

# Transcript: Mayor de Blasio Presents 2019 State of the City

January 10, 2019

**Announcer:** Please welcome Rabbi Dr. Alvin Kass to deliver our invocation.

**Rabbi Alvin Kass:** Almighty and eternal God, thou controlest the destiny of all peoples, and in whose hand lies the fate of all nations. Theodore Roosevelt once said, "It's fine to be alive when great things are happening." Indeed, it's fine to be alive when great things are happening here in New York City, under the wise, determined, and creative leadership of Mayor Bill de Blasio.

[Applause]

We are blessed to be residents of a city where crime is at an all-time low and educational opportunity is at an all-time high. It is a place where so many people look to for inspiration and guidance and wisdom, as we make our way towards the future. We are so thankful to be in a community where the Mayor fights for the equal dignity and sanctity of every citizen of this exemplary metropolis. We know, too, that we are in the city of immigrants, par excellence, what Emma Lazarus called the wretched refuse of your teeming shores, the homeless and the tempest-tossed -- have provided the energy, the dynamism and the creativity that have made New York City the veritable capital of the world, the pace-setter for commerce, for industry, for finance, for communications, for the arts. They have been the ones who have helped to make this metropolis an inspiration to the entire world. Out of matchless diversity has emerged a society with astounding harmony and goodwill. To be sure, it is not a perfect world. And all of us have been deeply concerned by the uptick recently in hate crimes -- most especially anti-Semitic outbreaks. Nobody is more concerned about this than Mayor de Blasio. Cognizant of the continual struggle for the nation's soul, Mayor de Blasio is committed to do everything that is necessary to extirpate hatred in our midst, so that --

[Applause]

So that New York City truly becomes a metropolis where people of every race, religion, color, and creed can pursue their individual destinies untrammelled, unafraid, and in obedience to Thy will. Mayor de Blasio, as you have carried Grandpa Simpson on your shoulders –

[Laughter]

So may you continue to carry all of us on your shoulders.

[Applause]

As we strive to finish the work that we are in, of achieving and cherishing a lasting peace among ourselves.

Dear God, we beseech thee to bless Mayor de Blasio, his dear wife, and wonderful family, with continued good health and well-being, and bless as well all the citizens and workers of this great city, so that the day may soon dawn when there is a perfect fulfillment of the prayer of the Psalmist.

[Rabbi Alvin Kass speaks in Hebrew]

Behold how good and how pleasant it is when brothers and sisters dwell together in harmony, unity, and love. Amen.

[Applause]

**Announcer:** Please welcome New York City Firefighter Regina Wilson to sing God Bless America.

[Applause]

[FDNY Firefighter Regina Wilson sings God Bless America]

[Applause]

[SOTC Video plays]

**Announcer:** Please welcome First Lady of the City of New York, Chirlane McCray.

[Applause]

**First Lady Chirlane McCray:** Good morning, everyone.

**Audience:** Good morning.

**First Lady McCray:** That was powerful, wasn't it? Yes. And many of the people in that video are here with us today. So please, let's show them our appreciation.

[Applause]

Now, how many of you found yourself nodding along with that video? Yes. Well, you aren't the only one. You know, Bill and I are blessed that we don't have to struggle as hard as some folks, but I was nodding too, because when our children were young, we didn't have extended family around to help, and it wasn't easy. When my mother was diagnosed with cancer, and Bill's mother was wheelchair-bound with heart disease at the same time, we needed to move them close by and give them extra care. I took my mother to doctors' appointments and coordinated all the bills, home maintenance, and repairs. Bill sometimes had to drop everything and rush to the doctor's. Sometimes I had to drop everything and rush to the hospital, and all the while, we're working full-time and parenting two young children who needed our time and attention every day. I had never been more stressed and exhausted in my life. And I know our experience is not unique.

Society has changed drastically over the last 50 years. People are working harder and working longer hours. Most women are working outside the home, and there are more single-parent households. All that comes with extra pressure on our families. That pressure has taken an immeasurable toll on their mental health and emotional well-being, and, you know, it's the kind of health challenge that usually doesn't get tended to until it becomes a mental health crisis. That's why we created ThriveNYC, to help more people.

[Applause]

We want to help more people get the care they need before their lives are irreparably damaged. Three years later, Thrive is reaching people wherever they are. With NYC Well, help is just a phone call away. More than 500,000 calls, texts, and chats have been answered, and people are getting connected to treatment and care. Thrive is in our communities, with more than 90,000 New Yorkers trained in mental health first aid. Thrive is in the places people pray, with thousands of churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques committed to ending stigma. Thrive is in our public hospital system, where doctors screen pregnant women and new mothers for maternal depression and provide mental health care to anyone who needs it.

[Applause]

And Thrive is where our children learn, with mental health support in all 1,800 of our schools. And I'm proud to announce that this year we will bring Thrive to the workplace.

[Applause]

So many workplaces have already recognized the value of encouraging physical fitness and offer programs from nutrition counseling to step challenges. Well, we can address mental and emotional wellness at work too. Of course, just as with physical fitness, there's no one-size-fits-all approach. Every person is different, and their challenges are too. Some people experience traumatic life events outside of work, like divorce, or the illness of a parent, like we did. Some people live with chronic mental illnesses that they are successfully managing. Others may develop a mental health condition while on the job. Some people are exhilarated by a high-stress environment. Others get overwhelmed. But just as we all benefit from getting regular physical exercise, everyone can benefit from becoming more emotionally resilient. The workplace can be a resource for wellness. That's why, through Thrive in the workplace, we will ask employers all across the city, from nonprofits and small businesses to large corporations, to increase mental health awareness, fight stigma, and strengthen supports for mental health at work. We want every working New Yorker to know -- there is always help and there is always hope.

[Applause]

A few words in Spanish –

[First Lady McCray speaks in Spanish]

[Applause]

And as the single-largest employer in the five boroughs, the City of New York will lead by example.

[Applause]

Building on the success of WorkWell NYC and the Employee Assistance Program, we will do more to connect city employees to services, resources, and tools for wellness. That's our commitment, and the work starts now.

[Applause]

But it doesn't stop there. My partner in life and in love fights every day to ease the burdens on New York City's families, and, as always, he is here to share his commitment with you.

Please join me in welcoming Mayor Bill de Blasio.

[Applause]

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Thank you. Thank you, everybody. You know, I have a confession to make. I'm going to do it here publicly. Every single time I hear Chirlane McCray speak, I fall in love again.

[Applause]

I love her for a thousand reasons, but I have to say what she has done with ThriveNYC is breathtaking. It's reaching every corner of this city. It's changing people's lives. It's

breaking the stigma, opening up for the first time for so many people the possibility that they can get the care they need. Let's thank our First Lady.

[Applause]

Now, moments like this, when we all gather together, makes me so proud to be a New Yorker. When you look at these wonderful people behind me, aren't you proud to be a New Yorker? And look around this beautiful theater. I see so many people. I want to thank all of you who contribute to the greatness of this city. I want to thank the members of my administration. These are some hardworking people. I want to thank them for all they do for our city.

[Applause]

Our Deputy Mayors, all the Commissioners, all the people who make this government run every day on behalf of the people. Let's thank them for their hard work.

[Applause]

I want to acknowledge some remarkable leaders who are joining us here today. First, someone Chirlane and I owe so much to and this city owes so much to. Former Mayor David Dinkins, thank you for being here.

[Applause]

I want to thank all the clergy members that are here, but we have some of the preeminent leaders and some of the great unifiers in this city with us. I want to thank His Eminence Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, and Reverend A. R. Bernard.

[Applause]

I also want to say for the record I did not know that Rabbi Kass was a Simpsons fan. I learned something already here today. We're also joined by so many outstanding elected officials. I want to welcome our new State Attorney General, Tish James.

[Applause]

You've got a fan club here, Tish. I want to welcome City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, Comptroller Scott Stringer, all our Borough Presidents, our District Attorneys, our City Council members, our State Assembly members, and a special thanks and a special congratulations to two very special groups of people with us -- and they are now serving in the majority -- our State Senators.

[Applause]

And our Members of Congress.

[Applause]

Now, we're lucky today to be joined by many of the people who not only make this city run, but who go above and beyond for the city they serve and the city they love. We recognize them in today's program. They're heroes. They're extraordinary people. Heroes like Police Officer Syed Ali, a combat veteran. You've heard his story.

[Applause]

Patrolling the subway last month, single-handedly held back a group of five assailants. And as if that wasn't enough, when one of them fell on the subway tracks, Officer Ali saved his life.

[Applause]

Heroes like Erin Schneider, a Sanitation worker who saved a colleague whose arm got caught in a mechanical broom and became the first woman in the 138-year history of the Sanitation Department to be presented with the agency's Medal of Valor.

[Applause]

Heroes like Police Officer Osvaldo Nuñez -- this is one of my favorite stories -- a rookie cop at the front door one day at the 115th Precinct in Jackson Heights, he gave CPR to

a baby girl. Saved her life. Heroes like Firefighters Andrew Laird, and Ryan Ciambriello, and Lieutenant Ryan Mcnamara who just last month rescued two women from a perilous 3-alarm fire in Chinatown.

[Applause]

And here's the kind of hero we need to laud more often and appreciate more. Heroes like Brenda Cunningham from our Administration for Children's Services. Brenda is retiring after 40 years. 40 years of healing thousands of abused children. Caring for them in foster care and helping them grow into healthy adults. Thank you, Brenda.

[Applause]

And heroes like Detective Michael Lollo, who put his life on the line even when he wasn't on the clock. Michael just donated a kidney to a complete stranger, saving her life.

[Applause]

All these heroes are up in the gallery. Will you all stand? And many other great heroes. Let's applaud them all.

[Applause]

My friends, sadly there's a hero who is not with us today, because we've lost him. Firefighter Steven Pollard. Steven gave his life responding to an emergency on the Belt Parkway just days ago. He comes from a family that loves this city so much. Generation after generation has served us in the FDNY. That family is now in our prayers and in our hearts. And I want to say to the Pollard family that all of New York City will be with you. In the days ahead, in the months ahead, in the years ahead. You are now part of our family. All of us together. Now and always.

[Applause]

Let's honor Steven's service and his memory with a moment of silence.



[Moment of silence is observed]

Thank you. These people, every one I've mentioned, help us redefine what's possible and what's worth fighting for in this city. And I believe we can look back at what we've accomplished together over the past year, and we can feel a lot of pride. We begin at the beginning. Once again, we're the safest big city in America.

[Applause]

The NYPD has pushed crime to record lows, with the fewest homicides since 1951.

[Applause]

Neighborhood policing is now the reality in this city, and it works. I want to be blunt about this. For years, there was a conventional wisdom in this town, and it said that you can only arrest your way to a safer city. Guess what? Conventional wisdom was wrong.

[Applause]

This is an amazing fact I'm going to tell you. Last year, the NYPD made 140,000 fewer arrests than the year we took office.

[Applause]

Fewer and fewer arrests, and crime goes down and down. That's something to thank the NYPD for.

[Applause]

And the NYPD of today understands that that important work is done with the community, with community leaders, with civic leaders, with people on the ground who helped to do the work, the tenant patrols, the community patrols, and a crucial part of the equation -- the Cure Violence Movement, the Crisis Management System.

[Applause]

Now, let me tell you something else about our dear friend conventional wisdom. Conventional wisdom used to say that you can only imprison your way to a safer city. Wrong again. Wrong again.

[Applause]

Today the population in our Corrections system has dropped to less than 8,000 people for the first time in almost 40 years.

[Applause]

The era of mass incarceration did not begin in New York City, but it will end in New York City.

[Applause]

And we are getting closer every single day to that great day when we will close Rikers Island for good.

[Applause]

Today we're getting safer in ways we couldn't even have imagined decades ago. Last year, thanks to Vision Zero, we had the fewest traffic fatalities since 1910. 1910.

[Applause]

In 1910, my friends, New York City had half as many people, and there were more horses in New York City than cars. Now, last year, I pledged that we would not only be the safest big city in America, but we would also strive to be the fairest big city in America. And that's why in 2018 we built and protected more affordable apartments than ever, than ever.

[Applause]

The most since our Housing Department was founded. I want to thank our friends in the City Council, because they played a crucial role by passing the Access to Counsel Law, which has made such a difference. Because of our work together, tens of thousands of tenants now have their own lawyers, lawyers paid for by the City who stop illegal evictions. Thank you to the members of the City Council, thank you Speaker.

[Applause]

Speaker, you've got a rowdy group over there. We're also showing public housing residents that we can begin to reverse decades of disinvestment and make their lives better. The New York City Housing Authority has a plan to bring brand new everything to 175,000 NYCHA residents, from new roofs to new kitchens and bathrooms.

[Applause]

We still grapple with too many people in this town who need our help because they're homeless. I'm proud to say that we moved more than 2,000 homeless New Yorkers off the streets and into a permanent situation where they can be taken care of and they can get the help they need.

[Applause]

And we closed more than 180 shelters that didn't meet our standards for health and safety, and we will close more. Now, making housing better, making it safer, making it affordable is not the only way we become the fairest big city in America. Our Equity and Excellence agenda drives us every day to help each and every child reach their full potential. We've provided every four-year-old in this city with free full day pre-K.

[Applause]

Now we've provided a record number of children across the city with 3-K.

[Applause]

Now, to all the educators in the room, I hope you're going to be proud of this next one. We set the all-time record for graduation rate in New York City.

[Applause]

Today, three quarters – three quarters of our kids graduate high school on time.

[Applause]

I want to put that in perspective for you. That number was less than 50 percent not long ago in this town. Less than 50 percent graduated on time before we had mayoral control of education, which created real accountability. And here's something else we should be proud of 59 percent of kids who graduated our public schools went on to higher education last year – another all-time record.

[Applause]

Now, last year I promised we would create more good jobs, and we would raise the floor for working people. Well, let me tell you what we've done. We've more than doubled the number of certified minority and women-owned businesses and awarded them more than \$10 billion in city contracts.

[Applause]

After years of laying the groundwork, our technology community, our tech community reached a turning point. New York City is now one of the world's premiere tech hubs, and all those jobs are now here for the people of New York City.

[Applause]

The major new announcements from Amazon and Google show that the world's most innovative companies want to be here, and they want to hire New Yorkers.

[Applause]

Now, we have over 4.5 million jobs in this city, for the first time in history. 4.5 million jobs.

[Applause]

Unemployment at a record low, wages rising. Now, all this has happened in a progressive city. All this has happened in a city that made sure there was fairness. So anyone who tells you that there can't be job growth when we ask for fairness – we're going to prove them wrong here in New York City. This is a city where we expanded paid sick days to half a million more New Yorkers.

[Applause]

This is a city where we require businesses to provide a fair workweek to more than 300,000 people.

[Applause]

Where we fought and won a \$15 minimum wage.

[Applause]

And that money has gone straight into the pockets of nearly a million New Yorkers who weren't making enough. That's the new reality of New York City. I want to tell you about another new reality. Every single day we're becoming a more sustainable city because we have to protect the future of our children and our grandchildren.

[Applause]

To me it was clear we had to do things differently. We had to do something that demanded a fight. We had to fight to ban Styrofoam in this city.

[Applause]

Some people said to me it's going to be a fight. It's going mean taking on big business. Well, we took on big business. They sued us. And we won in court. And now Styrofoam is banned in New York City.

[Applause]

And let's ban plastic bags and plastic straws while we're at it.

[Applause]

Next, we took on Big Oil. We're divesting \$5 billion of our workers' hard-earned retirement savings, taking that \$5 billion out of the fossil fuel companies that are destroying this planet.

[Applause]

And we're putting billions where it belongs – into renewable energy that will save us all.

[Applause]

Now, we're not afraid in this town to take on the big corporations. So we sued the big pharmaceutical companies for peddling addiction, for helping to create the opioid crisis.

[Applause]

We're going to fight to get the resources we deserve back from those companies, so we can help New Yorkers. But nonetheless, with the tools at hand today, we're stemming the tide of overdose deaths. I have to be very blunt about this next point. To keep people from dying in the streets, we may have courted some controversy. But I tell you, we are opening overdose prevention centers anyway.

[Applause]

Because there is no wrong way to save lives.

[Applause]

Finally, with our country's values and our city's values under assault every day in Washington, D.C., I laid out ways to strengthen our local democracy and protect our rights. We won ballot measures that expand participatory budgeting, and thank you to the Council for leading the way and innovating that extraordinary new process.

[Applause]

And the people spoke loud and clear in November. They said, let's get Big Money out of politics.

[Applause]

So from now on in New York City, every day people will be able to run for office without ever having to talk to a single big donor. They'll be able to win elections with grassroots dollars.

[Applause]

We didn't just sit still and watch what Donald Trump was doing to our city and to the rest of this country. We took him on.

[Applause]

We sent lawyers to the border to fight the inhumane detention of children.

[Applause]

Remember early in his administration when Trump tried to force us to ask New Yorkers their immigration status? And he thought he had us, because he threatened to block our law enforcement funding, the very money we use to keep New Yorkers safe. Guess what happened?

[Mayor de Blasio de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

We took him to court and we won. Now, none of the remarkable achievements I just ran through – none of them were supposed to be possible. Every single one of them I heard plenty of naysayers, plenty of doubting Thomases. These ideas, the things we did in 2018, they cut against the grain of conventional wisdom. You know how I feel about conventional wisdom. These ideas were considered too radical or too costly or – shudder – too progressive. But we heard the voices of the people, and we answered the call. So the lesson now isn't to rest on our laurels. The lesson now is to go bigger, be bolder, aim higher. There's more to do in this town.

[Applause]

That takes me to the video we watched a few minutes ago. Those families. Very moving. The portrayal of those families. And their joys and their struggles are our own. I think everyone in this room could feel that and relate to them. And I know Chirlane and I were having the exact same thought as we watched those families. Because there was a point in our lives not too long ago when Chiara and Dante were still in school at P.S. 372 – some P. S. 372 fans here I can see – and Chirlane told you the story. Both our mothers got sick at the same time. We took it all on our shoulders. We got to know firsthand the meaning of that term, the sandwich generation – young kids and elders who need your help at the same time. What Chirlane didn't tell you is that she worked so hard to get her mom the treatment she needed, to get her through chemotherapy that Chirlane got sick herself. I can certainly say that being Mayor can be stressful, but it's not stressful that way. It's not like that knot you get inside when you can't be there for someone you love when they need you. Chirlane and I were lucky in a lot of ways, but we still felt overwhelmed. We're hardly the only family who knows what that feels like. I meet people every day who are loving, excuse me, who are living some version of that life. Or feeling that same pressure from all sides. That same feeling that things are becoming impossible. My friends, life in the fairest big city in America should never feel impossible.

[Applause]

We shouldn't feel such pressure on the quality of our lives. And that term is an important one – quality of life. It means different things to different people. When I say it, I mean the quality of your life. Are you spending enough time with your kids? Do you have time



for that? When was the last time you and your partner could actually go out on a date? Do you see your life getting better this year? Or are you just holding on? I'm here to tell you, you're not alone.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

Millions of people in this city, tens of millions across the country, are boxed in to lives that just aren't working for them. You haven't been paid what you deserve for all the hard work. You haven't been given the time you deserve. You're not living the life you deserve. And here is the cold, hard truth – it's no accident. It's an agenda. An agenda that's dominated our politics from Reaganomics to the Trump tax giveaway to the wealthy and corporations. For decades. For decades, working people have done their share. For decades, working people have gotten more and more productive. At the same time, they've gotten a smaller and smaller share of the wealth they create. Here's the truth. Brothers and sisters, there's plenty of money in the world. There's plenty of money in this city. It's just in the wrong hands.

[Applause]

You deserve a city that gives you the share of prosperity that you have earned. And so this year, this year in New York City, we will guarantee health care for all our people.

[Applause]

We will become the first city in the nation to require two weeks' paid personal time.

[Applause]

We'll get our lowest paid workers the wages and benefits they deserve.

[Applause]

And we'll get tough on the bad guys. When the city's worst landlords cheat their tenants, we will take their buildings away from them.

[Applause]

We'll expand 3-K to more neighborhoods, and by the time I leave office, 3-K will be in every district in this city.

[Applause]

We'll work with the State to legalize marijuana the right way. By expunging arrest records –

[Applause]

And making sure the grassroots, not the big corporations, run this new business. We'll create a universal retirement system in our city, because if you've worked for decades, then you've earned the right to retire in peace.

[Applause]

And come hell or high water – forgive me, Cardinal – come heck or high water –

[Laughter]

We will get Albany to fix our subways because New Yorkers can't waste more time getting where they need to go.

[Applause]

My fellow New Yorkers, you deserve to live in the fairest big city in America, and that's what we are going to deliver. And it all starts with health care. Somehow, in the richest city on earth, we have diabetics rationing their insulin. And women who have never had a pap smear. People whose preventable health problems turn into catastrophic ones that end up in an emergency room and an astronomical bill. Now, thank God Obamacare has driven down the number of uninsured Americans to record lows. But 600,000 New Yorkers still don't have insurance – 600,000 people. My fellow New

Yorkers, we're going to fix that, for a very simple reason – we believe health care is a human right.

[Applause]

Now, we want people to get it right all over the country. So we need to say yes to Medicare For All in Washington.

[Applause]

We need to say yes to single payer in Albany.

[Applause]

But until they say yes back, New York City will lead the way.

[Applause]

We will literally guarantee health care for every single New Yorker. Let me tell you how it works. If you don't have insurance, it's going to be simple. If you're eligible, we'll get you enrolled in the City's public option, MetroPlus and get you a doctor.

[Applause]

We'll get you a doctor at one of our 70 public health centers. And if you're not eligible, like hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers, including our undocumented neighbors, we'll take care of you too.

[Applause]

It's the right thing to do.

[Applause]

I will say this – I am not a scholar of scripture, the way so many of the leaders who have joined us here are. But I don't think there's a passage in the Bible that says, deny health care to your neighbor because they're undocumented. I think the Bible tells us help your neighbor.

[Applause]

Now, remember, our public hospitals already treat anyone who walks into an emergency room. But an emergency room is no replacement for comprehensive health care.

[Applause]

So this year, Health + Hospitals will launch NYC Care, a sweeping package of health services guaranteed on an affordable sliding scale to anyone without insurance.

[Applause]

And this is quality care, you'll be able to make an appointment, just like someone who has insurance. You'll be able to see a primary care doctor, a cardiologist, a gynecologist, a mental health professional, or a pediatrician. Whatever you need, it will be there.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

[Applause]

You'll get the care you need, when you need it, at a price you can afford, guaranteed. That's how simple it is. This is the kind of thing we need to do. Give people back some stability, some security in their lives. We also have to reckon with what's happening to working people in this country. We know that people are working harder and harder, longer and longer hours. Can I just test the audience? Who feels they're working longer and longer hours? The people have spoken.

[Laughter]

I believe I've opened Pandora's Box.

[Laughter]

Now, we know that the people working the hardest often earn the least, and have the fewest protections. In this city, nannies, home health aides –

[Applause]

– housekeepers, drivers, freelancers – more than 200,000 New Yorkers – receive no benefits at all, and have no security. These are the people who keep this city running.

[Applause]

And in return, they get the short end of the stick. It's not okay with them. It's not okay, is it?

**Audience:** No.

**Mayor:** It's not okay with me either. No one should be taken for granted. No one should be punished for how they make a living. And that's why, today, I am expanding the mission, and in fact, the name of the Department of Consumer Affairs. It will now be the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection.

[Applause]

They'll continue to enforce City laws like paid sick leave and will undertake a new mandate – to protect the most vulnerable workers in our economy. When a home health care aid – when their pay is withheld or any worker is mistreated, the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection will intervene.

[Applause]

Whether you're an employee or a temp, whether you're paid by check or cash, whether you're documented or not, if you work in New York City, then we will work for you.

[Applause]

And the workplace isn't the only place your city is adding muscle to protect you. We're going to get tougher when it comes to protecting you at home as well. I want to hasten to say – most landlords do the right thing. Most play by the rules. But too many others try to game the system and push working people out of their apartments so they can hike the rent. We're not going to take that. The city's worst landlords will have a new sheriff to fear – The Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants.

[Applause]

A new arm of City government that will root out the worst landlord abuse, a force that will hold every City agency, as well, accountable for protecting tenants.

[Applause]

I'll be signing an executive order to create this new office. In fact, I think I'll do it right now.

[Mayor de Blasio signs executive order]

[Applause]

Who says government can't act fast?

[Laughter]

My fellow New Yorkers, when a landlord tries to push out a tenant by making their home unlivable, a team of inspectors and law enforcement agents will be on the ground in time to stop it.

[Applause]

We'll use every tool we have. We'll fine the landlords. We'll penalize the landlords. But if the fines and the penalties don't cut it, we will seize their buildings.

[Applause]

And we will put them in the hands of a community non-profit that will treat tenants with the respect they deserve.

[Applause]

Sadly, that's not the only exploitation we're seeing. It happens to hardworking people every day at big box retailers, at non-union hotels and restaurants, and yes, even in corporate offices. I'm talking about the half-million New Yorkers who can't take so much as a single day off, not one, to be there when their child needs them or to gather with their family for a wedding or a funeral or just to take care of themselves. We all need to recharge sometimes, don't we? Our health depends on it. And the facts prove it. Employees who get regular time off have fewer health problems, they suffer fewer injuries, they make fewer mistakes, and their productivity goes up. That's why literally every other industrialized country on Earth gives workers the fundamental right of paid vacation. Look. That's a lot of countries, isn't it?

[Applause]

That's a whole lot of countries. That should tell us everything we need to know about why it's time to do it right here in New York City.

[Applause]

Literally not a single city or state in this country provides this right. This will be the first time, right now. New York City will become the first city in the nation to mandate Paid Personal Time for all our workers.

[Applause]

Full-time or part-time, you will earn up to ten days of Paid Personal Time every year.

[Applause]

We'll work with Speaker Johnson and the City Council to pass a local law that makes it mandatory for employers to provide it, just like they do paid sick leave and overtime pay. And those things have not stopped us from having a booming economy, have they? It's the right thing to do. We deserve to be there for our families, the people we love. We deserve to be able to take care of ourselves. We all deserve a little more happiness, don't we? And that word, "happiness", it means something in this nation. It is in the second sentence of the Declaration of Independence. It's what this nation was founded for. That means that living in this city shouldn't just mean surviving. You deserve better. So it's not just time off, it's time to live the right way.

[Applause]

And that is not the only time we need to give back to New Yorkers. Every day, millions of us lose minutes – sometimes hours – just getting to work or to school or wherever we have to be. It shouldn't be this hard to get around in the greatest city in the world.

[Applause]

And so we're giving people more and better options. This past year, we brought NYC Ferry to the Lower East Side and to Soundview in the Bronx.

[Applause]

I was there the morning we launched in Soundview in August, and I didn't realize quite how enthusiastic the Bronx was about its new ferry until it hit me in the form of a bear hug from Nellie Santiago-Rivera. The ferry cut Nellie's daily trip from her house in Shorehaven to her office in Midtown – cut that trip in half -- in half.

[Applause]



That's more time with her family, more time for herself, and I want more New Yorkers to have that too. So today I announced the next big expansion of NYC Ferry. We'll link Staten Island to the West Side of Manhattan.

[Applause]

We'll connect Coney Island to Lower Manhattan.

[Applause]

And we'll extend the beloved Soundview Route to Ferry Point.

[Applause]

Now, ferry riders won't be the only New Yorkers who can look forward to a faster commute, because we're going to do something big for our buses as well. There's the bus riders. I hear you.

[Laughter]

In 2019 alone, we'll help 600,000 New Yorkers actually get to work on time. We're going to double the number of intersections where we give buses green light priority, helping them to stay on schedule.

[Applause]

We're going to double our pace of installing dedicated lanes just for buses, helping them to move faster.

[Applause]

We're going to keep those bus lanes clear. The NYPD is adding its first ever tow truck units dedicated solely to keeping parked cars out of bus lanes.

[Applause]

These are the kind of things – I hear you, over there. Just don't park in the bus lane, and you're not going to have a problem.

[Laughter]

This is the kind of thing we can do right here in this city. But we need Albany to do its job to finally fix the subways.

[Applause]

There's a big day coming up. Get out your calendars for 2019. Get out a red pen. And circle April 1st. Not because it's April Fool's Day.

[Laughter]

Circle April 1st, because it's the day the budget is due in Albany. 80 days away. In the next 80 days, the fate of the MTA, the fate of our subways and buses, will be determined once and for all. And if it isn't determined in the next 80 days, we will lose our very best opportunity to address these problems. Now, I want to say this to all the elected officials in the room – and I'm going to include myself – all of us, we have 80 days to show the people that we can get this done, 80 days to show we hear them, to show them that we're not going to let this crisis get worse. And I, for one – I don't care if I have to pound on every door in Albany to get it done. I'll be there. And we can get it done. This is a crisis that can be addressed. Different people have different ideas. That's okay. We're going to need a lot of different ideas to fix this once and for all. Now, I continue to believe a millionaires' tax is the fairest, most progressive way to fund the repairs and improvements we need.

[Applause]

By the way, 70 percent of New Yorkers agree with me, according to the last poll taken.

[Applause]

But in truth, there are a lot of solutions on the table. Proposals for congestion pricing have definitely improved. Other people have floated other ideas, like a new Transportation Bond Act, or using the proceeds from marijuana revenue to finally get the MTA to work. Whatever the package of solutions, working people can't wait. We cannot let 2019 go by without a solution. We can't wait another year.

[Applause]

Now, this year, 2019, will be historic in Albany by any measure. There are so many reforms we've sought for decades that required a vote in Albany and seemed impossible. Those reforms are finally within reach, with Democrats now in the resounding majority in the State Senate.

[Applause]

We can finally get these things done. Remember, this year is also the year that rent regulation for one million apartments – well over two million New Yorkers live in them – rent regulations are set to expire. And this is the chance to not only keep them going, but to make them stronger. And that's why we will lead the change – excuse me – lead the charge. We will lead the charge to finally appeal vacancy decontrol once and for all.

[Applause]

We have to also make this the year we pass fundamental reforms in our democracy. We've got to make it easy for people to participate, easy to vote. Voting should be something people want to do, not something that feels impossible.

[Applause]

This year, we can pass early voting and same-day registration and no-excuse vote by mail.

[Applause]

Instead of being the hardest state to cast a vote in, how about we become the easiest state to cast a vote in?

[Applause]

We'll fight in Albany to guarantee huge other reforms we need. We'll fight to guarantee speedy trials and bail reform.

[Applause]

Because poverty shouldn't be the reason why someone ends up behind bars.

[Applause]

And lastly and most importantly, for the 1.1 million kids in our public schools, we're going to fight to extend mayoral control, so there's real accountability every day.

[Applause]

Every day we're showing what mayoral control achieves for kids and parents. Now, I have to tell you, education is my number one concern. And every year, my favorite day, hands down, is the first day of school.

[Applause]

I have to be honest and admit to you that many of our 1.1 million kids do not consider the first day of school their favorite day in the year. But I do. This year, I spent that September morning out at P. S. 377 in Ozone Park. I met this amazing mom, Wanda Carrion, who was just as excited as I was that day. And it wasn't because she has four kids and we were taking them off her hands after a long, long summer.

[Laughter]

It was because her kids were starting on a new path. Her son, Willie, was having his first day of pre-K. Her youngest, Ethan, was just starting 3-K. Just think for a moment what all this means to this family. Here's an immigrant, a mother of four, living in Ozone Park. Her kids are now getting the right start in life. She has that assurance that her kids are on their way. And now she's got the time to get her own education as a medical assistant and have a career.

[Applause]

That's the kind of story I want for every working parent in this city. And so this September, 3-K For All is expanding once again. We're ready to go farther.

[Applause]

We're going to Washington Heights, to the South Bronx, to East New York, to Staten Island, to Bushwick, and to Soundview. This coming school year, 20,000 children will be in free full-day 3-K.

[Applause]

And we're not stopping there when it comes to making our schools better. For decades, some of our kids, some of our schools were ignored. And there's no place where that happens, sadly, more than in the Bronx. Schools in the Bronx were short changed for years and years and years. I don't accept that. And neither do the educators who wake up every day to make those schools better. So this year, we're launching a new plan to attract the best and brightest teachers, get them to those schools, keep them in those schools in the Bronx that need them the most.

[Applause]

This is the epitome of our philosophy of Equity and Excellence, going above and beyond for kids in schools that haven't gotten what they deserve. Also, very proud to tell you, in 2019, we'll expand our partnership with Warby Parker, so we can provide free eye exams and free eyeglasses to every kindergartner and every first grader, citywide.

[Applause]

These glasses are so stylish that kids will actually want to wear them. Imagine. Now not only do we want to get our kids on the right path. We also want to make sure that people who have worked their whole lives are on the path to a secure retirement. A secure retirement. But here's a shocking fact – nearly half of the workforce in this city, two million of us, don't have employer-sponsored retirement plans. So we're going to establish retirement plans for any worker who doesn't have one. We'll be there for them.

[Applause]

You'll be able to set aside a small portion of your paycheck, watch it grow over the years, and take it with you from job to job.

[Applause]

Now, let's be clear, if you've spent your lifetime working, you've already paid your dues. Retirement should be something you can actually look forward to. That's what we're going to achieve here in New York City. Well, my friends, I want to now conclude by wrapping all these pieces together. And I want you to dream with me for a moment. I want you to imagine where we could all go together.

Imagine life in a city that takes some weight off of your shoulders. Imagine a city that's focused every day on making things more fair. Your health care guaranteed. Your wages and benefits protected. Your home and your rent affordable. Your time given back to you. Your child on the right path from 3-K all the way to college. Your subways and buses actually improving. Your streets safer than ever. And your retirement secured.

Imagine a city where New Yorkers can live their lives more fully. That's the quality of life I want for every New Yorker.

[Applause]

And that's what life should be like in the fairest big city in America, a place where work is rewarded, and all this prosperity is shared.

[Applause]

This country has spent decades taking from working people and giving to the one percent. This city has spent the last five years doing it the other way around. We give back to working people the prosperity they have earned. And we are just getting started.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

My friends, these goals are not utopian. They are not unreachable. They are achievable here in New York City.

[Applause]

Never, ever underestimate New Yorkers. Never underestimate us and what we can do. Never underestimate the change we can make together. Never underestimate the greatest city on Earth. We can do it. God bless you. And God bless New York City. And God bless America.

[Applause]