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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS SIGNS LEGISLATION TO FIGHT RATS,
BUILD CLEANER CITY**

Commissioner Jessica Tisch, Department of Sanitation: All right. Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Department of Sanitation's M2 Garage. We are here today to give the city some new tools in the war on rats. To kick us off, I would like to welcome the greatest enemy the rats of New York City have ever had, the cleanliness champion, our mayor, Eric Adams.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you, Commissioner. That's right. No, I have made it clear, I hate rats. And we are going to kill some rats. That is the signature. And so we made it clear. I just really want to thank the commissioner who has taken the passion of cleaning our city to an entirely new level. Her vision is clear and clean. And so today, we're making clear that rats don't run our city. New Yorkers do. The four bills I sign today will help create a cleaner city for New Yorkers. The legislation will create rat mitigation zones, codify garbage set out times, and reduce rats in construction areas and other buildings with large rodent infestations.

Last month, we announced that New York City was making a once-in-a-generation change to the cleanliness of our streets, reducing the amount of time that trash can remain on the curb and reducing rats on our streets. Today, we are taking the next step in signing into law. Clean streets are vital to vibrant neighborhoods and to New York City economic recovery. They go hand in hand and we hear it over and over again that people are concerned about the over-visualization of rats in their community and the infestation and just really the anxiety that they bring.

Rats hurt the quality of life in our city and cause real damage to our homes. It's costing New Yorkers and businesses millions of dollars to deal with this crisis. There have been 110 mayors in this city and they've all dealt with this crisis of rat infestation. And one of them had to worry about this population and we are going to take a real serious approach to ending this rat tale. For far too long, the population of rodents have been able to roam around this city with a level of impunity and we're saying no to that.

Today, we're making history and we're going to start the process of ending the rat race with this package of bills. So I want to thank this amazing team of Council persons who listened to their constituencies and leaned into this issue. Councilman Abreu, who has talked about this often in his Council district. Councilman Bottcher, who's in the heart of Manhattan and really deals with

this issue because of the large number of people, the large number of restaurants and businesses. Councilwoman Nurse and Councilman Ossé in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area.

We did a couple of initiatives there and they really are concerned about the rat problem. They have helped us get this done and we commend them for it. We're putting a dent in our rodent problem and this is how we can carry it out together. And this is one of many. We have a few more items we're going to be rolling out to deal with the rodent issue in this city. So again, commissioner, thank you very much.

Commissioner Tisch: Thank you, Mayor Adams. I'd now like to welcome Council Member Shaun, this is not Ratatouille, Abreu.

City Council Member Shaun Abreu: Thank you, commissioner and thank you, Mr. Mayor. There's no more Remy the Rat and no more Mickey Mouse on the streets of New York City. We're done recycling old ideas. We're trashing the old way of doing trash and introducing a new, visionary approach to garbage. The New York City Council and the mayor have achieved a monumental victory in our war against rats. After nearly a year of research, negotiations, and partnership with experts, labor, DSNY, the commissioner, Council colleagues, we have done what former councils and administrations could never achieve.

Our office has secured support for a bill which will reduce the amount of time trash sits out on our streets. This will keep our streets clean and starve rats of the midnight snacks that sustain their explosive growth. Families will no longer have to navigate as many mountains and mazes of trash piled up outside their apartments. New Yorkers will not have to fear as many rats hiding in late night shadows or more frequently rampaging through our subway system and sidewalks without fear. This was not an easy feat, but city-altering change never is. And I am most proud that we're able to do this in partnership with labor and the administration. New Yorkers can rest easy knowing that we are fighting back. Thank you so much.

Commissioner Tisch: Thank you, Council Member Abreu. Next, please join me in welcoming someone who definitely knows how to trash talk, Council Member Erik Bottcher.

City Council Member Erik Bottcher: Thank you. Thank you, Commissioner Tisch. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And thank you to my rat pack colleagues and thank you to my legislative partner, Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine. Now, to the rats of New York City, surrender now. Get out of town before it's too late. For 300 years, we've let you push us around. Today, we're saying no more. Enough. And we've made your lives too easy. Heck, we even put out food for you on the sidewalks every night. Well, the party is over. Now, I know you rats are listening to this and thinking, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. We've heard this before. We know you don't mean it." Well, we're here to tell you that, with this mayor and this City Council, it's a new day. And like the commissioner said, we're not going to let the rats run this town any longer.

Commissioner Tisch: Finally, we will hear from a great ally in the war on rats, Council Member Chi Ossé.

City Council Member Chi Ossé: Good afternoon and thank you commissioner, Mr. Mayor, and my colleagues in the rat pack. This package of bills is one step forward for mankind in our war in combating rat-kind here in New York City. While this is only going to make a dent in the rodent situation that we have in New York City, it is laying down the infrastructure in groundwork for, hopefully, a citywide trash containerization program in New York. This is a love letter to all of our constituents that have been calling our phones day in and day out about this rodent problem. I'm really proud of the work that we are doing and taking this situation seriously. And I'm so proud to be amongst this collective of Council members that is listening to their local constituents. This is the power of local governments. Pizza rat, if you're listening, pack your bags. Pack pizza in your bags, too. You may enjoy it later. And thank you again to this administration for taking these bills seriously. Thank you.

Commissioner Tisch: All right. Without further ado, let's sign some bills. Please join us at the table.

Mayor Adams: (Inaudible) do some on-topics I can sign and then we can.... All right.

Question: Yes. Thank you for taking the question. Good to see you. This is serious. Orkin Pest Control ranks cities for rat populations, rat complaints every year. This year, New York is number two after Chicago, up from three last year. Where would you like to see New York, say, one year from now, five years from now?

Mayor Adams: My goal is we must be the cleanest city in America. That's the goal. We're the largest city, the most important city. We must be the cleanest city in America. We must be clearly the place where people know we address this rat problem. And we have a few other items we're going to roll out, that we're testing right now to really deal with this issue. This is not only a health issue, but it also brings anxiety. To have a rodent in your car when you start it, run across your feet, to come out of a garbage bag. It is traumatizing. People think about it the entire day and they don't walk down their blocks after having an experience like that.

And so our goal is to be the top of the list on ending this rat problem in our city. And again, we have a few other items that we are testing right now and there are some promising results. And we are excited about moving this initiative forward. But we have to stop contributing as human beings. As Councilman Bottcher stated, we were feeding rats. We were creating an environment where rats felt comfortable being on our streets. We have a part, and I am with Councilman Ossé. This old fashioned way of placing garbage on our streets, it must change. And that is something we're looking at doing.

Question: Yes. Mayor, I respectfully request you leave Mickey Mouse out of this. (Laughter.) But you're a lifelong New Yorker, of course.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: Have you had your own personal experiences with rats?

Mayor Adams: Yes, far too many. When I purchased my home, I had a real rat infestation. We removed and killed 79 rats when I purchased my house to do a renovation. Brooklyn Borough Hall, we put devices, the rat traps around Brooklyn Borough Hall. We collected 96 rats. Now, people demonized me back then. If you look at all the stories, people were saying, "Why you killing those poor little creatures?" But I think every New Yorker can tell you their rat story. If you walk down the block and a rat runs across your foot, you never forget it. Every time you walk down that block, you relive that. If you see a rat in your home, you never feel comfortable in that room in your house again. For whatever reason, I don't know what it is, rats do something to traumatize you and you never live through it. And I hate rats.

Question: Mayor, you've been crystal clear on this, I think. The only thing I wanted to follow up with is, whatever measures you put into place now, a rat expert I interviewed today from Fordham said as long as there are bags of garbage on the street anywhere in the city, rats aren't going anywhere. They've got a meal. So can you get to, essentially, vision zero for rats?

Mayor Adams: Well, and I'm going to let the commissioner touch that as well, but I think Councilman Ossé is right. We sent the team down to Buenos Aires. Other countries are passing us by. We have this old fashioned method. It started during the Lindsay Administration when we were dealing with a particular issue around trash. We moved away from the trash cans. We introduced plastic bags into our lives. It has never been the same. This is going to be a difficult task if we don't really deal with plastic bags. And I don't know who thought of these ideas about mint bags is going to stop rats. It's comical. So we have to get garbage off our streets. That is our mission. We want to be the administration that finally deals with how do we rethink this process of garbage bags sitting outside our doors and outside our homes. Commissioner.

Commissioner Tisch: Sure. I'll just echo the mayor's commitment to rolling out containerization in New York City. It is definitely the way of the future. And I'll say the topic of containerization has been in the discourse in New York City for at least a decade and this is the first administration to really make meaningful progress on it.

So what have we done already? We've rolled out a pilot of containerization in every single borough. We met our commitment to do that. We're about to roll out a residential pilot this month, later this month. And we are right now engaged in a 24 week, not just study, but planning process to plan for how we roll out containerization more broadly in New York City. I want to be clear that it's really hard to do. I don't have to get into all of the details now. But we are doing that hard work now to measure space on the curb lines and understand the volume of trash by neighborhood, by housing stock, to figure out how big, for example, the containers have to be.

And the last thing that I would say to that is the change in the set out times, which we're in the process of doing and the mayor is signing legislation today about it. Those new rules that we put forward are going to, in my opinion, dramatically increase the use of containers in New York City even before we get to universal containerization. Because they give New Yorkers an option. You want to put black bags on the curb? Not before 8 p.m. You want to do it earlier? Great, you can do it at six, but it has to be in a container. Same idea for businesses. And so I think, when these new rules take effect later this spring, you're going to see a lot more use of containers in New York City than you have in decades.

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