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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everyone. Well, here's the day we've been waiting for, for a long, long time – Election Day. And it's an exciting day and it's an important day. And listen, the stakes couldn't be higher. What this day means for New York City is just extraordinary. This election will decide whether we get a stimulus or not, whether we get the kind of stimulus that will help the city recover and get back on his feet and move forward. This election will decide whether there's a vaccine we can believe in or not. Vaccine's coming, depending on who's president, people are going to believe in it more or less, take it more or less. This election will decide that. This election will decide whether we have someone in the White House who cares about climate change and is ready to take it on, which is so crucial for New York City, or whether we're going to see more and more years of inaction. There is so much on the line right now – most important election in our lives, by far. So, the most important message of the day is, get out and vote. 1.1 million New Yorkers voted in early voting – it's a triumph right there. It's a triumph for democracy. We could have that many or more voting here on Election Day. It's so important to get out and vote. No excuses – get out and vote today if you have not voted already.

Now, what are we've been seeing so far since the polls open at 6:00 AM? There are definitely a few problems and we need those problems addressed by the Board of Elections, but, overall, it has been going well. It's been going smoothly. We're seeing some long lines in some places, other places not so bad – calm, organized – that's the good news. So, a perfect environment for people to get out there and vote. Let's be clear, there's a very good chance we will not have clear results of the presidential election tonight or even tomorrow. This could go on for a while, depending on how it plays out. But that's something we've seen before in this country's history, not even that long ago. And that's something we'll be ready for here in New York City, either way. So, if you have not yet voted, polls open until 9:00 PM. If you are in line by 9:00 PM, the poll site will stay open until that line is done, until you cast your vote. If you're not sure where to vote, go to voting.nyc.gov to find your poll site location.

Okay. Now, if you have an absentee ballot and you've not yet sent it in, the best thing to do is to drop it off at a poll site, any poll site or Board of Elections office. You just have to drop it off. You don't need a stamp or anything. Now, if you're going to put it in the mail, here's the best advice – actually go to a post office to make sure it gets postmarked today. That's the legal requirement. You don't want to put it in a post office – in a mailbox and find out it was not stamped with today's date on it and postmarked with today's date. So, go to a post office. That is your best bet if you want to drop it off in the mail. Again, to everyone who has voted so far – 1.1 million New Yorkers – I am so proud of you. I am so thankful for you. Whoever you voted for, that's not the point. The point is you voted, you cared, you made an impact already. And this

whole country, it's astounding now how many people have voted already – around 100 million votes cast already. That's stunning. And that's a good, good sign for our future.

Now, want to make sure you get some additional observations from someone who has been leading our efforts to encourage people to vote, to make sure voting is a better experience, to make sure that people get translation services and support, to make sure people know where to vote. So much of this great work has been done under the leadership of Deputy Mayor Phil Thompson. So, Deputy Mayor, what are you seeing out there? What are your observations today?

Deputy Mayor Phillip J. Thompson, Strategic Policy Initiatives: Well, thank you, Mr. Mayor. Most poll sites opened on time and, as the Mayor said, appear to be operating fine. There are some poll sites that opened late – this is not acceptable. We reported these problems to the Board of Elections. And, as the Mayor has said earlier, we will be following up on ways to reform the Board of Elections post-Election Day, because New Yorkers deserve better. We're expecting a great turnout today. We're excited that so many New Yorkers have already voted and we're expecting an orderly voting process as well. Nonetheless, we have hundreds of New York City Election Day observers throughout the five boroughs to monitor any instances of voter intimidation.

Today is a day of celebration. So many New Yorkers have already turned out to vote. It's gratifying to see our unity and upholding our democracy. In this very building, 235 years ago, delegates to the Continental Congress met to map out the Constitution of the first democracy in the modern world. Our ancestors fought a civil war to extend democracy to all people in this country and to extend it into the economy as well. My parents' generation, including my father, joined the military to fight fascism in World War II, and then came home to fight racial segregation, all the time fighting for democracy. Now is our turn to stand up for our democracy. We're privileged to have the right to vote in free and fair elections. Let's use our rights so we don't lose our right. No matter what the outcome of the election today, we will continue to fight for justice. And we will win that fight by being united, determined, and peaceful by adhering to democratic values. We will not win by imitating the shenanigans of the enemies of democracy. As my grandmother often said, two wrongs make a right, being in the right will make us victorious. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Well, your grandmother was right, Phil. And thank you very much, obviously appreciate everything you and your team has done to make these elections work. And there's more work ahead, as we've talked about in recent days, to improve and reform our Board of Elections. And we'll have plenty to say on that in the days to come, but, right now, let's talk about the situation after the polls closed, because there's a lot of concern out there. I want everyone to know that we do not have a specific or credible threat of any kind of violence or unrest at this point. We'll be ready for any eventuality, but there's nothing specifically showing up at this moment that causes alarm. There are no major protest scheduled at this point. Look, here's the bottom line – our job, representing all of you is to make sure that everyone votes, everyone is heard regardless of viewpoint, and to continue in that spirit in the days and weeks ahead. Whatever the outcome, no matter how long it takes, we believe it's so important to respect all voices, to act in a manner that respects everything that we love about our democracy and our nonpartisan tradition of government. So, every single agency of the City government will act in that nonpartisan manner, whatever the outcomes here. We are here to serve all New Yorkers, and that's every agency,

whether it is here at City Hall, or the NYPD, or the Department of Education, or you name it, we're all here for the same purpose to serve everyone. Now, if there is going to be protest, as always, it needs to be peaceful, and peaceful protest will always be respected and facilitated. But we will not allow any violence. I want to be clear once again about this. And it's the responsibility of the government to step in if anyone intends to do violence or anyone commits an act of violence. But I also want to say to those who may choose to protest, how much – you have an important responsibility as well, if you see anyone suggesting violence or starting to act in a violent manner, move away from them, separate from them, report them. For so many of you who believe in change, but believe in doing it in a peaceful manner, it is so important to set the right tone from the very beginning and not allow anyone to hijack your protests or create the wrong atmosphere. If people have something to say, let's hear it, but let's hear it in a peaceful manner.

Let me say one more thing before turning to our daily indicators, because here we are at the end of a four-year road and I personally have been so moved over these years, watching how the people of this city and all over the country have responded to an absolutely unprecedented challenge. Look, there've been times in the last four years where we've seen our democracy threatened, where we've seen overt injustice, where we've seen overt racism, attacks on immigrants – you name it. It's all been very painful and it could be caused for people to be depressed or overwhelmed. But what I've seen more and more over the years is people fighting back, people resisting, people saying, no, this is not what our city or a country are meant to be. We're going to do something different and better here. And I have to tell you, it is actually renewed my sense of the strength of our democracy, the sense of community that people have. I've seen this all over the five boroughs. I've seen this all over the country, that people care. And, you know, sometimes when you see the headlines, they can sound dire, but every-day people – it's extraordinary how compassionate the people of this city, the people in this country are, how engaged they are. You saw it in these last days – 100 million people voting. And that's just unbelievable and that gives me hope. So, whatever's about to happen in the days ahead. I keep my faith in the people and the people have really shown us something in recent days – the people are not giving up and we should never, ever give up.

Let's go to our indicators. And, obviously, the indicators are all about a challenge that we are facing together. And here's a good example, New Yorkers having banded together to fight the coronavirus with extraordinary success. And now, we face a challenge and we're not going to back down in the face of that challenge. We're going to push these numbers back down again. So, let's go over them today. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, that threshold is 200 patients – today's report, 83 patients with a confirmed positivity level of 31 percent. So, the number of patients, again, staying in a range that we've generally been in, in recent weeks, that positivity level, a little higher than I'd like to see, obviously. So, we're keeping a close eye on that. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average, the threshold is 550 cases. Now, we're over that today, and, again, a cause for concern – 605 cases. We are watching that very carefully. Some of that, again, is because of a lot more testing, but it's still a cause for concern. Number three, most important number, percentage – I'm sorry, percentage of people testing citywide positive for COVID-19, threshold five percent. Okay, today's daily report is clearly [inaudible] it's 0.38 percent. We've seen that from time to time when a surprisingly low number of test results have come in for the day, that can vary by day. That that number will change and go upwards as more test results come in. But the truest number is always the seven-day rolling average number – this number 1.589 percent,

this is actually a little better than it's been in recent days – not where we need to be, ultimately, but a little bit better. So, that's the most important news of the day, that number certainly says that there was some real hope that we can continue our progress.

All right, let me finish on the topic of the elections in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

Everyone, get out and vote. If you have not voted yet, say it in every language – if you have not voted yet, get out and vote. You have until 9:00 PM tonight. With that, we will turn to our colleagues in the media and please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: Good morning, all. We'll now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Deputy Mayor Phil Thompson, by Dr. Chokshi, by Laura Wood, the Senior Advisor and Senior Council for DemocracyNYC, and by Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. First question today goes to Matt Chayse from Newsday.

Question: Hey, good morning, all. How are you?

Mayor: Good. How are you doing, Matt?

Question: I'm doing all right. So, my first question is for Dr. Varma, or Dr. Chokshi, or both. Gentlemen, to what extent are you seeing fatigue with the pandemic restrictions and how are you combating that, if you are seeing it?

Mayor: Go ahead, doctors.

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: Okay. This is Jay, I can go ahead and start. I mean, I think that – I think probably the easiest place to start is with our own personal lives. You know, I, myself, my wife, my three kids, I mean, this is a very challenging experience for everybody. And so, I think, you know, we personally, you know, are focused on what are the things that we can do day-to-day to make ourselves happy and comfortable. What are the things that give us pleasure that may not be the things that we would normally do, but those are the things that we can do in our regular life? And I do think that throughout the city you do see, you know, both the combination of people experiencing fatigue. You know, you see parties that people are having that need to be broken up. And we, obviously, want to crack down on those and minimize those as much as possible, but we also have empathy. We know that people are experiencing these challenges. So, what we've been really working on is trying to increase the amount of awareness and campaigns that we can do particularly about the importance of wearing a mask indoors, particularly during this time right now when we know people are likely to gather indoors, we want to advise against large groups, but we know that they might happen. And so, really the most important thing is just to wear that mask and maintain your distance.

Mayor: Dr. Chokshi, do you want to add?

Question: Yes. And thank you for the thoughtful question. I think Dr. Varma said it well, you know, particularly our focus on empathy. Pandemic fatigue is very real, and it's something that we have to both keep in mind with respect to what New Yorkers are going through every day,

but also understand it as a threat to our progress with respect to how we need to continue to combat the coronavirus. One of the concrete ways that we're really thinking about this as part of our own response is to make sure that we make the small accommodations so that we don't find ourselves in situations where we have to make larger accommodations or restrictions. So, one of the ways that we did this, for example, over Halloween, was to make sure that, you know, kids could still have fun, they could do things outdoors, you know, make sure that people were gathering safely in smaller groups. So, not restricting everything, but allowing people some outlets, but doing it in a way that prevents further spread of the virus, because we all want to avoid those more draconian measures.

Mayor: Go ahead, Matt.

Question: Okay. Thank you very much. And for you, Mr. Mayor, with a new round of protests possible in the aftermath of the election, can you tell us to what extent cops have been disciplined already with specific numbers, exoneration, sanctions? And when exactly is your promised report from the Corp Council on police behavior from the last round of protest to be released?

Mayor: That report Corp Council and Department of Investigation is, from the best I've heard, days away. We're looking forward to that report and understanding what that investigation has found and what it tells us for what we need to do, going forward. We'll get you the exact facts. Obviously, there was some very notable cases where officers were suspended or modified, and there's going to be disciplinary trials in some of those cases. And look, going forward, it's quite clear we have to do more to show that in the rare instances – and they are rare – where an officer does something wrong, that there's going to be very fast, clear, discipline. That's something I expect from the NYPD. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Michael Gartland from the Daily News.

Question: Morning Mayor, can you hear me?

Mayor: Yeah Michael? How're you doing?

Question: I'm alright. So the first question I had has to do with the preparation for protests and unrest or whatever we're going to see into the evening. So the City is telling businesses, bring in items that are unsecured or not tied down on the street, but not to put up plywood to cover the windows. I mean, it seems like both of those responses would be for the same sort of thing. Why the difference there? Why tell business owners, you got to take your stuff in, but don't tell them you got to put up plywood?

Mayor: Look, this is based on the judgment of public safety professionals, and they've obviously had an ongoing dialogue with the business improvement districts and the business community. I think they are different things, you know, obviously used in different ways, but look, each store owner has to make their own choice. Some have decided they want to put something up. I think it's fair to say the vast majority have not, but it's public safety professionals just using their best judgment as to what matters most. Go ahead.

Question: Next question is on the election and elections in general, do you think it would be a good idea to, and I'm not sure exactly how this would be done, but to move the Mayoral race to years where you have a presidential election to encourage more turnout. You know, I'm sure there all kinds of considerations that go along with that, but I was curious on Election Day, what your thoughts were on that Mr. Mayor?

Mayor: It's a really interesting and fair question, Michael. I'm not sure I would agree with that assumption. I think we have got to continue the work of democracy and I'll offer my thoughts and see the deputy Mayor has some as well. I think it's not so much about saying, Hey, we can only have one year, one day or one week, every four years where we all get interested. I think it's something much deeper than that. We have got to deepen the efforts to engage people in voting and in all sorts of other civic participation. That's why we have a Civic Engagement Commission. That's something that was decided by the people. That's why we put forward a reform of our campaign finance laws to get big money out of elections in the city, make it easier for grassroots candidates. So there'll be more engagement, more candidates who represent a broader range of communities. That's why we fought for early voting and early voting is making a big difference in terms of people being able to participate. So, no, I think it's fine if it continues on the same cycle, but I think we've got a lot more work to do to show people why voting matters. Go ahead Phil. You want to add?

Deputy Mayor Thompson: I agree fully with the Mayor and there are many things that we could do that other states already do to make voting easier. So same-day voter registration. Some states allow voters to vote at any polling site, not just any specific one in their neighborhood, and there are many other reforms that need to happen in order to make it easier for people to vote. So that's part of the agenda we'll be pursuing after this election.

Mayor: Yeah, and Michael, absolutely everything that Deputy Mayor Thompson raised, obviously the profound changes we need at the Board of Elections, which is crucial because we want early voting to be appealing. It was difficult this time because of the lines. We want to fix that – we need a different Board of Elections to do it, and also I mentioned it yesterday look I mean, we're the greatest city in the world where the place is supposed to be the most innovative and creative. When it comes to voting this City and this State have been way behind the nation in so many cases, and we just got our democratic clock cleaned by Harris County, Texas that came out with a great innovation, 24-hour voting. We didn't do that. They did that, and I give them a lot of credit in Harris County, Texas – 24-hour voting allows so many people who work overnight shifts or have long days that they have to deal with. It gives them options. You'd think that the place that would have happened first is in the greatest city in the world and the place that's known for being a 24-hour city. That's an amazing innovation. That's something we should think about for the future as well. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Emma Fitzsimmons from the New York Times.

Question: Hi, good morning, Mayor. I had a question for you about the stimulus. You've been talking a lot about what a Biden presidency would mean for New York City. Have you had any talk with Biden and his campaign? Do you have any guarantee that New York would benefit from a second stimulus?

Mayor: I spoke with the vice president on the day, obviously, we all memorialize those lost on 9/11 and the conversation was obviously broader, but I did talk to him about the need for New York City to come back, and especially in that site, a place that epitomizes both those we lost, but also the strength and resiliency of New York City, you know, we talked about New York City's come back and how important that was for the country. I've spoken to a number of people in his world about stimulus, and I know there's tremendous support for it, and I think you've seen Emma in his public statements, and also the statements about from people close to him about him looking at the example of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and really understanding he's in a similar historic moment to what Roosevelt was in 1933 – in the midst of the depression. I think all signs point to not just a stimulus, but a huge stimulus, the kind of stimulus that Nancy Pelosi and the House passed, for example. So nothing more important in this election today than the future of a stimulus that could really put New York City and this country back on its feet, and I'm absolutely convinced that's what Joe Biden will do. Go ahead, Emma.

Question: Thank you, and I know Biden is very close with Governor Cuomo. What's your relationship with him? Like I know you're more sort of the Bernie wing of the party but is he – well, I guess, how would you characterize your relationship with Biden?

Mayor: I've had limited contact over the years. I mean, perfectly cordial on a personal level. I remember speaking to him when he was in the vice presidency and we talked about some of the issues facing the city and he offered some really helpful advice. You know, we've had obviously some ideological disagreements, but look, I think he's the kind of person to his great credit that believes in a big tent believes in representing everyone in this party, in this nation, and I look forward to him being our president and Kamala Harris being our vice-president. I think New York City will have a very, very welcome ear in the White House when Joe Biden's there.

Moderator: The next is Henry from Bloomberg.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor, how are you doing today?

Mayor: I'm doing well, Henry. How about you?

Question: I'm doing okay. Hanging in there. I wanted to ask you about the boarded-up stores particularly in Midtown Manhattan and which are being shown all over the country, and obviously it's not a good look for New York City, and I'm just kind of asking you and asking myself really, what does this say about New York City, about the faith that people have in their Police Department and in the capacity of the city to maintain order in the months following the demonstrations where looting just went on almost unpunished throughout the city. It's – I'd like to hear your thoughts about what this says about the credibility and confidence people have in the Police Department.

Mayor: Yeah, Henry, I understand the question, but I think you may be reading more into it than is there. We're at an unprecedented moment in history, and a moment that will pass. The frustrations that were unleashed in the course of the spring, we're based in the coronavirus, and then obviously for a lot of people, we're about the injustices in this country. Some other people were just committing acts of violence and crime, but that was an extraordinary moment. That is not a moment, I believe, we'll see repeated in the future. I think we can't understand – we can't, we cannot misunderstand something that was of a particular moment and assume it means

something greater than it does. The fact is going forward. We're going to have a very different reality.

Now, look, I'll be very clear. I think of Joe Biden wins. I think there'll be a lot of healing in this country. I think we'll get the support we need to move forward much more quickly. I think there's a huge difference depending on the outcome. I think of Joe Biden wins. We're going to have a vaccine that people will believe in and that will cause people to be more likely to use it, and that will speed up our recovery on that level as well. But, you know, we had a few days that were really extraordinary and painful, and then as per usual, New Yorkers got right back to living our lives, got rocked to right back to work, stores reopened. I don't want to make it more than it is, and also what you're seeing, Henry has happened around the country. We're not the only place where people in central business districts are boarding up out of caution because they know it's an unprecedented moment, but then this moment will pass. Go ahead.

Question: Okay. Thank you for that, Mr. Mayor. I guess, you know, I've got a long list of questions. I'm going to go back to the issue of who's getting tested and what this data means for New Yorkers, and there was a report in the New York Times over the weekend that testing seems to be a lot more prevalent in affluent neighborhoods, which are showing the least incidents of infection, and when that happens, obviously that skews the city-wide averages, and again, I'm wondering how effective is this data point if most of these people are a lot of these people are being tested who have very little chance statistically to be infected by the virus?

Mayor: I will start and turn to Dr. Varma and Dr. Chokshi. Henry, I'd say, first of all, I think if I had a general wish for what we do going forward is that New Yorkers in general, across every neighborhood, every background that people just got tested more, you know, we gave some really important guidance from the Health Department a few weeks back about, you know, getting tested monthly and, and situations that should cause people to get tested more quickly. I think everyone needs to get tested more, and that would be the best thing for this city. So we get the truest picture, but also remind you that where we concentrate our testing resources is where the need is greatest, where we're seeing issues and problems. So I'm not sure that that report accurately portrays the way we shift our resources toward the problem. I don't think we're getting an inaccurate view because those who are, you know, the healthiest are the ones getting tested because we're actually moving the resources where the problem seems to be greatest. Go ahead, Dr. Varma.

Senior Advisor Varma: Sure, yeah, let me highlight a couple of things I want to first pick up on, on where the Mayor left off. We made a very conscious decision starting in April that we were going to make New York City you know, reach testing levels that are absolutely essential to be able to control the virus, and that means basically getting to places that aren't seen in the US and honestly, most places in, in other economically similar countries, and when we decided to allocate those resources, we intentionally put them in the areas that are both hardest hit and, or areas where there are limited access to health resources and where we thought people would be highly vulnerable. So we have very intentionally done that and consistently used our data to target an increased testing in areas where we find that the actual acceptance of testing isn't as high on the assumption that the more likely you are to effectively trip over it in your neighborhood, the more likely you are to take the time out of your day to have that done. So we can't correct you know, decades, or if not centuries of inequality, where there may be people in wealthier areas that are actively seeking out more testing over time. But we have intentionally

put our resources into the places so that people who have higher degrees of vulnerability or less economically advanced can get those, and then I would say the second point is just about the data. I think it's probably worth not taking all the time on this, but we can certainly schedule another time to discuss in detail, but just to reemphasize, this is just one part of many different data points, and the fact that we have been able to collect this data at very, very high levels across every neighborhood – it has proven very good at helping us to identify areas of higher versus lower transmission.

Mayor: Dr. Chokshi, you want to add?

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Yes, sir. I'll just add one point on this, which is to, to say that the hyper-local response that both the Mayor and Dr. Varma described is something that we have refined over the last few weeks and months, particularly with respect to how testing resources can be deployed. So we've both expanded what you can think of as more stationary testing sites in the community but made it so that they are accessible to New Yorkers wherever they live. But then we've added a host of more mobile testing options, whether it's a mobile testing van or pop-up sites that we can bring to areas that have a higher rate of cases or lower rates of testing or partnering with community physicians to actually give them the testing supplies, the testing kits that they need. So that's given us a layer of, of being very nimble with respect to pushing our testing resources where they need to be on a day-to-day and week-to-week basis.

Mayor: Thank you.

Moderator: The next is Nolan from the Post.

Question: Can everybody hear me?

Mayor: Yeah, Nolan. How are you doing?

Question: I'm alright, Mr. Mayor, hope you're doing well too. The Police Department released stats late last night that showed that murders are up 37 percent for the year, and shootings are still on pace to more than double. Where's the Police Commissioner. Why isn't he here to face questions about this?

Mayor: Nolan, look – the statistics showed a number of things, and we've talked about the challenges we've faced because of the coronavirus and all the challenges in our society, but there were also some very important examples in those reports that I think we need to remember. Look we saw a huge increase in gun arrests. That's a very important, positive thing. We saw some major categories of crime actually going down this October versus last October, murder down by one, but still that's one life saved. We saw rape going down, burglary, grand larceny, other categories. So I think this is indicative of the fact that the NYPD, despite everything that was thrown at it is rallying its forces, working more closely with communities. We are going to take the neighborhood policing philosophy and make it work in this situation, keep making adjustments, obviously our new Chief of Patrol Juanita Holmes was going to be a key figure in that. So I think if you look at that report closely, it shows us some of the things that are part of how we're going to make the comeback here. And again, the Commissioner and I get together and we have something to specifically report on as we did the other day with the naming of Chief

Holmes, and it's something that indicates to me the future direction of this department. Go ahead.

Question: The follow-up on Henry's question about confidence in the City's ability to handle post election protests, in June – on June the third, the night of June the third, you are out there telling protesters it would be okay to continue protesting after the curfew was imposed, provided the protests remained peaceful at the same time, your Chief of the Department, Terrance Monahan, was telling reporters he was cracking down on the protest because curfew was curfew. That night the cops cracked down on the protesting Cadman Plaza, a lot of people were hurt, what are you doing to avoid similar miscommunications this time around?

Mayor: Nolan, respectfully, I don't – that's not how I remember it all. I don't think that's accurate. We made very clear that there was a curfew and people needed to abide by the curfew, but there was also a very consistent effort by the NYPD to say to people, look, we're asking you to disband now as a curfew begins, and sometimes people continued to protest for awhile and there was a continued dialogue urging people to stop protesting and disperse, and that's what happened in the vast majority of cases. There were obviously a couple of cases that didn't go as well as that, that we've looked at very carefully wanting to do better going forward. But I just want to remind you again, the vast majority of what we've seen throughout this horrible year, 2020 has been the hardest year in so many ways, but what we've seen in general is peaceful protest, respecting peaceful protest, people working together peacefully. That is the future. That's what I expect to see from this point on if there is protest and we're going to do everything we can to communicate clearly what the ground rules are and when there's a situation that people are being asked to do something different, get out of a road or something, to clearly communicate clearly communicate the consequences and then act on them. Please go ahead.

Deputy Mayor Thompson: I just want to say I lived through 1967, 1968, when over 80 cities in America burned down, and the frustration that people were feeling right now because of the virus, because so many people have lost employment and income, is no less than it was in 1967, 1968. But if you look at how people responded in New York and across the country, actually, as the Mayor said, it was extraordinarily peaceful and people really had more trust and belief that through peaceful demonstrations, their voices would be heard, government would respond, and compare it to what I saw in '67, '68, there was minimal damage. Now, any violence, any damage is too much, any looting is too much, but we've come a long way since then, and I don't think we should lose sight of that. And regardless of the results of the elections tonight, I really believe that we're going to see the same kind of leadership displayed by people who want to protest, if they do protest, and we're going to work collaboratively with them as we have. And I just think it needs to be put in context.

Mayor: Well said. A man who knows his history. Thank you. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Jessica Gould from WNYC.

Question: Hi, happy Election Day.

Mayor: Happy Election Day. How are you?

Question: I'm all right. On the theme of protests over the weekend we know that pro-Trump caravans drove around and some were using emergency vehicle lights and sirens, and some passersby said they were threatened, one said that she was injured, but we don't think there – we didn't hear about any arrest or enforcement from the NYPD on that side, but then when there was an anti-Trump protest, there was a crackdown, and as of early this morning, we heard that one of those protesters was still in custody after two nights. Can you explain what's going on there? And you know, you've said that NYPD officers treat all protesters the same. So how does this fit with that?

Mayor: Look, I want to get all the specific facts, but I know because I see the reports every day, I know people across the ideological spectrum who have been protesting and if they violate a law or they cause harm to someone else, people are being arrested. There's clearly evidence that it happens to people across the spectrum. So I don't know about everything that happened with those caravans and there's anything else if someone was injured and they're pressing charges, obviously that's going to be investigated and acted on, but I just don't see any evidence of a disparate approach. There's been, to pick up on what the Deputy Mayor said, hundreds and hundreds of protests over the course of this year, this incredibly painful and emotional year, the vast majority were peaceful throughout with no arrests whatsoever, and then where there have been arrests, obviously it's tended to be very few people amongst larger groups of protestors, but it has to be, and it will be, and it has been a fair treatment across the board. I mean, that's what we're really, really adamant about. And if anyone has you or anyone else has a specific instance that needs to be followed up on, we want to know about it because if someone wants to press charges who hasn't already, you know, we obviously want to make sure they have the right to do that and the NYPD will follow up. Go ahead

Question: Okay. On a totally separate point. It's cold outside and we're hearing from teachers and students that in classrooms, it's also cold inside, and we know that windows are left open to improve ventilation, but as it gets colder and colder is the plan to keep those windows open or is there another option for ventilation that will help people stay warm in the winter?

Mayor: Jessica, it's a real important question and a very common sense question. I thank you for it. So the head of the school facilities efforts at DOE, Kevin Moran and his team, had done a great job on this. It really depends on the school and the classroom. There are schools where they'll be able to keep the windows open and adjust the temperature effectively. There are schools where they've added filtration systems, so they don't need to have windows open. There are schools or individual classrooms really where they'll have to put air purifiers in the room. It's all tailored to each school in each classroom, but this has been on our minds from the beginning of the school year. So generally I think the fact will be that if a school can't keep the windows open and keep the room temperature at an acceptable level for the kids and the teachers, then that's the kind of place where we either put in additional filtration systems or put in air purifiers as an alternative. Go ahead.

Moderator: We have time for two more today, the next is Gersh from Streetsblog.

Question: How are you guys doing? I really appreciate you taking the call. Mayor you're all right?

Mayor: I am doing well. Happy Election Day, Gersh.

Question: It's always a happy day, yes. Okay, Mr. Mayor, I'm going to change gears a bit and follow-up on the recent sidewalk retail announcement that you had made. You know many safe streets advocates want more space for pedestrians, not less, because sidewalk space is already limited in New York City, especially after every afternoon and around 4:00 pm, when sidewalks typically get covered by garbage bags that could be put in curbside spaces. So you had an open streets plan that gave pedestrians a lot more space, but obviously it was limited to about 80 miles of street. Do you have a larger permanent plan for pedestrians, perhaps reserving curbside spaces for garbage so pedestrians aren't squeezed on garbage covered sidewalks?

Mayor: Well, look, Gersh it's sure is an interesting idea. It's something I'm certainly happy to look. The – I want to emphasize that I do hear you loud and clear about keeping sidewalks available and we are obviously one of the great walking cities in the world, and that's part of what makes us, you know, a very special place. So we have to protect that. Now, we know there's less activity in some parts of the city than there were before – there was before the pandemic. That we'll come back over time. We know that during the pandemic, getting people outside is even more important. So I'd say that what we're doing here with the open retail, we're going to do that through December 31st, see how that goes, the open storefronts, that really responds to the moment and I think that's necessary, and then we'll see if it's something that people are part of our future. We know open streets are part of our future. It's been a huge success. We know open restaurants are going to be a part of our future, that's a huge success, and that will take up some of the curbside areas. But you know, what you're proposing is obviously a much bigger idea. Look, I think we have to look at a host of things going forward because as we come back from the pandemic and we will, we need to learn some of the lessons here. Open streets, open restaurants have been a revelation and certainly points in the direction of being even more creative as we go forward. Go ahead, Gersh.

Question: So let me follow up on that. You know, you've talked a little bit about open streets being a permanent part of our city scape. I don't know if you're aware of this, but you know, some of the neighborhoods where there are very successful open street programs like 34th Avenue in Jackson Heights in Corona, the DOT – you're own DOT – has gone to the local community boards in some of those communities, and the DOT is facing an amazing amount of resistance from some of those community boards where there are a lot of car drivers, certainly not the majority, but a plurality of people, own cars. Are you preparing some sort of way to get past some of that knee jerk reaction, negative reaction to a simple change like an open street?

Mayor: Yeah, Gersh, you and I have been down this road, you know, I say this sympathetically, we've been down this road many times with Vision Zero. As we were adding bike lanes, other changes and Select Bus Service, we've often had opposition of community boards. I don't want to stereotype community boards, a lot of good people, well meaning people serve on community boards, you know, they give their time and energy for free. It's a big deal, but we've had a lot of community boards that have been kind of knee jerk, opposed to some of the progress we needed. And I've said very consistently I'll listen. My team will listen, but you know, we believe in Vision Zero, we're going to keep making Vision Zero changes. We believe in bike lanes. We believe in open streets. We believe in open restaurants. That's where we're going. So community boards are there to advise – and sometimes they point out a specific change in a specific location that we can do and make it better – but we have set our direction and I know it's what's right for New York City, and that's what we're going to keep doing.

Moderator: Last question for today goes to Kala from PIX.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor talking about voting this morning - happy Election Day, by the way –

Mayor: Happy Election Day, Kala.

Question: So a lot of polling sites have experienced connectivity issues, and I want to know what the city is doing to fix that going forward as we will likely have a busy evening ahead?

Mayor: Kala, I appreciate the question. I want know more about the specifics of that as the day proceeds. Look, I think it goes back to the central point that we have to approach elections differently in the future. My preference would be for the Board of Elections to be a city agency in the future. That will take some really extensive action in Albany, but whatever form it takes, the current Board of Elections doesn't run the elections the way we need to, it's not fair to people. So I'm hoping that this moment where everyone's really, really focused on voting, it's going to be the moment that change happens. There's legislation that could be passed immediately in Albany to empower the Executive Director of the Board of Elections to make it a more professional agency. That would help with the kind of issue you're talking about here, looking for those connectivity problems in advance so we can figure out what we have to do to help them with technology or locations. But I fear Kala that until we change the Board of Elections, these kinds of problems will just be persistent. Go ahead.

Question: Okay, and a poll worker just talked to my colleague, who's on site, saying – trying to explain how you can vote in person again today if you already sent in an absentee ballot, it's a rule specific to New York. We've seen the president tweet about this before. Can you tell us your thoughts on that and how confusing and chaotic that could be?

Mayor: Well, Kala, I want to make sure I'll turn to Phil Thompson and to Laura Wood on this one, you're saying the scenario is you sent in your ballot, but you still want to vote in person. Is that what you're saying? That's just –

Question: Correct. If you'd like to change your vote, they would have to look up your absentee ballot, and I guess, make that inapplicable at this point so that you can cast your ballot again in person.

Mayor: The truth and nothing but the truth, Kala, I've not heard that scenario before or that being something that people wanted to do, but let me turn to the Deputy Mayor of see if you have, or Laura Wood can join in.

Deputy Mayor Thompson: I'll turn to Laura to answer that specific question, but I want to double down on something that the Mayor just said, in terms of the Board of Elections and connectivity problems, and earlier the Mayor talked about people waiting in line, and I talked to people last week who waited three, four, in one instance, even five hours to vote. It used to be in this country that you had – in some places – you had to pay money to vote. It was called a poll tax. If you're a low income worker and can't afford to take the day off to wait four hours to vote, or can't afford childcare in order to vote, then you are effectively facing the same thing as a poll tax, and it amounts to nothing but a modern day poll tax. It is outrageous that in New York City

and in New York State, we have the equivalent of a poll tax that keeps so many more people who want to vote from being able to vote. And we have heroes like Ella Baker from Harlem who led the fight against poll taxes in the 1950s and 1960s across America. It should not happen and we have to change it. And I will just turn to Laura.

Mayor: Laura, you want to speak to that specific scenario?

Senior Advisor & General Counsel Laura Wood, DemocracyNYC: Sure, Mr. Mayor, thank you. The reporter is correct that in New York State, as the Mayor mentioned earlier, absentee ballots do not begin to be canvassed until the polls close, and so if someone has sent in their absentee ballot, but then decided to either vote in person early or on Election Day, the Board of Elections, as part of that canvas, will be able to tell who voted already in person and set aside those absentee ballots. Every state is different in that regard, but in New York, that is the case, and so voters who may have thought they were unable to get up to the polls today and sent in a ballot, if they so choose, can go to their poll site and vote in person.

Mayor: And Laura, just to clarify, the more recent action is the one that is the ultimate thing that's counted. If you go in today to vote, then that will be what is counted as opposed to what you had sent in previously. Is that right?

Senior Advisor Wood: That's correct, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Okay, great. All right, thank you, Laura. Thank you, everyone. Look, as we conclude today, here's the bottom line, New Yorkers have done something amazing in this last week or so with early voting. Absolutely beautiful. You know, again, look at the story of 2020, so many challenges, so many problems, but so many heroic actions, big and small by everyday New Yorkers, fighting back the coronavirus, now one of the safest places in the country, opening up our schools. Now you see New Yorkers voting in record numbers in the middle of a pandemic, 1.1 million people already, and we expect a hell of a lot more today. I'm very proud of the people in that city. I'm proud of the spirit. I am proud of the sense of ownership and responsibility that people are taking. I have great faith in the people, and this is why the city is going to come back strong because of our people. So I'll conclude with a simple point, it is always been up to you, New Yorkers, to make this place great, and you never failed to do so, today you have a historic moment. So if you have not voted yet, make your voice heard. I have faith that what you do will change this city and this nation for the better. Thank you, everybody.

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