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RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON WOR 710 AM

Len Berman: Mayor de Blasio, as promised, on the air with Len Berman and Joe Bartlett. Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Joe Bartlett: Hey, that's my fault –

[Dial Tone]

Berman: Way to go – way to go. How about now? You think so now?

Bartlett: Did I just disconnect – Bill, you there?

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Yeah, I'm here.

Bartlett: Mr. Mayor, alright, how are you?

[Laughter]

Mayor: I'm good, I'm good – Happy New Year.

Berman: Happy New Year to you, Mr. Mayor. Thank you for joining us this morning. Question number one I think on everyone's mind is preparation and preparedness for New Year's Eve in Times Square. It's been a very difficult year when it comes to terrorism – your thoughts as we head towards New Year's Eve?

Mayor: Well, look, I certainly understand that everyone's concerned, and I want everyone to understand and to hear that the NYPD is ready, that the preparations for New Year's Eve are more extensive than ever. I was at a what we call a table-top exercise at One Police Plaza yesterday. NYPD and all the other relevant agencies – FBI and all agencies sit at the table, go through the plans, go through different scenarios. The planning is extraordinary. We'll have a huge number of police out on New Year's Eve, including a lot of our new anti-terror force, the Critical Response Command, that's 500-plus officers we put into the budget back in June, who are specialized in preventing terror. So, this is the best prepared city in this country to stop terrorism, and people should rest assured that they will be very well protected on New Year's Eve.

Bartlett: Alright, Mr. Mayor, last week your office announced a major policy change, allowing six weeks of parental leave to city employees. Now, that's a very generous program that really isn't available to the private sector. Explain the rationale for that.

Mayor: You know, you look all over the world and countries very much like the United States believe that parental leave is a fundamental right, and that families need it, and it makes for a better society. Look, when Chiara was born – when my daughter was born, my wife had to go back to work, you know, just a few weeks

later. It's a priceless moment in life where you want parents and children to bond. It's very important for the future health and well being of that child. But what happens? Folks get forced back to work right away. We want to have a policy that's actually family friendly, that actually focuses on the well-being of children and parents. So, six weeks will be covered for 20,000 city employees. We look forward to extending this opportunity to our entire workforce, but that's something we can only do by law through collective bargaining. And it's gotten a really positive response because a lot of folks know that their only choice had been previously to go right back to work. And now, I think they're breathing a sigh of relief that they can actually focus on the first days in their child's life the right way.

Berman: Mr. Mayor, Joe Bartlett thinks you're being way too generous with this program. He's annoyed about this.

Bartlett: You know, actually, I'm envious, because this was not available to me, and, if I were to have a child now, I wouldn't get that.

Mayor: You know, I usually turn to Joe Bartlett for advice in all things. So, you know, I know –

[Laughter]

Berman: So do I.

Mayor: You know, I know you would understand the [inaudible]. Look, I think it's the kind of thing – this is the shape of things to come. There's only a few other cities in the country that provide this benefit at this level. But let's look at the modern world – people are working longer and longer hours. I bet your listeners can relate to this – I mean, we are all working longer hours than we used to. A lot of people, despite working, you know, full-time, or even a couple of jobs, are really having trouble making ends meet. And then think about the fact that when a child comes along, you know, it's a rush. It's like – get right back to work, and that's not fair. It's also not healthy. You want parents and children to bond. You want them to really have the time to recover, particularly mothers who give birth need time to recover. And so, it's the right thing to do. But I'll also tell you, from an employer point of view [inaudible] attract the best employees, to keep the best employees, because many employees will tell you that the lack of a decent parental leave policy is one of the things that discourages them from choosing a particular firm or agency to work at.

Berman: We're on the line with Mayor de Blasio. And, Mr. Mayor, you were on with us once before – we're grateful for your return – and, at that time, you said your number one regret of your first two years in office was the way you had communicated the homeless problem to the people of New York. Do you feel more comfortable with how you're doing now?

Mayor: I think we are turning the tide because we have a much clearer, stronger set of policies in place. Look, we're doing a full review of all of our operations related to homelessness. We've put in place a new effort called HOME-STAT, which I'm very proud of. This is going to be the biggest homeless outreach effort of any city in the country – in fact, any that's ever been attempted before. Every day, we're going to have city employees checking the key spots where homeless folks have been, trying to make sure that there is assistance provided for anyone who needs it, literally, every day, cataloging what's going on so we know what we have to do to help people and to deal with problems. And HOME-STAT is going to cover the whole city, but particularly focuses on Manhattan between Canal Street and 145th Street. But here's the thing that we haven't been able to do right before – we've got 3,000 or 4,000 people who are living permanently on the streets of this city, and that is a heartbreak for this city, and one of the things that truly bothers so many New Yorkers for good reasons. We're going to figure out in each and every case what's going to get these folks off the street – what do they need? We know in a lot of cases it's mental health services, or substance-abuse support, or supportive housing – things that we are putting in place more and more. But the way I see it is – you think about those 3,000 or 4,000 people on our streets – every single one of them had a path from a better life, a more normal life,

to the streets. We now have to find the path for each one of them back from the streets to a better life. And there's going to be case workers working with each person's reality – each one's different. Some people just need to be reconnected to their family – and if their family could find them again, they could get them off the street. So, we're going to do this person by person and work to really change this situation.

Berman: Alright, Mr. Mayor, looking ahead to 2016, what would your priorities be at this point? And I know pretty soon the whole reelection issue is going to start putting pressure on decisions. So, what do you have in store for the city for 2016? What's your main mission?

Mayor: Well, I'm going to be outlining that first in the city budget proposal in a few weeks, and then in my State of the City address. Look, we're going to deepen what we're doing. The focus has always been on trying to raise the wages and benefits of New Yorkers – that's one of the examples we've talked about before – paid parental leave, improving the benefits that people have that really change their lives and make their lives more livable. We're going to obviously fight for higher wages – that's something that Albany has to approve – a higher minimum wage. We're going to deepen our affordable housing plan because that's the number one expense in most New Yorker's lives – it's housing. So, we're going to deepen our affordable housing efforts. So, we're going right at the core issues – how to make life more livable in the city, how to make it more affordable, how to help a huge percentage of New Yorkers who are working hard but are really struggling to make ends meet. And we'll lay out a series of ways we're going to deepen those priorities in 2016.

Berman: Alright, from what I read, the city has a one billion-dollar surplus. Do you have plans for that?

Mayor: Well, I am, you know – as Joe Bartlett will testify – I am a very progressive person, but I'm also very fiscally responsible and careful, and we have a very strong reserve that we've put in place that I believe is necessary because we cannot predict the economic future. We know that in the past when there was a downturn and the city didn't have enough reserves – what happened? Property taxes went up, which is something I'm adamantly opposed to, you know, services got cut, city employment got cut – that hurt a lot of families. So, we've laid in literally some of the highest reserves the city has ever had so that we can weather whatever storm is up ahead, and that is something I am committed to for the long haul.

Berman: Mayor de Blasio, can you hang with us just for two more minutes –

Mayor: Yeah.

Berman: – Because I want to ask you a question about crime stats. Terrific –

Mayor: Absolutely.

Berman: We have to break away for traffic – it's only going to take a few seconds. We'll be right back with Mayor de Blasio.

[...]

Berman: Thank you Mayor de Blasio for hanging with us – it's Len Berman and Joe Barlett this morning. Todd Schnitt is on vacation. Mayor de Blasio, the crime stats – I have to just be honest with you, I'm just confused by them all the time. First, you had former Police Commissioner Ray Kelly alleging the NYPD is fudging the states – Kelly was one of those who said crime would spike when stop and frisk decreased. And then a report comes out the other day from John Jay College of Criminal Justice saying crime is at a record low in New York City. So, what am I supposed to believe here?

Mayor: You should believe Commissioner Bill Bratton. He has every month gone into great detail on what's happening with the statistics of the city. And I give Commissioner Bratton and his leadership team a lot of

credit. I give the men and women of the NYPD a lot of credit. They have driven down crime again. I am literally holding in my hand the report I got ending midnight last night. Here's the reality – compared to last year at the exact same time – 77 fewer shootings for the year. There are 15 more murders, and I don't take that lightly. Every one of those bothers me, and we're going to keep pushing down that number. But 15 more murders for the year – and last year was the record low number of murders in the last 50 years. So, overall crime is going to be down again compared to last year. Increase in gun arrests – substantial increase in gun arrests this year compared to last year. The NYPD is doing a great job, and these statistics are based on the exact same methodology that Ray Kelly used, which is why I find it surprising that he's questioning Bill Bratton and the NYPD. They're using the same exact methodology. What they're doing is they're building on previous success and driving down crime further. And listen, guess what's about to happen? Today, we have a graduation ceremony for new NYPD officers – the first wave in the group of officers that we authorized back in the June budget. When you get to this time next year, we will have, in real patrol-strength terms, 2,000 more police officers on the streets in New York City – the first major increase in well over a decade – and better technology, better training. This city is the safest it's every been and we're going to go farther.

Berman: And now you're reaching the halfway point of your first term, do you still like what you're doing? I think there was a – I think there was a quote of you in the New York Times today that said that you missed the private life – you know, being able to do private things. Is it still an issue for you?

Mayor: Yeah, look, anyone who, like me, is first focused on my family, public life obviously takes away from family time and takes away from the ability to spend time uninterrupted with your family. And that – I'm never going to lie to you about that. You know, I miss what was a kind of kinder, gentler time on that level. But, look, the work is – amazing privilege to be able to do this work. I'm proud of what we've done for the people of this city. I look forward to doing a lot more. I mean, look at what – the example we talked about before. I have the honor, having been chosen for this role by the people, with the stroke of a pen, I can give 20,000 people paid parental leave and, hopefully through negotiations with the unions, we're going to be able to extend that to hundreds of thousands of people. That's going to make a huge difference in the lives of families and children. You know, what we do with pre-k – we've reached 68,000-plus kids with pre-k compared to just 20,000 a year just two years ago. Look, that's the kind of thing you can only dream of doing if you care about public service and you care about changing this world. So, I'm blessed, but, you know, family time is very important to me, and that's something we're going to have to constantly work to make sure that gets protected.

Berman: Hey, Mr. Mayor, before you run, last time you were with us, your opinion was that Donald Trump was a blowhard. I'm just wondering if you've changed your mind in the last several weeks.

Mayor: You know, I have – I have, because I said – I realized that day – and I remember that interview well – that that was really the wrong term to use, and it minimized the danger of what he's saying. And I quickly realized I had to change my language and start saying that what he's doing is dangerous. And a lot of other voices have come to the same conclusion. Look, this country – you know, it's a time of year when we think about our blessings – the blessing of this country. Every kind of people are welcome here – you know, the great nation of immigrants, a beacon to the world. I mean, this is what has worked. This is what's made us great. And what has Trump done? He has systematically affronted one group after another – women, Mexican-Americans, Muslims – and then he started to say things that are positively un-American, like having Muslims on a list and not allowing people into the country based on a religion test. I mean, just look at the Constitution. This goes against all our basic values. He's now become dangerous, but I also think more and more people, including a lot of Republicans, are very, very concerned about what he's saying, and more and more people are speaking out against it.

Berman: And before we let you go, do you have a New Year's resolution you want to share with us?

Mayor: Well, I'm working on it. You know, last year I said and I recognized that I did not do a good enough job of being on time, and worked very hard to improve it this year, and I'm proud to say I think we've turned a

good corner there. I need to come up with a good one for next year. So, Chirlane and I are deep in conversation. She knows a lot about my flaws, and I think she'll be my number one advisor on which flaw I should work on this year.

Berman: You mean there's more than one?

Mayor: You know, I'm well endowed with flaws.

[Laughter]

Berman: Well, on that thought, Mr. Mayor, we wish you a Happy New Year, and we sincerely thank you for joining us again on WOR Radio.

Bartlett: Happy New Year, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Happy New Year, guys.