



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 16, 2015

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

RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor de Blasio: It's been a little under 24 hours since we last met – everyone good?

Sound people, has the helicopter left to your satisfaction?

It's been a little under 24 hours since we last spoke, and during those last 24 hours we continued to work with leaders and Albany members of the Legislature – key players – pushing hard for resolution. Again, over two million New Yorkers waiting for an answer on rent regulation. So, this work will continue non-stop until the job is done. We want to make sure, again, all New Yorkers make their voices heard, and let Albany know how important it is to resolve these issues, and resolve them now.

With that, I welcome your questions.

Question: Have you personally spoken to the governor today?

Mayor: No, I spoke to him last on Sunday, but my staff has been incessantly talking to him, and his team.

Question: What's your assessment of where things are right now on the – solving the rent crisis?

Mayor: There's more work to be done, obviously. We all wanted to see a resolution by yesterday. That didn't happen. Thank God there is still time to do it – would take a retroactive action, obviously, to go back and cover any hours or days missed. But it can be done. And I think there is momentum towards a solution, but I don't have any specifics yet.

Question: For renters, what is the impact on them right now [inaudible]?

Mayor: We've had a big uptick in calls to 3-1-1 – renters looking for information. We don't have any specific report – that I know of, at least – of a landlord inappropriately trying to undermine their tenants or the leases. Again, all leases – God forbid this is not resolved quickly – all leases would remain in effect for the term of those leases. As I indicated yesterday, we should not be shocked if some unscrupulous landlord is trying to take advantage of the situation. Anyone who thinks that might be happening to them should call 3-1-1, and we will make sure they get legal assistance. And we will follow up very energetically if we find the landlord doing anything inappropriate.

Question: Mayor, when did you find out about your predecessor's \$100 million dollar gift?

Mayor: That was a – something they kept close to the vest, and I don't blame them. And we found out in the last 24 hours, and I am thrilled by it. I think it's a great, great contribution to the city.

Question: Mr. Mayor, what did you and Mr. Bloomberg talk about?

Mayor: We talked a lot about this project, and what it is going to mean for the city. We also – we caught up on family, and joked around a little bit, but I think, you know, the most important topic of conversation was this historic moment. I give him a lot of credit [inaudible]. I give him even more credit for continuing to contribute to it even as he's been out of office.

Question: How do you feel your relationship is with him?

Mayor: You know, as we've seen each other at different events, you know, we chat – we catch up. And again, I appreciate his commitment to this city.

Question: Did you envision a Bill Clinton–George H.W. Bush friendship over the years?

Mayor: I think that's an interesting example – or you know your recent American history. I look forward to certainly working with him on things where we have common beliefs.

Question: Did Mayor Bloomberg weigh in at all about the situation in Albany to you?

Mayor: No.

Question: Your Honor, what do you think of Donald Trump announcing for president?

Mayor: I don't comment on the Republican field, generally. I think – I think they've got quite a bit of competition over there. I remain confident that when the issues are aired out, that none of them will prevail.

Question: Mr. Mayor, are you planning to call for a rent freeze this year, like you did last year?

Mayor: Again, we're going to let the Rent Guidelines Board look at the facts. And as we receive more information about the facts, I'll determine if there's anything I want to say. But what we've made very clear is, under this administration, the Rent Guidelines Board will assess the specific expenses that landlords have, and will make a decision based on that. I don't think it has happened consistently enough in the past. The reason we got to that one percent increase last time was because there was a really rigorous look at the actual expenses – and I know they'll do the same this time.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: No. The fact is – I've said repeatedly – and, by the way, I commend the Assembly for passing a strengthening of the rent laws. I commend the governor for calling for a strengthening of rent laws. Now we've got to get all the players together in agreement. If we just extend the rent laws as they are, we will go backwards – because we are losing, consistently, thousands and thousands of units of affordable housing – over the last two decades, over 200,000 units of affordable housing lost from rent regulation, Mitchell-Lama, etcetera. So we've got to strengthen the rent laws. The Legislature did it last time, when rent control came up. They need to go even farther this time.

Question: Mr. Mayor, what's happening with 421-a? Is that part of the negotiation?

Mayor: It's a – I rarely see you in these settings. I'm quite impressed – special guest appearance. Look, the 421-a reform we put forward I think would be a sea change for that program. It would end the practice of subsidizing luxury condos. It would ensure that any time a tax credit is given it would come with affordable housing in the buildings. And we added to our proposal the Mansion Tax – a tax on high-value homes, the proceeds of which would go to create affordable housing. Obviously, those proposals have been available to

Albany for weeks and weeks. We've seen some real interest in both in the Assembly and the Senate in moving forward, but I do not have a clear picture today –

Question: What happens if you just [inaudible]?

Mayor: Again, I've said clearly, I don't believe in – there's been a proposal, for example, for a one-year extension as-is. That would mean one more year of tax giveaways for luxury condos and one more year of a lot of taxpayer dollars being wasted. So I think the issue could and should be dealt with right now. The reforms are available right now – and that's the smarter way to go. If Albany prefers to keep 421-a as it's configured now for the long haul, I would argue we should just end the program outright at that point.

Question: Mayor, what do you make of the GOP Senate proposal on rent regulations, which includes some, you know, rent verification, and –

Mayor: It would take us backwards. It would take us backwards. The fact is we need to strengthen rent regulation, not water it down, and I think that proposal would very severely water it down.

Question: Mr. Mayor, now that you've visited Four Freedoms Park, do you think that Hillary Clinton chose well for her campaign?

Mayor: Absolutely. I think it was a great choice of a site. I think it speaks to her deep feeling for the values of Franklin Roosevelt – that's certainly something I share with her. And I thought she gave a great speech and it was a very promising day.

Question: Mayor, Governor Cuomo doesn't seem to be too concerned about the lapsing of rent regulation. You seem to be a bit more concerned. Your thoughts on [inaudible]?

Mayor: I have to defend the interests of over 2 million people who hired me to protect their interests. I have over 2 million constituents, who, right now, are wondering what's going to happen to their apartments. So I feel very passionate about this. My job is to protect the interests of my fellow New Yorkers, and we need action.

Question: Why doesn't Governor Cuomo feel that way?

Mayor: I – I wouldn't say that, because he put out a proposal that I thought was a good proposal. We need to see him get the different players together to agreement towards a proposal that's either like his or the Assembly's, both of which would strengthen rent regulation.

Question: There's concern among Roosevelt Island residents that the unintended consequences of Cornell Tech is to make the middle class and lower-middle class [inaudible] unaffordable for them to live here. Do you have any concerns, [inaudible]?

Mayor: Well, obviously, this would be consistent with concerns I feel all over the city – and I spoke about this in my State of the City speech. We have to be concerned everywhere to protect affordability. It's why we have a plan for 200,000 units of affordable housing citywide. That's why we're fighting to strengthen rent regulation. That's why we're doing so much to reinforce our public housing authority. There's so much we've got to do to protect affordable housing and keep every part of New York City a place for every kind of person. So this is a – I think Cornell Tech is going to be a great contribution to the city, but, like with every other important development, we have to protect affordability and make sure that Roosevelt Islanders can continue to be Roosevelt Islanders.

Amy Spitalnick: Two more, guys.

Question: Mr. Mayor, given what's happened so far in Albany, does any word leap to mind [inaudible] functionality of what's going on up there?

Mayor: I would say it's simply time for action. You know, the – what's – the word is “action,” you know? We've gotten to D-Day. It's time for action. The clear outlines of what needs to be done are there, whether you're talking about rent, whether you're talking about mayoral control of education, whether you're talking about 421-a – all of the options are right on the table, visible to all. It's time to make decisions. It's time to act. Okay? Thank you, everyone.

###