven beds – the ones we have in place and the 500 more that'll be in place by June.

I do believe in the drop-in center model and we're going to move towards that as well. We're going to need all these tools, plus what HOME-STAT gives us, which is the constant – constant monitoring of the whole city to understand what's happening, the central database to know what we need to do for each individual, the central caseworkers – and this is a whole different approach that says, look, if there's 3,000 or 4,000 people on the streets on any given night, that's the number of people we can reach and figure out very individualized solutions for. But I think you're right – for some people, you know, they'll go to a safe haven, for some people they'll go to a drop-in center, for some people they won't come in the first time, but maybe the tenth time or the 12th time we connect with them that will start a change, particularly if they see that we have real specific things available to help them. I'll just make one point that was well reported in the Times, and this was about the three-quarters houses, but it's a very powerful story. And I imagine a number of you saw it. It was on the front page, I believe, it was over the summer. A man who was in a three-quarters house and had lost touch with his family, and as a result of the changes we made in the three-quarters houses, and this individual getting services, that led to his family being contacted. And his family had been trying to find him. They found him again. They brought him back home. He's had a lot of his challenges addressed. He's now living a much better life. That's one person. Every person on the street has a story like that. We have to figure out the pathway back off the street.

Question: [inaudible] it's a very complex issue, obviously, but some of these problems are that straightforward. Many people we talked to, it was a matter of getting [inaudible] family –

Mayor: Yup.

Question: – and they were able to go back home. It sounds like, from what we learned [inaudible], that there aren't even enough resources going into the shorter-term problems, and while I realize homelessness is a very complex issue, it seems like shorter-term issues, like having more drop-in centers or dealing with safety and sanitary conditions at the shelters we already have –

Mayor: Yup.

Question: – seem like something that can be addressed sooner than all the months we were waiting for HOME-STAT and now we're waiting for it to kick in. So will we see more to deal with this in the short-term? [inaudible]?

Mayor: Yeah, well, I – I would contest that piece. I would say that, first of all, the investments we've already made in additional shelter security, in addressing some of the issues within shelters – the physical issues within shelters, and the quality issues in shelters – if you look over the last two budgets, because remember – and by the way, anyone who feels frustration over the issue of homelessness, I immediately understand, and anyone who says look at this piece, look at that piece, look at this piece, and then there's another ten pieces behind that, right? – the challenge is it's a very complex playing field – but if you go back clinically – I would ask you to do this – and look at the first budget and look at the second budget, and look at the investments made in addressing the problems in shelter, in preventing homelessness in the case of many families, in helping people back out of shelter. This has been systemic. It is not in the sense of the way you're asking it, it's not satisfying because we invest and invest and it still takes time for everything to take hold, so we would all love, you know, very, very fast solutions to a lot of problems, but I'm convinced that all of these investments, all these changes are steadily changing the situation. But I think the core of your question is exactly right. We have to fire on all of these cylinders simultaneously. We have to prevent people from ending up in the shelter to begin with. We have to get them out of shelter more quickly. We need a host of solutions for people, whether it's safe havens coming off the street or supportive housing or regular affordable housing, which we're obviously focused on building. We need to fix the quality of the shelters we have, which bluntly were left in a poor shape for many, many years – we have to make them safer. We have to make them safer for surrounding communities. And we need a robust presence on the street – a very visible presence – encountering homeless folks and figuring out that individual solution for them, tracking that very specifically so we can follow-up effectively, having a case manager for each individual homeless person. This is a combination of tools that has never been tried before on this scale in the city, not even close. It will not happen overnight, but I'm convinced it will work. And the encampments are another example. I mean, encampments didn't get a lot of attention. They were somehow tolerated. They made no sense. They were horrible for everyone involved. We found that if you applied focused attention you could end those encampments and actually get services to a lot of the folks who were in them. So, that's been our approach.

Question: [inaudible] there are a number of families right now who are being housed inside of [inaudible] hotels [inaudible]. It's Christmas in three days and some of these families were supposed to only be there for ten days – they've been there for much longer. Additionally, we also found that some of these folks held were overpaid for by DHS, [inaudible] cheaper price. [inaudible]?

Mayor: I don't – on the second one, I don't want to assume that's right. I appreciate that you did your research, but I would want us to do ours. Obviously, we enter into bigger contracts, and I'd like us to check that before I assume that that's accurate. Look, again, this is a very frustrating area for all of us, but it's important to be blunt about it and straightforward. If you look at economic realities – so just step back and let's make this very human. The economy stopped working for huge numbers of people. This is everything I talked about in 2013 – low wages, low benefits. If you have a minimum wage job in New York City, it is very hard to find housing. If you have a minimum wage, you probably don't have – minimum wage job – you probably don't benefits in many cases. You're economically insecure. If the price of housing had stayed stable, this would be a very

different discussion, but what have we all seen before our very eyes over 10, 15 years? Constantly increasing cost of housing. Even after the Great Recession, we had this strange double-play where people's economic reality continued to worsen, and the cost of housing continued to go up simultaneously. That has been brewing for years and years. On top of that, I think some major policy mistakes were made four years ago in cutting out some of the strongest tools we had to address homelessness. This is where we find ourselves. I'm trying to be blunt with the people of New York City. This problem is not going away overnight. I need to be clearer about that. I need to be blunter about it. I need to show people we're firing on every cylinder. I need to show people we're not only dealing with the shelter issue, the issue that most New Yorkers never see, but we'll also dealing with the street issue. And that's my responsibility. But I don't want us to feel frustrated without looking at the root causes and the history. So when you talk about the hotels, we obviously look forward to the day when no one's in a hotel. It's not what we want. We want to keep perfecting the tools that keep people out of shelter to begin with. We want to keep perfecting the tools to get people out of shelter and into better housing. The more we get people out of shelter the less we will need the hotels. Our goal is to never need a hotel, obviously. Our goal is to not need as many shelter facilities, but it will take time for that whole super-structure to be built up. It's a problem that's been years in the making – it will take years to get out of. That being said, we see some hopeful signs. If 22,000 people got out of shelter with the tools we have already, that's going to deepen. If HOME-STAT starts to work more and more, more and more people come off the streets, and get to better solutions. So, it's a very tough moment, obviously. It's a painful moment. We don't want to see any families going through this, especially don't want to see children going through this, but it is the economic reality of the times we're living in. And I can safely say now that we've given you a complete package including affordable housing, preventative measures, anti-eviction legal services, rental subsidies, HOME-STAT, supportive housing, safe havens – we've put the whole – the whole set of tools on the playing field in a way that has never been done before. And it will have an effect. It will take time, but it will have an effect.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Look, I want to say at the outset, the Assembly has been absolutely supportive on a host of issues. And the relationship with the Assembly couldn't be better. The Senate has a different view ideologically than I do. That's not a surprise. We've still been able to do work together. And I am hopeful that, you know, as we continue to show – for example, with mayoral control we showed a tremendous cross-section of support in this city, and around the state for it, including Republicans and Democrats, including business and labor – in the end, I believe that will win the day. So, we just have to, you know, continue making the case, communicating constantly with the different players in Albany. I don't want to sound naive and say that, you know, the right position always wins the day, but on something like mayoral control the breadth of support for it is so extraordinary I believe it will win the day for that reason alone. It's been proven.

Yeah.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Look, there's a lot of things I want us to do more of – there's no two ways about that. I'm – I look at the whole experience with tremendous gratitude – great deal of gratitude for the people who have served in this administration, great deal of gratitude for what they've achieved, for the partnership we have with the City Council. And yet, I always feel we need to do more. And the homelessness issue is a great example. We want these strategies to work, and we want them to work quickly. I'm impatient to see more and more results. It's not that I doubt we're doing a lot of the right things, but I know it will take time. And again, I certainly will double-down to communicate better and, you know, to reach out all over the city better. So I feel very good about the ideas we've put on the table, and the major initiatives. I want to see them work more and more.

Yeah.

Question: Over the last year you kind of waded into some national politics – rolling out your Progressive Agenda, there was a plan for a forum in Iowa that didn't happen. You got some heat over the amount of time it took you to make your presidential race endorsement. I'm curious what you learned in that arena over the last year and sort of what your strategy will be for dealing with national politics going forward – whether you'll continue to [inaudible]?

Mayor: Well, a couple of different pieces to that, I'm very proud of the work we did in terms of the Congress – you know, rallying mayors around the country on a bipartisan basis around the transportation bill. Look, the involvement of mayors was one piece of a much bigger equation, but I hope it helped. We certainly got, for the first time in years, progress on the transportation bill. That will be very good for New York City going forward, and as important as the additional investment is I'm always looking to, you know, find ways to change the paradigm because the Washington dynamics today just don't work for New York City – they don't work for cities all over the country. So, the fact that we actually saw something start to move that might indicate bigger changes ahead was very powerful to me. For the first time, we saw an acknowledgement that the federal government has to start investing more in infrastructure – that had been a stuck issue – you know, a paralyzed dynamic for, I think, the previous seven years. We finally saw movement and I think the really bipartisan effort by mayors played a helpful role – and certainly, the members of the House and Senate who asked us to do it thought it would play a helpful role, and that was also a bipartisan group asking us to – all of us mayors to be involved. I think we saw progress on the Zadroga Bill – obviously, was tremendous progress – and that was, again, for many, many reasons, but the same model of a bipartisan effort by mayors was helpful. I think on a different dynamic with the immigration issue – where we're not seeing the outcome we want on the federal level – I still think the fact that cities are working so closely together will be helpful to the future when we finally have a pathway to comprehensive immigration reform. So, I believe that one part of my involvement – the part that's with my fellow mayors – has been very productive and I, certainly, look forward to continuing that. I looked at this, from the beginning, in terms of the national political landscape, as a dynamic where if we didn't change things, New York City would always be held back – if we didn't get the federal government to become an active partner again, in infrastructure, affordable housing, education, mass transit – if we didn't reassert some kind of urban agenda in a country that's evermore urbanized, we would be working with one hand tied behind our back and that's been the motivating force of a lot of what I've done. The part about the presidential race – obviously, I think 2016 is going to be different than 2015, but 2015 was a rare moment. The issue of income inequality really started to pervade the national discussion. It was long overdue and that's what led my judgement – could I, in any way, contribute to that issue being focused on and there be an imperative for leaders to make major commitments around solutions to income inequality? I hope I contributed to that in some way. That's certainly what animated the desire to create a bigger coalition with the progressive agenda and that coalition will continue its work, I hope, for years to come, because it's going to be necessary. You know, the year 2015, in comparison to the year 2014, is like night and day – a lot of factors contributed to that, but it was really great to see, you know, whereas sadly in 2014, there was no serious discussion of income inequality in the national elections – in 2015 there was really in earnest and you saw in the public opinion polling how important that was to the people in this country. I think the progressive agenda is going to have a lot of work to do in the coming years, and then a lot of people are going to get elected in 2016, and hopefully there's going to be a context in Washington where real change can start to happen – much more deep change in 2017 – so that's going to be a crucial year – and equally in states around the country, with new leaders I hope will address these issues. So, I look forward to continuing that work.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Look, I – you know, I'm not in the business of dwelling on the past. I've clearly said I need to communicate better and I need to get out to the grassroots more. It's pretty obvious that some things, you know, worked as we hoped, and other things didn't. On the other hand, I'm sober about the fact that, you know, you try a lot of things in leadership and you don't expect every single one of them to work, you just got to keep learning. So I'd say I learned a lot and I think a lot of these experiences were humbling, but that's a good thing, and I feel very good about the platform we now have to move forward with in 2016 and '17.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: One, two – go.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: I think it's starting to get better, but it's a long road, meaning we have better tools today than we did two years ago for getting people out of shelter – we have better tools today than we had two years ago for keeping people from going into shelter to begin with. That being said, there's still a lot more we have to do to improve the quality of our shelters. There's still a lot more we have to do to keep people from ever getting there to begin with. So, simply because the tools are now finally available and being used on a large scale, I think it's improvement but much more work to be done.

Question: [inaudible] time and resources to try to get the Senate – you know, the State Senate to become Democratic. In the end it didn't work and the Republicans still have control. What's your plan this year?

Mayor: Look, I think it comes down to the choices that candidates will make in districts all over this state and, obviously, that the democratic Senate leadership will make. I think it's going to be a very Democratic year in this state, obviously, especially with the likelihood of Hillary Clinton at the top of the democratic ticket. But I will take my cues from others as to whether I can be helpful to them.

We'll go to off-topic. Go ahead.

Question: What do you miss about, like, before you were mayor?

Mayor: Well, I was going to say softball, but I made a big comeback in 2015 – sorry, it's a sore spot for certain members of the group here. 2014 and 2013 were very, very disappointing years for playing softball – 2015, I was back in saddle, so, that's a good thing.

Look, I miss – like anyone in this work with a family – I miss, you know, the privacy. I miss being able to be with my family in public and just be with my family. You know, it's always a little bit of a strange dynamic when people come up to you all the time and, you know, it's – most people, I have to say, overwhelming majority of people are very courteous and often very kind but, you know, there's something about the privacy of life before that I miss a lot and – but I count my blessings, I really do. I think, you know, this role comes with opportunities to experience extraordinary things and meet extraordinary people – make an impact on people's lives that you can only dream of if you care about public service. This has been my whole life's mission – ever since I was a teenager, I wanted to do public service – so when you get to do it on this level, you can't ask for more than that. You know, I – at the same time, the family is the center of life, you know, for me, and there were some things that were just, you know, more family-centered before, that's harder to do now.

Yes.

Question: You've had several top appointees leave since you started. I was wondering, do you have any regrets or are there – is there anything that you [inaudible] new appointees? [inaudible]

Mayor: Look, I think, we have, overall, a high level of continuity and a lot of really effective people. I mean, this a great team – one of the compliments I get the most from both friends and foes is that they appreciate the quality of the team we have and how accessible they are and how professional they are. I've been doing personnel work a long time, there's no such things as getting it 100 percent right. I certainly try and learn from each situation and I can also say it's a lot nicer to make personnel decisions one at a time than what we had to

go through in the transition, which was, you know, dozens and dozens of key roles simultaneously. But I'd say overall, I'm very satisfied at the personnel we've put together.

Jonathan.

Question: You mentioned that the State Legislative budget session [inaudible] mayoral control. [inaudible] Bloomberg this year. Have you asked him to publicly support [inaudible] mayoral control for you?

Mayor: He has been pretty clear about his desire to stay out of local political and legislative discussions – and I honor that and respect that. But again, I think we've had such a cross-section of support around mayoral control, again, including a lot of Republican leaders and business leaders. I think there's plenty of folks who have helped us to make clear that it's a bipartisan consensus. I mean, the New York City Partnership's a great example – they've really gone to bat, and I'm certain they will again. So I think we have plenty of folks to help make that point.

Question: [inaudible] graffiti is up but arrests are down [inaudible]?

Mayor: We take graffiti very, very seriously. Some of those statistics are very much of the moment and shouldn't be overweighted. NYPD, in fact, more than ever, is focused on quality-of-life offenses. And part of it – as Commissioner Bratton has said – part of why is as the NYPD has very successfully continued to drive down violent crime, that it's freeing up time and energy to focus on quality-of-life offenses. That's before the 2,000 more police officers are on patrol in the next year. So, no, graffiti is a – is a serious offense. I think NYPD has some very sophisticated tools for going at it. So I expect you will see continued enforcement efforts in that area.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Not that I know of. I think it's one of the tools. I don't – I don't know, you know, how the mechanics of it work nowadays, but it's one of the tools. It certainly is a valid tool. I think the enforcement efforts are more valuable, and we've obviously put a lot of energy into enforcement. And I think we have to get at the heart of the matter, which is changing the laws nationally on guns – I'll continue to pursue that. I'll continue to pursue efforts like pushing the gun-divestment campaign, which I think is another way of creating pressure for changes on a bigger level. But, you know, as far as I'm concerned gun buyback is another tool in the arsenal.

Question: [inaudible] Mr. Mayor, the – with the indictments and the convictions of Shelly Silver and Dean Skelos and the sort of environment around corruption, have you had any officials meetings internally to say to your team what are we doing to make sure our people are not getting involved in anything like this? What are we doing to make sure that there's no ethics violations happening and that I'm not – you – are not put in a position where it looks like you're acting because of campaign donations or other stuff?

Mayor: I think the city of New York has a lot to be proud of. This predates me, but I think we've – we've built upon the tradition. The city of New York, you know, over the last ten, 20 years has made tremendous progress on ethics. And if you haven't had a chance to read about the history of New York City in the 1970s, let's say, or '80s, there were tremendous ethics challenges in our agencies, sadly in City Hall, at Police Plaza – you name it. This city should be proud of the fact that a lot – you know, success has many fathers and mothers – there's been real progress over several decades. We have one of the best campaign finance laws anywhere in the country. We have some of the strongest ethical watch guards, like the Conflict of Interest Board, the Campaign Finance Board. We have a very strong Department of Investigation. And it's a good-news story. Unfortunately, you know, understandably, the times that you get to hear about these tools, these mechanisms is when they're catching someone who did something wrong, but I think we can safely say we've made a lot of progress as a city. I'm very proud of this administration's record on ethics – and we went to a lot of trouble to choose people we thought were really very ethically consistent. So I, bluntly, don't feel like I need to give a pep-talk or

refresher. I think people get it. I think they get it very squarely. And wherever we find something that isn't right – and our Department of Investigation has done an extraordinary job – and they are very quick to root out problems at the agency level and to make arrests – and it's very clear there will be consequences for any wrongdoers. So I think our situation and the Albany dynamic are very different.

Question: [inaudible] homeless problem in New York City. Two developments today that make that work a little bit more difficult. First of all you heard about the – Stringer's audit showing that there's not a lot of improvement in the shelters since the Department of Investigation's report [inaudible]. Your response to that? And also, there's a group of homeless people who are complaining about the enforcement of the police, especially [inaudible] encampments, and some of the homeless people are comparing you to Giuliani, saying you're – you [inaudible]. Your response to those two things?

Mayor: You know, anyone who tries to compare me to Giuliani really has an uphill climb. I – I could not be more different. But, no, the – look, this one's not even close. The encampments – think about it. Think about what it meant – you know, there's these settlements of people living out in the open or living under, you know, a railroad tunnel, sleeping in the exposed air, often, unfortunately, also drug dens. This was not an acceptable way of life for these people, and we're not going to tolerate it for them, let alone for the communities around – and what a horrible message it sent to surrounding communities about quality of life. It was tolerated in the past. I don't tolerate it. And we had tremendous success going to the encampments in advance – and don't let anyone tell you otherwise. We went to the encampments in advance, days and days of, in different languages, outreach workers talking directly to the homeless individuals, saying we have a place for you to stay, we have food for you, we have medical services for you – you should not be living out in the open, we have a place for you. And I believe the figure was at the time that we took down the encampments about 40 percent of the homeless accepted services, which is a very rate in historical perspective. So it was the right thing to do. We're not going to allow encampments to reassert – we're just not. I'm not going to tolerate it. My job is to balance a number of factors. And the fairness to these individuals is a crucial factor – they deserve a better life. They do not deserve to be living on the street. Fairness to communities is a crucial factor, too. A community should not have to tolerate that kind of disorder in its midst. As for the shelter dynamics, no, we've made a lot of changes and improvements since the DOI report, and we've documented that. I can't speak to the totality of the comptroller's report, because I haven't seen it, but I can say that we've addressed a number of the issues that came up in the comptroller's report.

Question: [inaudible] you talk about revisiting that, do you have any thoughts on [inaudible]?

Mayor: I'm comfortable with that approach because it's – it's entirely legal and it's disclosed – in fact, disclosed more than the law requires. And in this day and age, until we get a constitutional amendment reversing Citizens United, which is an imperative, and I commend Secretary Clinton for calling for that – and it's something I'll certainly work to support – we're in an environment where a lot of very wealthy, powerful people will use their money to reenforce the status quo. We've seen it in my case and we've seen it in plenty of other people's cases – we've seen it directed against me and directed against other progressive leaders around the country. That's the reality of the times we're living in – we're talking about a huge amount of money. If progressive organizations want to fight back and defend the progressive agenda and do it in a legal manner that is fully disclosed, that makes sense to me given, unfortunately, the legal environment we're working in. When those laws change, entirely different discussion.

Question: Do you think those [inaudible]?

Mayor: The bottom line is that the resources go to promote a progressive agenda. That's what matters.

Question: How are the changes to the bond policies and the diversion policies –

Mayor: Say again?

Question: How are the changes to the bond policies and diversion policies [inaudible] in Albany and do you have a sponsor identified for that?

Mayor: You mean bail? Okay, I'm sorry – I'm going to – I thought bond like financial bond – no, bail and diversion. We have had very good conversations with folks in Albany about the goal of simultaneously, as I say it, my sort of simple formula, reforming both the top end and the bottom end of the structure, so ensuring that the dangerousness of a suspect be taken into account in a bail proceeding and requiring it to be taken into account in a diversion proceeding, but also the kinds of reforms needed to help non-violent, low-level offenders have maximum opportunity to take advantage of diversion and avoid bail dynamics that put them in jail, for example, because they can't afford a low-level bail. So both types of reform are needed. We've certainly found a lot of interest in that in Albany. We haven't published our state legislative agenda yet, but that will certainly be a part of it.

Henry.

Question: Your friend Donald Trump – you have said –

Mayor: That's a good note to end on. Go ahead.

Question: You've said that you would be opposed to the city doing business with him going forward, because [inaudible] so offensive [inaudible].

Mayor: Yes.

Question: Would that principle also apply to other business people in the city whose views are either misogynistic or anti-gay or anti-black or anti-Puerto Rican?

Mayor: I'm not going to give you a broad-brush answer. Obviously we fight out these issues in the political realm all the time. I don't think there's any comparison to Donald Trump. This is not me trying to miss the import of your question, Henry. I think this is a pure factual statement. He is the frontrunner for the Republican nomination. He is a household name. And he has offended almost every ethnic and religious group in this city at this point pretty profoundly, and repeatedly, and in a manner that is unapologetic. I don't think he has any other parallel. So I've said that we will abide by the law, obviously, and we will follow whatever the law's dictates are, but I'm not looking to do business with him and I think what he's done has been very – it's been hurtful to a lot of people in this city and it's been dangerous to the social fabric of this nation. And, you know, I agree with Secretary Clinton, he has, in the end, by his words, unfortunately, done ISIS's bidding.

Question: [inaudible] millions of dollars supporting candidates who oppose marriage rights [inaudible] –

Mayor: We can look at any situation, Henry, but, Henry, I'm being really straightforward with you. You can give us any specific situation – we'll do our best to assess it, but I don't think there is any parallel to Donald Trump right now.

And that's a happy New Year note to end on! So, thank you, everyone, very –

Question: What are you going to do for the holidays?

Mayor: We are sorting that out as we speak. Dante's not home yet. As soon as he gets home, we hope to figure out our plan, but I'm very much looking forward to time with the family.

And I wish everyone happy, restful, joyous holidays, and we'll have a lot to do together in 2016. Thanks very much.

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