

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30, 2025

11:49 A.M.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The House will
come to order.

Good morning, colleagues.

The Reverend Donna Elia will offer a prayer.

REVEREND DONNA ELIA: Let us pray. Holy and
Majestic God, we pause in this moment before reports are heard and
decisions are made we honor and praise You. Thank You for the
beauty of this day and for every good gift You freely pour out upon us.
As legislators gather for the day's work, equip them with the gift of
patience, kindness, wisdom, discernment and courage. Help them to
work together to build bridges across differences of perspective and
conviction. Equip them as they serve that they might work for what is
just and honorable, and thank You for all the staff whose work is a

vital part of the whole.

On this day we are particularly grateful for deceased members of this Body whom we now name in our hearts before You.

(Pause)

Thank You for their many contributions, for their particular strengths and challenges, their collegial spirit and their enduring legacy. Strengthen their families and may their memory be a blessing that continues to inspire.

Help this Assembly as it strives to further justice and equity in government. Heal any who feel unwell, comfort those who grieve, and let the day come when no child will live in poverty and all will dwell secure. Help us all, O God, to work for peace and to honor and glorify You all our days.

In Your holy name we pray. Amen.

MEMBERS: Amen.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Visitors are invited to join members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Whereupon, Acting Speaker Hunter led visitors and members in the Pledge of Allegiance.)

A quorum being present, the Clerk will read the Journal of Tuesday, April 29th.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Madam Speaker, I move to dispense with the further reading of the Journal of Tuesday, April the 29th and that the same stand approved.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Without objection, so ordered.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Thank you so much, Madam. And good morning to my colleagues and the guests that are in the Chamber.

I do want to share a quote with you today. This one comes from Kofi Annan, the Grenada -- Grenadian diplomat and the seventh United Nations Secretary General and the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize winner. His words for us today: *We may have different regions -- different religions, different languages, different colored skin, but we all belong to one human race.* Again, these words from Kofi Annana [sic].

Madam Speaker, members have on their desk a main Calendar. Before any housekeeping and/or introductions, we will be calling for the Rules Committee to meet off the floor. This Committee is gonna produce an A-Calendar of which we will take up today. We're also gonna be calling for the following committees to meet as well: Banks, followed by Governmental Employees, followed by Local Governments. We will then begin our floor work by taking up resolutions on page 3, and then we will take up on consent Rules Report No. 154. It's on page 6. We'll also take up the following bills on debate: Rules Report No. 45 by Mr. Vanel, Calendar No. 74 by Mr. Dinowitz, and Calendar No. 76 by Ms. Rozic. There may be a need for additional floor activity to be announced, Madam Speaker. Should that happen, I will be happy to do so. But members should be

aware that at the conclusion of our work today on the floor we're going to take up a privileged resolution memorializing our deceased colleagues. And Majority members should also be aware that there may be a need, or perhaps will be a need for a conference as we complete our work on the floor today.

That's where we are in general, Madam Speaker. If you could now begin by calling the Rules Committee to the Speaker's Conference Room.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Rules Committee to the Speaker's Conference Room.
Rules Committee members to the Speaker's Conference Room.

We have no housekeeping this morning. We're gonna start with introductions.

Mr. McDonald for the purposes of an introduction.

MR. MCDONALD: Good morning, Madam Speaker, and good morning, colleagues.

I rise today to recognize the Spina Bifida Association of Northeastern New York. Spina Bifida, as many of you know, is the most common permanently-disabling birth defect that is combatable with life in the United States. It is a type of neural tube defect that occurs when the spinal column fails to develop or close properly during early pregnancy. While it presents lifelong challenges, individuals living with spina difa -- spina bifida lead full, meaningful lives as students, professionals, parents and community members.

This Awareness Month, which we celebrate, also

emphasizes prevention, and highlights the importance of folic acid in reducing the risk of neural tube defects.

Please join me in welcoming the Spina Bifida Association of Northeast New York [sic] today, and thank them for their ongoing advocacy, education and support. I'd like to recognize the individuals who are here today, and I also want to share this with my colleague Mr. Tague, as his constituent Jubilee Schmid is here. We have Paul Lukasiewicz; Elizabeth Dunn; no stranger to my life, my constituent Cliff Perez, who's advocating everything and anything all day long; and our Executive Director Julia Duff.

Madam Speaker, please welcome this extraordinary group to the Chamber and extend them the cordialities of the House.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On behalf of Mr. McDonald, the Speaker and all the members, we welcome you to the Chamber and extend the privileges of the floor to you. Thank you so very much for all the work you do with the Spina Bifida Association, very meaningful, heartfelt work. Thank you so very much for joining us today.

(Applause)

Ms. Buttenschon for the purposes of an introduction.

MS. BUTTENSCHON: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As a graduate and former Dean of Mohawk Valley Community College, I am proud to introduce on behalf of myself, Assemblymember Miller, Assemblymember Smullen, the MVCC, Mohawk Valley Community College Men's Basketball Team and

Men's Soccer Team. Both teams had remarkable seasons, achieving the 2025 NJCAA Division 3 National Championship for each prospective sport. This marks the first national championship for both of the teams at Mohawk Valley Community College.

The MVCC basketball team is led by Head Coach Harley Fuller and Assistant Coaches Ray Daley and Dylan Drexter [sic]. They claimed their championship after defeating Herkimer College 58 to 51 in the National Championship game, finishing the season a remarkable 29 to 1 record.

I would like to mention three outstanding players that are here with us that helped secure this Championship: Isaiah Earl, who was named the NJCAA National Tournament MVP Outstanding Performance Player; Andre Pasha, who finished as an impressive freshman; and Jalen Bradberry, who delivered a strong performance.

In addition, the impressive MVCC Men's Soccer Team, led by Head Coach and MVCC Athletic Director Dominic DiMaggio and Assistant Coach Grant Calogero. They claimed this Championship after defeating six-time defending national championship Dallas College in Richmond 2 to 1 in overtime in the National Championship game, finishing the season 14-2-3. Today we have the coaches with us, as well as many outstanding players; Souayibou Gjomemo [sic], as well as Santiago Villafane.

I would like to congratulate both teams as the New York State Assembly officially acknowledged them with a resolution for their hard work and dedication and commitment.

Madam Speaker, would you please acknowledge the outstanding men that are with us today?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On behalf of Ms. Buttenschon, Members Miller and Smullen, and on behalf of the Speaker and all members, we welcome you to the Assembly Chamber and extend the privileges of the floor. Congratulations, student athletes and coaches to the Mohawk Valley Community College Men's Basketball and Men's Soccer Team. Great achievement being national champions. We hope you enjoy the proceedings today. Thank you so very much for joining us today.

(Applause)

Mr. Smullen for the purposes of an introduction.

MR. SMULLEN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my distinct honor today on National Therapy Animal Day to introduce to this Chamber one of my constituents, Mrs. Ann Trojan from Gloversville, New York. She's here today with her husband Bill, and I've got to tell everyone within earshot that she's a fine example of what you can do with a therapy animal. She works at Boulevard Elementary School, and it's an absolute delight to see her work with her dog and the -- and the children of that school. She's very active in the community. We're very proud of her advocacy efforts, and we would like to ask for the cordialities of the House to be extended to her on behalf of the people, not only of the 118th Assembly District, but the State of New York on this National Therapy Animal Day.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On behalf of Mr.

Smullen, the Speaker and all the members, we welcome you, Ms. Trojan, to the Assembly Chamber and extend the privileges of the floor to you. Thank you so very much for all the work you do with the national therapy animals, and today, National Animal Therapy [sic] Day. Thank you so very much for joining us. The work you do is very commendable and we love our therapy animals. Thank you.

(Applause)

Ms. Lee for the purposes of an introduction.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my honor to welcome Dr. Lauren Komer, Dr. Nina Schwalbe, and on behalf of Assemblymember Rebecca Seawright, Dr. Kelsey Hopland to the floor today.

Dr. Lauren Komer is a neuroscientist with over 12 years of experience. She was accepted -- she accepted a position at the National Institute of Health National Institute on Aging, where she organized critical Alzheimer's research workshops, translated scientific findings for the public, and supported researchers with grant writing. Just two weeks before her one-year work anniversary, however, after earning an award for exemplary performance, Dr. Komer was abruptly terminated along with other probation -- probationary employees. She was later returned to administrative leave where her status with NIH is currently in limbo.

Dr. Nina Schwalbe is the CEO and founder of Spark Street Advisors, a global public health think tank based in New York City. Previously, Dr. Schwalbe led USAID's COVID-19 Vaccine

Access and Delivery Initiative. She supported New York's pandemic response, working to save lives in a time of massive uncertainty.

And Dr. Kelsey Hopland. Dr. Hopland earned her PhD in neuroscience at Weill Cornell Medicine, where she studied immune and cancer cell interactions in brain tumors. Dr. Hopland was recently terminated from her role as a health science policy analyst at the National Institute of Aging, a division of the National Institute of Health. In her role she communicated with external stakeholders, including Congress, about NIH research activities and the budget for the national plan to address Alzheimer's research.

In the face of Federal cuts, these women, Dr. Hopland, Dr. Komer and Dr. Schwalbe have bravely become an -- advocates for the importance of Federal health agencies who do lifesaving research for all Americans, including all of New York State.

Madam Speaker, would you please welcome Dr. Kelsey Hopland, Dr. Nina Schwalbe and Dr. Lauren Komer and extend them the privileges of the floor?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On behalf of Ms. Lee, Ms. Seawright, the Speaker and all members, welcome, Doctors Komer, Schwalbe and Hopland to the Assembly Chamber. We extend the privileges of the floor to you and hope you enjoy our proceedings today. Thank you so very much for joining us.

(Applause)

Resolutions page 3, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 395, Mr.

Lemondes.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim April 29, 2025, as Undiagnosed Rare Disease Day in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Lemondes on the resolution.

MR. LEMONDES: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This resolution -- resolution's purpose is to recognize the unique challenges of both victims of undiagnosed diseases and conditions and their families who seek answers, oftentimes for the rest of their lives.

In 2016, the year of my daughter Elly's death at 16-and-a-half years old, the Rare and Undiagnosed Network ironically began its awareness campaign for annual recognition on April 29th on behalf of the entire Rare Disease Network. Moreover, the associated bewilderment with rare and undiagnosed conditions leaves patients, parents, extended family and caregivers alike in an uncomfortable position.

As all families have tragedy of some type, they're usually easier to accept and move on from when you know why. However, when you don't you find yourself in a very restless and oftentimes perpetually vulnerable position. As my wife and I sat many times at our daughter's deathbed, not knowing if she would make it through the night, I was always surprised to see the angels descend to help. These are the people you wouldn't expect, but are comforted by in recognition that you may not be as alone as you think.

I have always been amazed at the power of the human soul in God's hands. Similarly, patients plagued by these conditions need extra, extra advocacy as they and their families experience every form of discrimination imaginable; subtle, overt, unintended, and sometimes deliberate. Oftentimes with no precedent to fall back on, there is limited advocacy for them which further exacerbates their care, comfort, education, sometimes jobs and ability to earn a living, and end-of-life care as well. On her deathbed, approximately 30 to 40 times throughout her life the doctors were always wrong. She left on her terms, in our home with family with her.

In closing, the burden of uncertainty is so stark that it impacts several other aspects of life for all those in the circle of people afflicted by these conditions. Please join me in recognizing the unique challenges of those suffering from rare and/or undiagnosed conditions and the burdens on their families.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 396, Mr. Hevesi.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim April 30, 2025, as Adverse Childhood Experience Awareness Day in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 397, Mr. Tague.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim April 30, 2025, as Therapy Animal Day in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Tague on the resolution.

MR. TAGUE: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, my colleagues, I rise today to honor and celebrate the remarkable impact of therapy animals on the lives of so many. These furry, feathered or scaled friends aren't just pets. They are sources of comfort, joy and healing. Their presence can reduce stress, alleviate anxiety, and even improve physical health.

For individuals facing challenges, be it illness, trauma or loneliness, the unconditional love and gentle support of a therapy animal can be trans -- transformative. Veterans working through PTSD, children in need of support following a period of trauma, or senior citizens in need of companionship and company. These are the people that rely on constant and immediate care that domesticated animals can provide. We should continue to encourage and support that healing.

Therapy animals offer a unique form of emotional

support, bridging communication gaps and fostering connection. They're ambassadors of hope, reminding us of the healing power of nature and the profound bond that we share with the animal kingdom.

So my fellow colleagues, my friends, let's take this day to express our gratitude to these remarkable creatures and the dedicated people who work alongside them, making a real difference in the lives of others. Please join me in supporting this resolution. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 398, Mr. Sayegh.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim April 2025, as Celebrate Diversity Month in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Sayegh in the -- on the resolution.

MR. SAYEGH: On the resolution, thank you, Madam Speaker.

Today I rise with this annual resolution celebrating diversity. And each and every one of us, no matter who we represent, what our background is, understand that each and every one of us and all of us combined come from different religions and different cultures and traditions. We have different value systems. We have different

heritage. And our role as citizens of the world or citizens of this Assembly is largely to encourage all efforts to work together, to recognize differences. But more important, to recognize that there is more in common that allows us to earn the respect of each other than the differences. And today is truly a day to recognize the importance of diversity and recognize that the state of our State and our nation and our world with the level of polarization and division, that now more than ever it is most important to learn to respect and encourage respect for each other.

Diversity is very important, and it really allows us to recognize the contributions of many communities that we, in Session, celebrate and recognize on a regular basis. So today is really an overview of recognizing the diversity and the differences and the commonalities.

Thank you very much.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 399, Ms. McMahon.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim May 2, 2025, as Polonia Day in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Ms. McMahon on the resolution.

MS. MCMAHON: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As a State and legislative Body, we recognize the importance of fostering and enhancing ethnic pride and cultural diversity.

Polonia Day, also referred to as Polish National Flag Day, is a holiday celebrated in Polish communities throughout the world. In addition to honoring the Polish flag, Polonia Day also serves to recognize the Polish diaspora and celebrate all Poles living abroad.

Western New York is the proud home to one of the largest Polish communities in the United States, and the region is steeped in Polish American history. In the 1850s and '60s, Poles of Jewish descent began arriving in Buffalo and Western New York, soon followed by Catholic Poles. Many of these immigrants were escaping oppression and poverty in Germany, Austria and Russia, as an independent Polish nation did not yet exist. At the turn of the century, the population of Polish Americans in Buffalo had grown to roughly 20,000, and by 1971, Polish Americans became the largest ethnic group in Erie County, including roughly 75 percent of the population of the Town of Cheektowaga.

To this day, Poles and Polish Americans continue to take great pride in their flag. Here in New York State we are proud to honor the rich heritage and long history of Polish culture and influence on our State and communities. In that spirit, I am proud to introduce this resolution to proclaim May 2, 2025 as Polonia Day in

the State of New York.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Chludzinski on the resolution.

MR. CHLUDZINSKI: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise today with immense pride and a deep sense of connection to speak in support of this resolution honoring May 2nd as Polonia Day. I want to thank the sponsor for proposing this resolution.

As a member of this esteemed Body, and more personally, as someone who comes from a proud Polish American family, this day holds profound significance for me and for the countless Polish Americans in our State, and more specifically in my district, which we know from last week being a Dingus Day week. If you saw my district, you would arguably agree that it is the Polish American capital of the country.

Growing up with rich traditions and unwavering spirit and the enduring values of my Polish heritage were deeply engrained in our family life, from the lively sounds of polka music filling our home to the aroma of pierogi and kielbasa during family gatherings. Polonia was not just a word, it was a lived experience, a vibrant tapestry woven into the fabric of our identity.

Furthermore, I have the distinct honor of representing a district that is home to a significant and thriving Polish American community. I see firsthand the incredible contributions that Polish

Americans make to our neighborhoods, our businesses, our cultural landscape, and the very soul of New York State. Their resilience, their strong work -- work ethic, their commitment to family and their there deep-rooted patriotism have enriched our communities immeasurably.

Polonia Day is a vital opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the profound impact of Polish immigrants and their descendents on the United States. It's a day to remember the sacrifices made, the triumphs achieved, and the enduring legacy left by generations of Polish Americans who have helped build and shape our nation.

For my family, for my constituents, and for Polish Americans across New York State, this resolution is more than just words on paper. It is a recognition, a validation and a heartfelt thank you to our community that has given so much.

Again, I thank the sponsor for supporting this resolution and in celebrating the rich heritage enduring contributions of Polonia in our State.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Madam Speaker, if we can now call the Banks Committee to the Speaker's Conference

Room.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Banks Committee members to the Speaker's Conference Room. If you're on Banks Committee, please see Chair Vanel in the Speaker's Conference Room.

Page 3, resolutions. Resolution No. 400, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 400, Mr. Lavine.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim May 3, 2025, as Press Freedom Day in the State of New York, in conjunction with the observance of World Press Freedom Day.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Can we have some quiet, please? Thank you.

Mr. Lavine on the resolution.

MR. LAVINE: Madam Speaker, with the approach of May 3rd, World Press Freedom Day, we must pause to reflect on one of the most essential pillars of democracy, a free and independent press.

As a member of the State Legislature, I'm reminded daily that the work we do in public office only has meaning when it is subject to public scrutiny, transparency and accountability. That scrutiny begins with a press that is empowered -- empowered, not punished -- for asking hard questions. We must never forget that

journalism is not just a profession, it's a public service and sometimes it is a true sacrifice.

A name that comes to mind today is someone who lived in part of my community, Marie Colvin, whose mom and sister are dear friends. Marie was a Long Island native and a fierce, fearless foreign correspondent who risked everything to bring stories of war and injustice to -- to us. She reported from conflict zones across the globe, from Chechnya to Sri Lanka to Libya to Syria, where she lost her life in the holy City of Homs, reporting on atrocities by the Syrian government.

Marie believed that bearing witness to human trafficking and human suffering was not just her job, it was her moral duty, her responsibility. Her courage reminds us that press freedom is not theoretical. It's not a game. It is a personal, personal sacrifice and it is urgent. And right now it is under attack internationally and here in the United States as well. Across the globe, journalists are being imprisoned, silenced, threatened, killed, simply for doing their jobs. In countries like Russia, Iran, China and too many others, authoritarian regimes are cracking down on dissent, shuttering independent media and spreading propaganda in its place. But the threat isn't only overseas. In the United States we have seen coordinated efforts to discredit the press, to block access to public information, and to intimidate reporters. We've seen increased hostility towards journalists covering protests, politics, and even local governance. And we've seen how disinformation and politically-

motivated attacks can erode and destroy public trust in the very institutions that democracy holds so dear.

Let me be clear. Free press is not the enemy of the government, it's the guarantor of good government. As legislators, we must do more than express support for press freedom. We must actively defend it. It means condemning violence or threats against journalists wherever they occur, and it means standing up even when standing up is not comfortable. That is to guarantee the public's right to know. Democracy cannot function and will die in the dark. The press brings the light.

So as we approach World Press Freedom Day, let's renew our commitment not only to the ideals of transparency and truth, but to the brave individuals who risk all in its pursuit.

Thank you so very much.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Ms. Giglio on the resolution.

MS. GIGLIO: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And I'd like to thank the sponsor for this very important resolution, as my stepson was a writer for BuzzFeed and he was in Syria and Ukraine when he was abducted by pro-Russian militants who drove him off into the mountains with other reporters. They blindfolded him, they beat him to get the passwords from his cellphone, from his computer because they wanted to know what he was writing about the militants. So it's a very important resolution, and it's very important for democracy and for us here in the United

States to know what's happening overseas and also to protect reporters here in the United States for their opinions.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 401, Ms. Barrett.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim May 4, 2025, as Volunteer Firefighters' Appreciation Day in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Ms. Barrett on the resolution.

MS. BARRETT: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am honored to once again stand before you and sponsor this important resolution to celebrate New York State's many volunteer firefighters and recognize these dedicated, brave, selfless men and women who valiantly serve our community.

New York -- New Yorkers rely on volunteer firefighters Statewide, with nearly 90 percent of fire departments across the State being volunteer-run. In my own district there are 42 fire companies of various sizes and the vast majority of them are volunteer-run. These are the men and women who run towards the fire, who rescue our family pets, our family treasures, our family members when we are in crisis. And while they're volunteers in the

sense that they're not paid, they are professionals who train, often at their own expense. They sacrifice time with family and friends and they serve in many, many cases for decades and as part of many generations.

Volunteer firefighters provide vital lifesaving services, all while saving New York taxpayers more than \$4 billion. Were we to be paying all of these people salary as paid -- paid firefighters, that would be what New York State taxpayers would have to pay.

Recruitment and retention are major challenges. The number of volunteer firefighters has dropped to 80,000 from 120,000 a few decades ago. It's crucial that we support our fire departments as they work hard to recruit and retain our next generation of volunteer firefighters.

I am proud and I hope many of you will join me in supporting these efforts through at least one piece of legislation which I carry which would allow volunteer firefighters to claim both the New York State Volunteer Firefighters and Ambulance Workers income tax credit as well as the local property tax exemption. Currently, volunteer firefighters are not allowed to collect both of these incentives. Allowing our heroic first responders to collect both of these incentives is a small gesture but would make a difference in many lives and many families.

In my district and all throughout the State, we are immensely grateful and dependent on the sacrifices and hard work of

these heroic men and women, and I ask all of my colleagues to join me today in honoring our volunteer firefighters of New York State.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Angelino on the resolution.

MR. ANGELINO: Thank you, Madam Speaker. On the resolution.

I join the sponsor in thanking all of the volunteer firefighters across New York State. I, too, have scores of fire departments in my district, all of them volunteer except one. I fear that the last volunteer firefighter has been born. As -- as the older volunteers age out, fewer are raising their hand and asking to join their local community -- the fire department. It's the best job you will never get paid to do. And the volunteer firefighters, last night at my hometown, huge storms went through. I know in Gloversville last night there was a gigantic fire, and volunteer fire departments respond to those things. And it's not -- they're called firefighters, but it's so much more. Lost children, lost hunters, snowstorms. Trees across the highway, flooded basements. You name it. When you call 911, if the dispatcher doesn't know who to send, it's likely gonna be a volunteer fire department.

So it's right, just and good that we recognize volunteer firefighters on this day and I'm proud to be one of them.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Brown on the resolution.

MR. A. BROWN: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Not to take anything away from my grandfather, who was paid FDNY Chief, but it's the unpaid component that always amazed me. My son was a volunteer fireman. But you take a person like our very own Assemblyman Joe DeStefano, for four decades served as an unpaid volunteer fireman. Always on call for over 40 years.

So I want to thank all volunteer firemen like our very own Assemblyman DeStefano for what he does for us each and every day.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Ms. Walsh on the resolution.

MS. WALSH: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'd like -- I just want to add my voice to this resolution, which is so important, I think, that we take the time to really recognize. I don't know about the rest of you, but over the last few weeks I've been going to so many different fire banquets and I'm thinking of one in particular. It was an Old Timer's night in Ballston Spa that we had a couple of nights ago, and it was held right at the firehouse. And what they do is they honor everybody that has been in the fire service; many, many of them served for 50 or more years. And it was amazing because in the midst of eating this dinner and joining together and talking and chatting, there were two calls that

came through and -- and so the siren starts to go off and everybody just kind of gets up from their meal, they go over, that -- their lockers were lined in the inside of the firehouse and they all just kind of put their gear on and they took off to deal with the emergency. And that happened twice that evening. And it was just -- it just becomes a fact of their life and it's just something that they do. Something that their families, of course, support. And I just think it's -- it's such a part of the fabric of the Upstate area that I represent and I hope we never lose it. But in listening to a previous speaker, I, too, worry and wonder whether the volunteer fire service can really continue as it has been. And I hope it does because as the sponsor noted, it is a tremendous savings to the communities that they represent.

But anyway, the very least we can do is to all add our voices today and support this resolution and I'm very proud to do so.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER MCDONALD: On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 402, Mr. Epstein.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim May 2025, as Lower East Side History Month in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER MCDONALD: On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The

resolution is adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 403, Ms. Jackson.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim August 2025, as Black Business Month in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER MCDONALD: On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; those opposed, no. The motion [sic] is adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 404, Mr. Zaccaro.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim September 26, 2025, as Yemeni American Heritage Day in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER MCDONALD: On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

On consent, page 6 [sic], Rules Report No. 154 [sic], the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A01191, Rules Report No. 156, Bores, Glick, Epstein, Shimsky, Levenberg, Paulin, Simon, González-Rojas, Meeks, Seawright, Cruz. An act to amend the Executive Law, in relation to defining personalized handguns and requiring the Division of Criminal Justice Services to certify the technological viability of personalized handguns and to establish

requirements related to the sale of personalized handguns.

ACTING SPEAKER MCDONALD: On a motion by Mr. Lasher [sic], the Senate bill is before the House. The Senate bill is advanced.

The bill is laid aside.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Mr. Speaker, members now have on their desk the A-Calendar. I would like to advance that Calendar.

ACTING SPEAKER MCDONALD: On a motion by Mrs. Peoples-Stokes, the A-Calender is advanced.

On consent, page 3, Rules Report No. 156, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A01191, Rules Report No. 156, Bores, Glick, Epstein, Shimsky, Levenberg, Paulin, Simon, González-Rojas, Meeks, Seawright, Cruz. An act to amend the Executive Law, in relation to defining personalized handguns and requiring the Division of Criminal Justice Services to certify the technological viability of personalized handguns and to establish requirements related to the sale of personalized handguns.

ACTING SPEAKER MCDONALD: This bill is laid aside.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A01325, Rules Report No. 157, Simon, Taylor, Forrest, Colton, Kelles, Shimsky, Glick, Levenberg, Otis, Raga, Burdick, Davila, Lee. An act to amend the

Correction Law, in relation to a reading proficiency level assessment and dyslexia screening for incarcerated individuals.

ACTING SPEAKER MCDONALD: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect on the 90th day.

ACTING SPEAKER MCDONALD: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Madam Speaker, could you please call the Government [sic] Employees Committee to the Speaker's Conference Room?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Government [sic] Employees to the Speaker's Conference Room. Government [sic] Employee [sic] Committee members to the Speaker's Conference Room.

On consent, page 3, Rules Report No. 158, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A03104, Rules Report No. 158, Magnarelli. An act to amend the Tax Law, in relation to

extending the authorization of the County of Onondaga to impose an additional rate of sales and compensating use taxes.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Home Rule message is at the desk.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A03398, Rules Report No. 159, Pheffer Amato. An act directing the Department of Environmental Conservation to conduct a study on ecological restoration needs of Jamaica Bay.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On a motion by Ms. Pheffer Amato, the Senate bill is before the House. The Senate bill is advanced.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(Pause)

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Madam Speaker, apparently we're having some technical difficulties, but could you call the Local Governments Committee to the Speaker's Conference Room? We can continue our committee work and recall a vote and -- actually, put the House at ease until our technical issues are worked out.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Local -- Local Governments Committee to the Speaker's Conference Room. Local Governments to the Speaker's Conference Room.

On a motion by Mrs. Peoples-Stokes, we stand at ease.

(Whereupon, at 12:52 p.m. the House stood at ease.)

(Whereupon, the House came back to order at 1:11 p.m.)

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The House will come to order.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: So, we're gonna go right back to page 3 and begin where we left off at Rules Report No. 159.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On consent, page 3, Rules Report No. 159, the Clerk will read.

Oh, sorry, one second.

On a motion by Ms. Pheffer Amato, the Senate bill is

before the House. The Senate bill is advanced.

We're all confused here today.

The Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On a motion by Ms. Pheffer Amato, the Senate bill is before the House. The Senate bill is advanced.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A05302, Rules Report No. 160, Woerner, Otis. An act to amend the Education Law, in relation to empowering the Commissioner of Education to declare a disaster has substantially impacted a school board or school budget election and to allow school boards to set an additional day for voting.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On a motion by Ms. Woerner, the Senate bill is before the House. The Senate bill is advanced.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A05380, Rules Report No. 161, Bronson. An act to amend the Tax Law, in relation to extending the authorization for the County of Monroe to impose certain sales and compensating use taxes.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Home Rule message is at the desk.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly -- Assembly No. A05927, Rules Report No. 162, P. Carroll. An act to amend Chapter 329 of the Laws of 2009, amending the Family Court Act and the Social Services Law relating to removing special powers granted to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, in relation to the effectiveness

thereof.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

Mr. Carroll, congratulations on your very first bill.

(Applause)

On consent, page 4, Rules Report No. 163, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A06080, Rules Report No. 163, Kay. An act to amend Chapter 373 of the Laws of 2020 amending the Tax Law relating to authorizing the Town of Wallkill to adopt a hotel or motel tax of up to 5 percent, in relation to extending the effectiveness thereof.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Home Rule -- Home Rule message is at the desk.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A06195, Rules Report No. 164, Fall. An act to amend Chapter 306 of the Laws of 2011 authorizing owners of residential real property in high-risk brush fire areas in the borough of Staten Island to cut and remove reeds from their property, in relation to the effectiveness thereof.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A06200, Rules Report No. 165, Burdick. An act to amend the Tax Law, in relation to making technical changes; and to amend Chapter 507 of the Laws of 2016, relating to the imposition of an occupancy tax in the Village of Harrison, in relation to extending the effectiveness thereof.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Home Rule message is at the desk.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will
record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A06427, Rules Report No. 166, Paulin. An act to amend the Tax Law, in relation to revising the period of authorization for the County of Westchester's additional 1 percent rate of sales and compensating use tax; and to amend Chapter 272 of the Laws of 1991, amending the Tax Law relating to the method of disposition of sales and compensating use tax revenue in Westchester County and enacting the Westchester County Spending Limitations Act, in relation to revising the period of authorization for the County of Westchester's additional 1 percent rate of sales and compensating use tax.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Home Rule
message is at the desk.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will
record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A06433, Rules Report No. 167, Shimsky. An act to amend Chapter 504 of the Laws of 2016, amending the Tax Law relating to authorizing the Town of Greenburgh to adopt a local law to impose a hotel/motel occupancy tax for hotels not located in a village; authorizing specified villages in the towns of Greenburgh and Mount Pleasant to adopt local laws to impose a hotel/motel occupancy tax in such villages, in relation to extending the effectiveness thereof.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Home Rule message is at the desk.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A06531, Rules Report No. 168, Miller. An act to amend Chapter 549 of the Laws of 2005 amending the Tax Law relating to authorizing the County of Herkimer to impose a county recording tax on obligation secured by a mortgage

on real property in relation to extending the effectiveness thereof.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Home Rule

message is at the desk.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will

record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A06593, Rules Report No. 169, Schiavoni. An act to amend Chapter 264 of the Laws of 1961 relating to the incorporation of the Hampton Bays Volunteer Exempt Firemen's Benevolent Association and providing for its powers and duties, in relation to the management of certain affairs of such association.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will

record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A06865, Rules Report No. 170, Jones. An act to amend the Tax Law, in relation to extending the authorization granted to the County of Clinton to impose an additional 1 percent of sales and compensating use taxes.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Home Rule message is at the desk.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A07044, Rules Report No. 171, Santabarbara. An act to amend the Tax Law, in relation to the imposition of sales and compensating use tax in Schenectady County.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Home Rule message is at the desk.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A07212, Rules Report No. 172, Otis. An act to amend Chapter 618 of the Laws of 1998, amending the General Municipal Law and the Education Law relating to disposal of surplus computer equipment by political subdivisions, in relation to the effectiveness thereof.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A07601, Rules Report No. 173, Alvarez, Tapia, Dais, Shimsky, Kim, Torres. An act to amend Chapter 383 of the Laws of 1991, relating to the incorporation of the New York Zoological Society in relation to extending the expiration date of free one-day admission to the zoological park.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A07928, Rules Report No. 174, Cruz. An act to amend Chapter 730 of the Laws of 2019, amending the Executive Law relating to the authority of the New York Black Car Operators' Injury Compensation Fund, Inc., in relation to the effectiveness thereof.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: This bill is laid aside.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A08018, Rules Report No. 175, Lunsford, Dais. An act to amend the Environmental Conservation Law, in relation to extending the authority of the Department of Environmental Conservation to manage oysters.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: This bill is laid aside.

Page 5, Rules Report No. 45, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A00813, Rules Report No. 45, Vanel. An act to amend the Executive Law and the Criminal Procedure Law, in relation to directing the Superintendent of State Police to develop and institute child-sensitive arrest policies and

procedures for instances where police are arresting an individual who is a parent, guardian or other person legally charged with the care or custody of a child.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On a motion by Mr. Vanel, the Senate bill is before the House. The Senate bill is advanced.

An explanation has been requested, Mr. Vanel.

Quiet, please. We're on debate.

MR. VANEL: This bill will make technical amendments to Chapter 648 of the Laws of 2024 to direct the Superintendent of State Police and the Municipal Police Training Council to develop and establish child-sensitive arrest policies and procedures for instances where police are arresting an individual who was a parent, guardian or other personal -- person legally charged with the care or custody of a child. This bill will not only help minimize the childhood trauma associated with parents -- parental arrest, but the goal is to also help strengthen and trust community and improvement with relations with the police.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Ms. Walsh.

MS. WALSH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the sponsor yield for just a couple of questions?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Will the sponsor yield?

MR. VANEL: Yes.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The sponsor yields.

MS. WALSH: Thank you very much, Mr. Vanel.

So as you mentioned, it's a chapter amendment, it makes a few changes to the bill passed last year. So just taking them kind of one at a time, what I saw was that it removes the requirement for the Superintendent of Police to consult with DCJS in developing child-sensitive arrest practices. So now they would only need to confer with OCFS; is that correct?

MR. VANEL: That's correct.

MS. WALSH: And why was that change made? If you know.

MR. VANEL: It says that -- that the -- the -- they typically do not weigh in on State Police policies and procedures.

MS. WALSH: Okay, great.

I -- I noticed that in the debate last year there was some discussion about DCJS not having members with actual law enforcement experience, so I was thinking perhaps that might have been part of the reason why that change was made.

(Pause)

MR. VANEL: They've been removed, so we're not -- we're not sure.

MS. WALSH: That's fine. That -- that's absolutely fine. All right.

Another thing that the chapter does is it adds language, quote, "to the extent practicable", for example on page 3, line 9 and page 3, line 30, and omits language quote, "shall make

reasonable efforts to ensure the safety of such child." So it seems like it -- it kind of softens the -- the language and the obligation on the responding officer. Would you say that that's a fair statement?

MR. VANEL: I'm not sure the difference between reasonable or to the extent practicable, but we were okay with the -- with this amendment.

MS. WALSH: And I understand that these -- these are changes that were recommend by the Second Floor for the Governor's office.

MR. VANEL: Yes.

MS. WALSH: Yeah, correct. Okay. So the Governor had said in her approval memo that she wanted to make changes to ensure that the requirements placed on police officers can quote, "evolve as best practices evolve." But in your opinion, isn't it more about recognizing that each arrest situation is to some extent unique so that the rules and protocols developed must be flexible?

MR. VANEL: Well, in my opinion, again, the State -- the Superintendent of State Police will be making, you know, and municipalities -- and the Municipal Police Training Council will be making these -- these decisions and these -- these recommended policies. So I think that, you know, they are the best ones to be able to do so to be able to change or what have you. So this -- this bill is -- is nimble enough to be able to change with the times.

MS. WALSH: Thank you very much for your answers.

Madam Speaker, briefly on the bill.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the bill.

MS. WALSH: So last year there was significant, I would say, bipartisan opposition to this legislation. Some were opposed because they believed that developing protocols in conjunction with DCJS was unwise, given the lack of actual policing experience with DCJS. That has been addressed in the chapter. Now the Superintendent will only confer with OCFS, the Office of Children and Family Services.

Some were opposed, I think, because the legislation felt insulting to law enforcement who have been keeping children's safety in mind from the very beginning, and certainly didn't need the State telling them how to do their jobs. In this chapter amendment the language has been softened, in my opinion, to reflect and acknowledge that there are emergencies and exigencies that might require an officer to simply try their best, make reasonable efforts to ensure the safety of the child. Also, the chapter amendment doesn't preclude law enforcement from doing what needs to be done to effectuate an arrest.

So I think that the chapter is an improvement from the original. For that reason, more members may be supportive. But, I mean, for me here's the bottom line: The best way to keep children under the age of 18 from having adverse psychological or emotional experiences caused by witnessing the arrest of their parents, guardians and caregivers is for those parents, guardians and caregivers to not be

getting arrested in the first place. And if they are arrested, not resisting arrest, fewer scenes of seeing parents handcuffed, weapons drawn, pepper spray, physical struggle, et cetera, would benefit a child's emotional health which is, of course, a laudable goal.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect on the 180th day.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

Page 12, Calendar No. 74, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Senate No. S03876, Calendar No. 74, Senator Hoylman-Sigal (A03875, Dinowitz, Otis, Santabarbara, Steck, Jacobson, Alvarez, Colton). An act to amend the General Business Law, in relation to requiring comparison of prices charged by energy services companies.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: An explanation has been requested, Mr. Dinowitz.

MR. DINOWITZ: This bill would require energy service corp -- companies, otherwise known as ESCOs, to include on

their billing statements a comparison of the prices of energy services they provide to their customers with those of the utility company. So the bill would require that the first page of a monthly billing statement of an ESCO customer include a side-by-side comparison of the current price the customer is paying for energy services with the ESCO versus what they would pay as a customer of a local utility, as well as an itemized list of prices charged for the energy -- for energy-related value-added products provided over the past billing period. And in addition, it would require that once a year an ESCO provide a comparison for the total prices charged by the ESCO against the price of equivalent services provided by a local utility. And for such period, the ESCO shall unambiguously convey whether or not the customer is saving money or paying a premium for the services with the ESCO.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Gandolfo.

MR. GANDOLFO: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Would the sponsor please yield for some questions?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Will the sponsor yield?

MR. DINOWITZ: Yes, I will.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The sponsor yields.

MR. GANDOLFO: Thank you.

First, why is it necessary for us to pass this bill and include that price comparison between the ESCO and the public -- and the utility?

MR. DINOWITZ: Since New York began to

deregulate its energy industry, there have been a lot of problems with ESCOs. There have been fraud, abuse and other issues, and that prompted the Department of Public Service to take steps to more closely regulate the industry. So this is really an effort -- and I'm not saying all the ESCOs are doing bad things, not at -- not at all. But a bunch of them have been. And so this will help people understand whether or not they're saving money because the ESCOs pitch their services based on the consumers saving money and, in fact, that's often not the case.

MR. GANDOLFO: Okay.

Now, would you say that ESCOs and utilities are competitors?

MR. DINOWITZ: Well, in certain ways they are, of course.

MR. GANDOLFO: Are there any other examples where we require a price comparison from a potential competitor to the consumer so they -- from the competitor to say, *Hey, our -- our competition is going to give you a better rate?*

MR. DINOWITZ: I -- I don't know that I can come up with one, but I think the reason for this is so the ESCO could either -- the comparison could work to their advantage if what they're telling the consumer is correct. If they're gonna save the consumer money, then the price comparison will show that they're saving the consumer money. But on the other hand, if what they're saying was not correct the consumer has a right to know that as well.

MR. GANDOLFO: All right. Well, and of course we all want to save the consumer money on their energy bills. I -- I agree there.

Now, would a -- does a utility have to put a price comparison with an ESCO if -- would they have to put on their bill whether or not an ESCO might have a better price available?

MR. DINOWITZ: Well, not -- not based on this bill.

MR. GANDOLFO: All right, so not based on this bill. Do they have to do that currently?

MR. DINOWITZ: I don't believe so.

MR. GANDOLFO: Okay. Then why -- you know, why are we only mandating that the ESCO does this rather than have the utility -- the utility and the ESCO both do this, so that way consumers can make an informed decision whether or not they are currently using an ESCO versus a utility?

MR. DINOWITZ: Well, because it is the ESCOs in some cases that have caused the trouble, the fraud and so on. And -- and again, by doing this they can show that they're, in fact, better for the consumers if they are.

MR. GANDOLFO: Right. But in the interest of transparency to the consumer, why not just mandate it on both types of entities? That way the consumer at the end of the day would have all the information in front of them to lower their energy costs, if possible.

MR. DINOWITZ: Well, I don't -- I don't think we've

had those same issues with the utility. We've had other issues with the utilities, don't get me wrong. But since it's the -- since the ESCOs have pitched themselves as being, you know, so much superior to the utilities, they're gonna save you money and they lure people in sometimes into making decisions that they have subsequently regretted, we thought it would be good to have this legislation which asks them to do something which is actually pretty simple for them to do.

MR. GANDOLFO: Okay.

And now, I -- I know the PSC, I believe, has the Power to Choose website where you can go and plug in your zip code and it will give you a comparison of energy costs from the providers in your area. Why is that tool not an adequate enough -- adequate enough for the consumer to go on and check their price to see who might have the best deal for them?

MR. DINOWITZ: Well, first, not every consumer is particularly savvy with using such websites. I mean, I've -- I -- I don't find every website out there to be particularly user-friendly, but beyond that, not every consumer even has access to get that kind of information in the first place.

MR. GANDOLFO: All right. Okay.

And um, now, would an ESCO have access to all the information needed to put this -- include this with their bill? Would they have access to the -- the delivery service cost information from the utility?

MR. DINOWITZ: I believe they would.

MR. GANDOLFO: Okay. Is that publicly available or would they have to actively go to the utility and request information in order to put this on the bill?

MR. DINOWITZ: I'm not sure. But yeah, they already work with the utilities, so it certainly is accessible to them. I mean, doing this is not -- I know every business thinks anything you ever ask them to do is just this huge expensive and burden, but this is not. It's neither huge nor expensive.

MR. GANDOLFO: Okay. I mean, this I think does have the potential to be a larger than expected burden. It's my understanding that an ESCO might have to reformat their entire statement that they send to the consumer to fit this new information in. Is that not a concern?

MR. DINOWITZ: I -- I don't -- I mean, how hard is that to do? I mean, really, you just do a little bit of this and it's done.

MR. GANDOLFO: I don't know if it's that simple.

MR. DINOWITZ: I think it is.

MR. GANDOLFO: Okay. All right. Well, that about wraps up my questions, but I know one of my colleagues is gonna have probably a lot -- a lot of thoughts on this as well.

(Laughter)

MR. DINOWITZ: That's so unusual of him.

MR. GANDOLFO: Thank you, sponsor. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Palmesano.

MR. PALMESANO: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Will the sponsor yield for a couple of questions?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Will the sponsor yield?

MR. DINOWITZ: I will.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The sponsor yields.

MR. PALMESANO: Thank you, Mr. Dinowitz. I appreciate it very much.

My first question is, how is this supposed to work? The ESCO's supposed to provide --

MR. DINOWITZ: Louder, louder.

MR. PALMESANO: Yeah, how's this supposed to work in your mind with this bill, because I know this bill been around. The ESCO is supposed to provide in the -- in the bill they receive what their charges are and compare them to the utility?

MR. DINOWITZ: Yes.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. But is it supposed to compare the supply charge or the delivery charge or both?

MR. DINOWITZ: Yes.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. But you are aware that the ESCO doesn't do the billing, it's the utility that does the billing. They provide the bill. And there's the supply side, which would either be them if they're the supplier, or the ESCO and then the utility

provides on their bill the delivery. So what are they supposed -- who's supposed to provide it, the ESCO or the utility?

MR. DINOWITZ: Well, the information is readily accessible to them. The information is readily accessible and easily, and not a burden.

MR. PALMESANO: So, it's -- so, the reason I'm asking the question, because the bill says util -- ESCO, ESCO, ESCO, but it's actually the utility that's actually providing the bill to the customer, correct? So actually, the burden falls on the utility.

MR. DINOWITZ: I'm told sometimes the utility does handle the billing for the ESCO. I mean, I don't actually see my bill because I'm not the one who handles it.

MR. PALMESANO: No, I understand that.

MR. DINOWITZ: But what I do know is that bills -- bills go up. But I've had complaints from people -- you know, people have sometimes been switched to an ESCO and not even really knew that that happened. You know, you pick up the phone and you say hello and suddenly you have an ESCO instead of your ConEd or whoever.

MR. PALMESANO: Well, right. And I -- and I understand that. So, the utility -- there's three parts to the bill, as we talked; the supply, which gives the market base, that's from -- that's a market pass-through based on how it's bid [sic]; the delivery or transportation, which is what the utility receives for providing the infrastructure. That's -- when there were rate cases, it's all on the

transportation delivery, it has nothing to do with the supply. And of course the other part of the bill are the taxes, fees and assessments. So, and again, you say this bill about the ESCO, but the way I read it, it says that but it is the utility that will be required to do a side-by-side comparison showing what the ESCO is and showing theirs. So the burden is on them, so shouldn't it say utility?

MR. DINOWITZ: No, the ESCO has to have the side-by-side comparison on the bill.

MR. PALMESANO: But how -- explain to me how they do the side-by-side comparison when it's the utility that does the billing?

MR. DINOWITZ: They -- they -- both of them provide information to each other. That's why -- that's why I've said --

MR. PALMESANO: I understand.

MR. DINOWITZ: -- that it's readily available. It's -- it's just not a burden. It's not a thing. They could do it if they want to. And as I also said -- I don't like to be repetitive -- but if they're telling the truth about their prices, they would really want to do it because then it will show that their prices are cheaper. Of course, more often than not I suspect that's not the case and that's possibly why they don't want to do that.

MR. PALMESANO: No, and I understand that. I don't want to beat the drum on whose responsibility it is, because the bill is provided by the utility. They get whatever the charges for the ESCO and they put that on the bill of the ESCO. What the supply side

is, it gets put on their bill. So now you're saying basically the utility, even though you've been saying in your bill, basically the utility is the one that's gonna have to pay for it, correct? They're gonna have to put it on their bill, which will go -- it will be costs associated with that, for sure, to change the first page of the bill, and then ultimately that's gonna be a cost to put onto the ratepayers.

MR. DINOWITZ: You think there are significant costs in changing the first page of the bill by the ESCO?

MR. PALMESANO: Have you -- have you communicated with the utilities about this. I mean, because there's (inaudible/crosstalk) --

MR. DINOWITZ: I have not asked them.

MR. PALMESANO: -- format and now changing the process. And, I mean, one of the recommendations I've heard they've said is do a yearly comparison, get a break -- a yearly comparison, but this is a month-to-month comparison, correct?

MR. DINOWITZ: You know what, though? No -- no business wants to be told to do anything.

MR. PALMESANO: I understand.

MR. DINOWITZ: Everything that they're asked to do or required to do, they, you know, some of them will whine and complain, *It's gonna cost us money, it'll take time, it will be this, it will be terrible*. You know, the sky is falling. But the fact is that is just not the case. We're talking about a simple side-by-side comparison of some basic information. And I would hope that in the interest of

transparency and being a good company that wants to be pro-consumer, that they would be eager to do that.

MR. PALMESANO: And -- and -- and Mr. Dinowitz, I agree with you 100 percent on transparency and accountability for the ratepayer and I'll talk more about that in a little bit.

So right now there's a -- a Consumer Bill of Rights that was put in place under the law, and ESCOs are currently required to identify all variable charges on -- within consumer customer contracts, which there's problems with that, then the Attorney General would be able to act and act accordingly; is that correct?

MR. DINOWITZ: Well, you garbled some of what you said, but I heard something about a Consumer Bill of Rights.

MR. PALMESANO: All right. So, there's a Bill of Rights, ESCOs are currently required to clearly identify all variable charges within customer contracts. If ESCOs do not comply with this requirement, the contract would be deemed void and unenforceable and the company may be subject to a civil penalty levied by the Attorney General, correct?

MR. DINOWITZ: That's the current law, yes.

MR. PALMESANO: Yes. And also in 2016 the Public Service Commission issued an order which required that new and renewal contracts between ESCOs and mass market customers guaranteed savings in comparison to what the customer would have paid in a full-service utility customer, correct?

MR. DINOWITZ: Yep.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. And in that same year, ESCOs were banned from selling electricity and natural gas to low-income customers throughout New York State due to the practice of overcharging and engaging in ESCOs, correct?

MR. DINOWITZ: Yeah, overcharging. History of doing that.

MR. PALMESANO: All right. And do you know how many ESCOs that the PSC oversees right now?

MR. DINOWITZ: No, I don't.

MR. PALMESANO: I think there's about 151.

MR. DINOWITZ: About 151?

MR. PALMESANO: Yes.

MR. DINOWITZ: Okay.

MR. PALMESANO: And also, on the PSC website right now it says the PSC has been critical of certain ESCOs, particularly regarding prices, and the PSC is considering whether the retail access market for energy commodity is working properly or if it should be revised. That's what they're doing right now. Wouldn't it be in our best interest before we advance this bill to let the PSC determine and final their investigation and internally looking at this before we put any type of mandates on ESCOs and other utilities?

MR. DINOWITZ: No.

MR. PALMESANO: No? So we don't want to defer to the PSC which has the expertise in this, correct? (Inaudible)

MR. DINOWITZ: Why don't they defer to us? Why should we defer to them? And who knows when they're gonna finish doing that and how effective what they recommend is going to be. So why -- why dangle? We -- we should do something about an issue that -- that's affected many people and we could do something about that right now.

MR. PALMESANO: Is there any concern on your part that throwing more information like this to the customer, especially these -- and having the utility have to do it, because people enter into yearly contracts with ESCOs and it might be for a fixed-rate charge. So if the utility doesn't understand what they charge -- and then if -- if there's some -- a monthly bill that's changing, even though they're on a yearly contract, isn't that gonna be -- isn't there a concern there that the customer might opt out or get an early termination and then have termination fees from that? It seems like that could be a concern that we're talking.

MR. DINOWITZ: If that's a question, my answer is no.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. All right.

In the interest of disclosure, I know we talked about disclosure -- I mean, you want to do this for disclosure, for transparency. Wouldn't the best thing for us to do is to put on all bills what the charges that we're putting -- the customer is paying? We -- we -- I've talked on this floor time and time again about the Green New Deal, the CLCPA and the costs, what kind of costs are coming

down the pipeline. Wouldn't it be better -- wouldn't a better approach to be able to pass legislation called the Ratepayer Protection Disclosure and Transparency Act which would list on that bill for the customer in the interest of transparency, all the green energy costs, Clean Energy Fund, RGGI, ZECs, RECs. All those things on the bill so then the customer could really see what they're paying. Isn't that true disclosure and transparency on the cost of the program? Because I know you're concerned about cost.

MR. DINOWITZ: I'm not sure that that has to do with this bill, but --

MR. PALMESANO: But you're concerned about cost, right?

MR. DINOWITZ: Of course I'm concerned about cost.

MR. PALMESANO: And that's why--

(Crosstalk/inaudible)

-- and transparency and disclosure --

MR. DINOWITZ: Could I -- could I -- I'm concerned about the costs to consumers. And one thing I think we can say is we all could have, I don't know, maybe 140,000 people in our district. We all have approximately the same number of consumers, and unless they're living by candle power, they're all utility consumers. And I would think we would all want to do everything we can to protect the consumers and to give them the opportunity to make an intelligent decision based on transparency and full disclosure as to what their

options may be.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Dinowitz. I appreciate your time.

MR. DINOWITZ: You're welcome.

MR. PALMESANO: Madam Speaker, on the bill.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the bill.

MR. PALMESANO: Madam Speaker, and my colleagues, I appreciate the intent of my colleague with this legislation, wanting to get that transparency and disclosure. I get that. I think the problem is this is gonna be more confusing for customers because you're talking about changing around a bill. There will be costs from that that will be passed onto the customer and the ratepayer for the changes that need to be made. And there's confusion because the sponsor continues to talk about ESCOs, but the ESCOs don't bill the -- the customer, it's the utility. They get the supply side or whatever the cost is for the ESCO, and now that burden would be placed on the utility. Who does the burden, who does the penalty fall upon? It seems like there's some gray areas there. It seems like my -- my colleague wants to focus on the ESCOs, and I get that. But that's only the supply side. The delivery side, the transportation side is based on the utility. And of course you have the taxes.

I think I am concerned about the fact that this could be confusing and then you might have customers who might be on a year contract at a fixed rate and then they're getting a monthly bill and then they might be upset and they might try to cancel because they

think they can get a better deal for that month. They might (inaudible) utility have a better rate than the -- than the ESCO for supply. But then if they say, *I want to switch to the utility because it's better* but it -- while they're in the middle of a contract and they might not understand it, how it's working, then they could be subject to early termin -- termination fees, I think.

Listen, our rates -- our utility rates are going up across the State of New York, we've seen that. It doesn't matter what the utility. And we know the reason that rates are going up is to pay for the -- the green energy mandates that are being placed on the bills.

I think also this legislation is really aimed at -- to discourage competition. ESCOs are supposed to compete against the utility so I think it can discourage competition as one of the unintended consequences. But if we really want to be transparent with the customer, why don't we pass legislation which I think would surpass this in many ways, the Ratepayer Transparency and Disclosure Act, which would line-item every bill, what all the costs are for the green energy costs, whether they're the RECs, the Clean Energy Fund, the RGGI, all of those bill -- those dollars that are being added into the bill that our customers are paying for, when you see these rate increases going on with the utilities is to pay for these costs. On top of that, I mean, the PSC has already approved (inaudible) billion dollars in future ratepayer increases to pay for their green energy costs and mandates. That's part of this. That would be more detailed, that would be more applicable, that would be more helpful to our

customers and to our residents and our businesses. When we want to talk about transparency, I think that would be a better approach. I just think why not do a cost-benefit analysis and really show where these dollars are.

I think we're getting -- we're heading down the wrong track with this energy policy in the State of New York. Again, I appreciate my colleague for wanting more transparency. We've got other bills that talk about putting more bill -- information on the bills, but let's put what's truly driving up the cost of the bills, and it's these green energy costs. (Inaudible). That transparency will disclose, and that's Assembly Bill 6152. I think that would be a better bill for us to advance. But in the energy cost perspective, just to give you an idea, the retail energy cost for the -- for electric gas -- electric rates was 17 cents per kilowatt hour in 2019. This year it's 25 cents per kilowatt hour, 40 percent higher than the national average. We keep talking about wanting to lower costs, but the policies in this State continue to put mandates that drive up costs for consumers, drive up the cost for businesses.

And we -- I even talked about reliability. And if you want to talk about more and more businesses and families leaving the State, these are the type of policies that (inaudible) have more people leaving the State of New York and, unfortunately, it's heading down the wrong track. You know, I'll continue to talk about that. I'm not gonna belabor it anymore here today.

But I think -- again, I appreciate what the sponsor is

trying to do. I just think there's a better way to go about it. I think this is gonna cause some challenges across the board because there's some gray area about, again, ESCOs don't bill the ratepayer, it's the utility that bills them. And the bill is all about ESCOs and I think that's gonna be problematic, it needs to be weeded out. I think there could be some legal chance -- legal challenges.

So for that reason, Mr. Speaker, despite my colleague's good intentions, I'm gonna be voting in the negative and I would ask some of my colleagues to join me in that vote, too.

Thank you very much.

(Pause)

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect on the 180th day.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: A Party vote has been...

(Pause)

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect on the 180th day.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Mr. Bologna to explain his vote.

MR. BOLOGNA: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I want to commend my colleague, Mr. Palmesano, for bringing up a really good point here. And it's kind of indicative of -- of a lot of the processes that happen in this -- in this building; whether it's the lack of transparency in the budget process or energy bills.

When we talk about transparency, we should actually be transparent. And every tax, every fee, everything that New York State does to raise energy prices on our constituents and on consumers should be line-itemed in their bills. I think that that is a phenomenal idea.

So while I think that the intent of the legislation is -- is admirable, the execution in terms of what is being transparent is -- is -- is needed -- is -- there's some wanting there. So for that reason I'll be voting in the negative.

(Pause)

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Bologna in the negative.

Mr. Dinowitz to explain his vote.

MR. DINOWITZ: Just -- just a quick observation. That -- that's actually an interesting thought. And yesterday I thought I heard that Amazon was talking about indicating on its bills how much of the price increases that people are getting are due to the Trump tariffs. So when we talk about putting things on bills, interesting idea.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Dinowitz in the affirmative.

(Pause)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

Page 12, Calendar No. 76, Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A04850, Calendar No. 76, Rozic, Colton, Simon, Rosenthal, Lupardo, Forrest, Bronson, Santabarbara, Mamdani, Bores, Fall, Kelles, Simone, Seawright, Alvarez. An act to amend the Civil Service Law, in relation to enacting the "New York State Teleworking Expansion Act."

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: An explanation has been requested.

Ms. Rozic.

MS. ROZIC: Sure. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This bill requires each State agency to establish a policy and program to allow employees to perform all or a certain portion of their duties through telework, which is sort of like hybrid work, to the maximum extent possible without a decline in employee performance.

As we know, demand for talent has been high. Competition from the private sector is fierce. So this is one way we can counter that.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Gandolfo.

MR. GANDOLFO: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Would the sponsor please yield for a couple of questions?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Will the sponsor yield.

MS. ROZIC: Sure.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The sponsor yields.

MR. GANDOLFO: Thank you. I appreciate that.

So, first, I know teleworking has kind of been in place in our State agencies, but the -- I have a question about the language that employees -- the policy must allow employees to perform all or part of their duties remotely. Is that meant to imply -- to apply to all employees of the agency or would certain titles or positions be excluded?

MS. ROZIC: So each agency is supposed to designate a teleworking coordinator who would oversee implementation of a policy or a program, and they can choose, at their discretion, to establish policies for certain employees. It obviously excludes employees who are subject to collective bargaining. But it would really be up to the discretion of each agency and their coordinator to determine which duties, which employees, and who we're really talking about when we talk about performing onsite versus hybrid versus working from home.

MR. GANDOLFO: Okay. So is the intent to have as many employees work remotely as possible, or is it just solely going

to be left up to those agencies?

MS. ROZIC: The bill leaves it to the discretion --

MR. GANDOLFO: Okay.

MS. ROZIC: -- of each agency individually. It might work more for certain ones; like, you know, information technology services. It might not work for others. It really is up to each State agency to develop a policy or program, much like the City of New York has done.

And, personally, I'm agnostic. It could be that a State agency says none of our employees should be eligible to work from home or can't for whatever reason, and that would be in their discretion and purview. We give them latitude since they are the experts in their field.

MR. GANDOLFO: Okay. And would the potential policy crafted by the agency require approval, you know, from the Legislature, from the Executive branch?

MS. ROZIC: No. Again, it would be up to the --

MR. GANDOLFO: Okay.

MS. ROZIC: -- individual coordinator.

I'll give you one example, the Office of Information and Technology Services. As they have it now, you actually have to apply for the program annually, and that has to go through a pretty rigorous process.

MR. GANDOLFO: Uh-huh.

MS. ROZIC: So they could model it on that. They

could do something completely different depending on the agency needs.

MR. GANDOLFO: Okay. And I know there's a standard to not diminish employee performance or productivity.

MS. ROZIC: Uh-huh.

MR. GANDOLFO: Is there any requirement for a review by the Legislature or somewhere outside of the agency that employee performance has not diminished as a result of the policy?

MS. ROZIC: The legislation does not speak to that all --

MR. GANDOLFO: Okay.

MS. ROZIC: -- but I would be happy to visit that --

MR. GANDOLFO: Okay. All right. I think --

MS. ROZIC: -- in the future.

MR. GANDOLFO: -- that would be a good addition to it.

And I don't want to go on too long about this, but one question I have: Is there a projection or any kind of estimate on the impact widespread remote work might have on a city like Albany? I know the Governor's proposing, I think it was \$400 million, for a revitalization of Albany. Is there any estimate on how that might impact the local economy here?

MS. ROZIC: I don't have those figures --

MR. GANDOLFO: Okay.

MS. ROZIC: -- in front me. What I do know is that

as of last month we had tens of thousands of job vacancies across State government.

MR. GANDOLFO: Uh-huh.

MS. ROZIC: And I think that this bill aims to, at least, chip away at that problem.

We also project that more than a quarter of State government jobs will be up for retirement in the next five years. And so that's a really big problem that we're facing. And, again, I think telework is not the be-all and end-all, but could help in certain instances.

MR. GANDOLFO: Okay. I appreciate the answers to my questions.

Thank you.

And, Madam Speaker, on the bill briefly.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the bill.

MR. GANDOLFO: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I know remote work has become more popular, more widespread in both the public and private sectors. I do have some concerns that it could expand a little too much where employee performance might end up being diminished a little bit. So I would like to see some kind of periodic review, whether by the Executive branch, the Legislature, to make sure that the performance is still there from the State employees if remote work does become more widespread.

I also do have concerns that there's a \$400 million

proposal to revitalize the City of Albany, and that sending more employees home and not having them here in the City might be a detriment to the revitalization efforts here.

But I do appreciate the sponsor answering my questions and clarifying some of these issues, and I thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Chang.

MR. CHANG: Will the sponsor yield?

MS. ROZIC: Sure.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The sponsor yields.

MR. CHANG: Yes. Thank you very much.

Yet the language itself on the bill, it says "shall establish". And you mentioned previously that they can -- is it possible to change that "can establish" instead of "shall"? Because it would require each State agency to require it -- to establish a telework. Because there may be a certain agency do not need that [sic]. And without adding a -- an additional burden of cost, can we change that language to -- instead of "shall", "may"?

MS. ROZIC: No. But there is nothing in that that precludes an agency from coming back and saying, *We don't want to do telework for any of the positions. We don't see it -- we don't find it deemable [sic] or possible for X amount of jobs or vacancies that we have.*

MR. CHANG: Okay. Thank you.

On the bill, please.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the bill.

MR. CHANG: During -- during the time of COVID, and many of these are -- are done at telework, and many have residual work after COVID a number of years; such as, unemployment office or some other agency. And -- and my constituents always find fault on -- on the quality of services and not -- phones are not being answered. So sometimes face-to-face is, perhaps, is maintained instead of telework. Customer service should be -- should be important.

And also, establishing an office for telework and a coordinator, that's another level of bureaucracy, another level of, perhaps, wasteful, added burden for administrative costs.

I prefer it to have -- instead of "shall", required, is "may," and we have all the experience on what -- what works and what doesn't work in each agency for telework or not, and what's wasteful or not.

And that's all I have. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Ms. Walsh.

MS. WALSH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the sponsor yield?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Will the sponsor yield.

MS. ROZIC: Sure.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The sponsor yields.

MS. WALSH: All right. So -- and -- and I -- I've supported this bill in the past. I just -- a few more questions have kind of come to my mind about it.

MS. ROZIC: Sure.

MS. WALSH: When it -- when it talks about creating a policy and -- and having telework to the maximum extent possible without diminishing employee performance, would that be done, like, per -- like, for a particular job title in an agency that would be allowed to be telework -- telework, but -- or -- or is it -- it's not done by individual employee, right, it would be by -- must be by job title, no?

MS. ROZIC: The bill itself does not speak to specifics.

MS. WALSH: Okay.

MS. ROZIC: We give each State agency latitude to figure out what works for them because it's not one-size-fits-all. But I would say that telework is an industry standard in many instances, and that's what we're trying to account for.

MS. WALSH: Yeah. No, I understand that. I'm -- I was curious just thinking about how this would be implemented. Like, let's say, for example, a State agency says that for all grade whatevers, with this job title, the -- teleworking would be permitted, you know, three days a week. I don't know. That -- that's the policy

that they end up coming up with for this particular job. And then if -- if somebody didn't get that for whatever reason, if they were being told, *No, you need to come in*, I mean, would that be something that would be grievable? Would that be something that they would do -- work that -- that through their union, through PEF, or whoever, to figure it out?

MS. ROZIC: Presumably, yes. But, again, we are -- we are not prescribing implementation standards or a program in the bill, we just leave it up to the State agency to do that.

In the case that I referenced before with ITS, there is a grievance process that is open and --

MS. WALSH: Okay.

MS. ROZIC -- well publicized on their web page. So it's not a secret if an employee has a grievance or gets denied, how they can reapply or, you know, have that appealed.

MS. WALSH: Yeah. 'Cause I could see that as being kind of an issue. So even if the agency puts in language in the policy saying, this is going to be the general policy, but exceptions might be made based on individual employee performance or concerns, you know, I -- I just wonder how, in practice, this is going to work.

But -- but anyway, thank you very much. I appreciate that this bill is only requiring that plans be developed. It's not dictating the terms of those policies. And I do appreciate your answers.

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker, on the bill.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the bill.

MS. WALSH: So, as I said, I did support this in the past because -- and I think -- I think the rationale was that we did learn during COVID and the -- the pandemic that there were many jobs that could be performed very capably from home or, you know, remotely.

I guess, you know, my concern, a little bit, is how this would actually get implemented by the agencies. For example, there may be some employees who do better with remote work than others. There's some employees that really need to just have some greater supervision, where they're in an office setting. And what I'm a little bit worried about is, they're being grievances or -- or problems created when the employer says, you know, *You, Employee A, I'm okay with you teleworking because your productivity's good. You -- you seem to do well with it. You, Employee B, do not. I want to see you face-to-face.* And Employee B is saying, *Wait a minute. You know, I -- I want to be -- I want to be remote, too. I want to be able to do that.*

I don't like the fact that the -- the requirement in the bill is that, it (Reading): "If they need to establish a policy and program to allow employees to perform all or a portion of their duties through teleworking to the maximum extent possible without diminished employee performance", I feel like that, upon reflection, I think that that might be a little heavier than the way I would want to

go in terms of directing agencies to come up with policies that way. It might not be to the maximum extent possible. Although, I do think that there is a value to telework, and I do think that for certain employees, they won't have any diminished productivity.

And then to pick up on a previous speaker just talking about the City of Albany, I'll never forget having members of the Business Improvement District for the City of Albany come and -- they had a lobbying day. They came and visited with me. And their number one question was: *When are the State workers going to come back?* Because all the businesses, if you're ever out on a nice day like today walking around, there are a lot of businesses that are just shuttered in the City of Albany because there's nobody -- there's nobody here. The businesses are really dying -- drying up. So I think that that is something to consider when we're talking about the State workforce.

But, anyway, I appreciate the sponsor's answers to my questions, and thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Jensen

MR. JENSEN: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

On the bill.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the bill.

MR. JENSEN: Certainly, I -- I understand some of the -- the points that were raised by my colleagues, but I think when we hear time and time again at budget season and throughout the year

from our State agencies that our State workforce and our public sector employees who serve at the State level are lacking, and that it's harder and harder to recruit qualified individuals to serve the people of New York State. This type of legislation will ensure that not only can New York State government operate efficiently and effectively, but that we can have a more robust recruiting portion of Human Resources to ensure that we can have people working in a variety of State agencies from a variety of places across the State.

And certainly we've seen in our own Chamber, we've made teleworking work. We see it happening right now. So, certainly, I think it makes sense to ensure that State agencies are also doing that to ensure that they can continue to provide services to New Yorkers, but doing it in a way that ensures productivity as well as that efficiency and effectiveness.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

(Pause)

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect on the 90th day.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Madam Speaker, do you have any further housekeeping or resolutions?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: A resolution by Mr. Tague.

The Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 406, Mr. Tague.

Legislative Resolution commemorating the 100th anniversary of the New York FFA.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Tague on the resolution.

MR. TAGUE: Thank you --

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Quiet, please.

MR. TAGUE: Madam Speaker, my fellow colleagues, I rise today to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the New York FFA, also known as the New York Future Farmers of America.

As agriculture remains the economic engine of New York, agricultural education is vitally important for the continued prosperity of our State. New York FFA has offered students Statewide realtime, hands-on experiences to develop their skills and learn new techniques and technologies to advance all aspects of agriculture here in New York State. New York FFA has cultivated

some of the best ag leaders in the nation, with more than 13,000 middle and high school students active in almost 200 chapters today.

Over the last century, New York FFA has shepherded more than 521,000 students through the program, engaging them in the development of premier leadership, personal growth, and career success, no matter the professional path chosen.

My colleagues and friends, we know how much that I value the work of both the students and the advisors of the New York FFA. And why? It's because their impact is truly exceptional.

As New York FFA celebrates its 100th anniversary, I am incredibly grateful that I had the opportunity to wear the Schoharie Valley FFA blue and gold jacket, and will always encourage our young people to join this storied organization.

My friends and colleagues, today I happily ask you to join me in celebrating one of our finest institutions and thank all of those involved with the New York FFA for their incredible work. Happy 100th anniversary, New York FFA, and God bless each and every one of you.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

All those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

We have a number of additional resolutions before the House. Without objection, these resolutions will be taken up together.

On the resolutions, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolutions are adopted.

(Whereupon, Assembly Resolution Nos. 407-409 were unanimously adopted.)

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Madam Speaker, before we begin our acknowledgement of our members who were lost, members should note that we -- when we do adjourn today after the memorial, we will come back into Session on tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. That's Thursday, it's May the 1st, and Session will be at 9:00 a.m.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: A resolution by Mr. Heastie, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 405, Mr. Heastie.

Legislative Resolution honoring the memory of the deceased members of the New York State Assembly, in recognition of their distinguished careers in public service.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. McDonald on the resolution.

MR. MCDONALD: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And we want to thank Speaker Heastie for sponsoring this resolution which remembers all those men and women on both sides of the aisle who served with great honor and distinction here in the New York State Assembly.

You know, locally, close to here in the Capital

Region when I look at the list, you know, I've been in public office for 26 years. I've known people for a long period of time. And I smile when I see Bobby D'Andrea's name because he was up in the Saratoga County area but he always loved pharmacists.

And I also look at recently passed away and we -- we actually -- with Member Bendett we actually designated a highway after him, is Pat Casale. We would come down here every year for Pharmacy Year. Pat never represented us, but my mom said, *You've got to go see Pat because we all love him.* He was just a great guy.

And when I look at this list, you know, it just reminds us that although we come from different parts of the State and sometimes we may have different feelings on certain things, we are all part of one organization. We are here to represent all of the residents, as you say, of the State of New York.

So I want to thank you for taking the time to reinstitute this important remembrance of those deceased Assemblymembers. But also, let's not forget, behind every good Assemblymember there are good staff. And so we keep in mind today all those staff members that have worked with these legislators to serve the public. We thank you for the opportunity to recognize them today.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Ms. Woerner on the resolution.

MS. WOERNER: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I want to add my thanks to the Speaker for allowing

us an opportunity to honor our former colleagues and those that we knew and those that -- that we knew only by reputation.

I rise this -- this afternoon to speak about Bobby D'Andrea, who represented Saratoga County for 28 years. And -- and Bobby had a long and storied career as a Member of the Assembly, following years in local government as well, and working in the business community. What he is -- what -- I never met him as an Assemblymember. I -- I met him a few times after he retired. And what people say about Bobby, and they still talk about him, is that Bobby was amazing at community outreach. They would say, *If two people were gathered to open an envelope, Bobby was there*. And I have to say, with some amount of pride, that they then go on to say, *You remind me a lot of him*. He was a -- he was a major figure in our community's history. He is missed and his contributions are valued, and I'm pleased to have an opportunity to recognize him here.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Bronson on the resolution.

MR. BRONSON: Yes, Madam Speaker. I rise to recognize all those who we have lost, but I would like to, in particular, remember Assemblymember Susan John, who served in the Assembly for 20 years.

Susan was both my predecessor in the Assembly District I represent, as well as Chair of the Labor Committee and last Chair prior to my appointment from Upstate New York. I served as

Counsel to the Labor Committee during Susan's entire tenure as Chair.

Susan is one of the people who got me to run for office. I don't know whether I should thank her or not. But I'm -- I'm glad to call her a friend and a mentor. Those of you who spent time working with Susan know she was thoughtful, she was deliberative on all policy issues she addressed, and she, indeed, was a force. She legislated through the eyes of an attorney, but also from a sense a caring and compassion.

Susan always fought for equity, justice and fairness for all. And as such, she was a champion for women and children, fighting for domestic violence programs, breast cancer outreach, education for children, rape crisis centers, teen pregnancy prevention and much more. Her work included working on the creation of the Statewide Amber Alert to get the word out of missing and abducted children.

Believing strongly in the power of women, she promoted women's voices. She promoted the idea that they should have their own voice and they should have their own representation, and insisted that women's voices are heard.

I dearly miss my friend and mentor, but know our Rochester community and New York State is a better place because of Susan's dedication and all the work that she did for all New Yorkers.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Slater on the resolution.

MR. SLATER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today in support of the resolution and thank the -- and thank the Speaker for bringing it forward.

This a great reminder of the privilege it is to be a member of this great Body. And seeing so many familiar names that we are honoring today I think is an important moment for us to remember the great sacrifices that are made in order to properly serve those who elect us, and I know that we stand together in that fashion.

There are two individuals that I want to just particularly take time to recognize who I've had the honor of knowing, two of the most patriotic individuals that anyone can come across; that being Will Stevens, who served in this Body for quite some time. Will Stevens served with my father-in-law, and he recently passed away at the age of 99. Will had enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps during World War II, serving as a flight instructor and attained the rank of Second Lieutenant.

Will and the Stevens family have an incredible story here in the State Assembly. Will's father had served, and after Will, his son Will also served. Will actually was just here yesterday, following in his father's footsteps, serving in elected office. But again, Will, Sr. serving from 1952 to 1982, making Putnam County and the Hudson Valley incredibly proud.

I also want to speak of another dear friend and mentor of mine, Robert J. Castelli. I've talked about Bob several times here since being elected. Again, one of the greatest patriots I've

ever come to know in Bob Castelli.

Bob was a proud Vietnam Veteran, serving in the 7th Cow [sic]. He spent 21 years in the New York State Police and served two terms here, representing Westchester -- Northern Westchester County. And just earlier this year, along with Senator Harckham, we were able to rename the Somers police barracks where Bob started his career as a State Trooper, in his name.

And so it is with great pride that I recognize both of these leaders, both of these great representatives of the Hudson Valley. We miss them dearly, we thank their family for their incredible years of service on behalf of so many people. And again, I want to thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to bring their names forward today.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Ra on the resolution.

MR. RA: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

So I want to talk about my friend Gary Finch. And it's hard to believe that next week it will be two years since we lost Gary. But for those of us who knew him, truly a one-of-a-kind individual. You know, there's a lot of words that come to mind, certainly, he -- he was a statesman in many ways, really one of the most wise individuals I ever met. I -- I remember saying after his passing that this was a man who truly figured out the meaning of life. And he was kind to me when I was a new member, and so many of our colleagues, that he would invite us into his office for some

chocolate milk after Session some days and give us advice and tell stories. And he was of the most incredible storytellers. And you would love to have somebody new in the room who hadn't heard one of these stories because even if you've heard it a hundred times, you got joy out of listening -- listening to the story and seeing somebody hearing the story for the first time. He could keep a straight look on his face if he was playing a joke on somebody, longer than anybody I've ever met. You would be fearful that you had done something that Gary was mad at you about, and he could just keep it going on and on and on and not -- and not break into a laugh or smile when he was playing a joke on you. And there's a million different stories that come to mind, and I would never try to tell Gary's stories because nobody could tell them better than Gary. But -- but one that came to mind when I was thinking about this today, and I always laugh because it's not so much a Gary story, but something that actually ended up in print.

So, back in the year of the Sochi Olympics, there was a dispute between Russia and the United States. They wanted to send over cases of Chobani yogurt. And there was basically a State Department dispute and -- and the yogurt was just sitting in a warehouse in Newark Airport because Russia wasn't letting it go over there. And the *New York Times* reached out to Gary for comment, so I just want to -- want to read this piece of this article. *Gary D. Finch, a Republican State Assemblyman who also represents the Chobani plant, suggested that Russia should also consider importing Chobani*

so Russians everywhere can enjoy it. It would have a healthy effect on the way they look at life over there, he said. Mr. Finch, recalling Chobani's explosive growth since its founding, walked over to his refrigerator and opened it. He counted 18 cups. If Russia wants to have a cold war over yogurt, he said, so be it. Whatever they choose to bring to the table to have some conflict over, we, of course, will win, he said, and we will have our yogurt at the end of the day.

Gary was, again, a statesman, a friend. And to understand his sense of humor, he by trade was a funeral director. So the -- the type of situations he encountered, he was always just able to give good advice to any of us, whatever we were going through, in -- in our lives.

So, I was privileged to call him a colleague, but just incredibly fortunate to call Gary Finch a friend. And, you know, we all -- we all miss him, but there's not a day that goes by that we don't smile when we think of Gary.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Ms. Glick on the resolution.

MS. GLICK: Thank you, Ms. [sic] Speaker.

This is gonna be difficult because I served with 14 of the people on the list, and so it's poignant and sobering at the same time.

I will point out two things to begin with: One, that in years past the Chamber would be full when we did this, and that's

probably because we have fewer people who served with the folks on this list. And there are only two women on this list, reflecting the fact that it is only recently that we have seen an expansion of the number of women in this Chamber.

The first I will speak of is Susan John, who was my classmate, and one of -- at the time, one of the few women lawyers. She, I think, maybe tripled the number of women attorneys in the place at the time that she arrived. She was a good friend. When my mother was going to move to Rochester to be in assisted living because my older sister lived there and it was her turn to do something, I called Susan and I said, *I -- I need to -- I'm gonna be driving up a lot of my mother's stuff. Can you recommend someone to help me move the stuff out of the truck?* When I got there, Susan had arranged for some moving company that she was friendly with, and completely gratis, just as a friend doing a friend a favor. She died way too young and was a very good soul and an animal lover. So Susan is -- is missed.

It's really hard to -- to look at this and -- and -- and limit myself, but Shelly Silver was the Speaker for many, many years, and despite the difficulties and -- at the end of his life, I want to say that he was a great listener. He rarely said anything, but he was a great negotiator. And for years in this Chamber, we were in the Majority but we had a Republican Governor, in New York City a Republican Mayor, and a Republican Senate. And this Chamber's principles around protecting women's rights, LGBT rights, and

protecting education and advancing education and childcare were things that Shelly was able to do with really almost no cards to play because we only held this House. And he should be remembered for the incredible work that he did on those issues.

Al Vann out of Brooklyn, just a towering figure and -- and a beautiful man, and with incredible grace. In many ways, our former Speaker Pro Tem reminded me of Al because he carried himself in a certain way. Didn't speak a lot, but when he did, you really listened. And he was charming and very quietly forceful.

I'm -- I'm -- I know I only have a limited time, so I'm gonna skip over some folks I didn't agree with.

Alan Hevesi. When I was first elected, I was the first out gay person, was known as, you know, loud mouth lesbian feminist. And Alan was sent to have lunch with me to make sure that I wasn't a bomb thrower. And we had a very, very interesting and very good beginning to what was a -- a good friendship. And I learned so much from him. And the people who served here with Alan, they were -- the oratory in this building was remarkable. And Alan was one of those people who could frame an argument, and even if you didn't disagree with him -- even if you did disagree with him, rather, you kind of felt foolish because he crafted an argument that made you feel like, *Oh boy, I better look this over again*. And he also taught me that --

(Buzzer sounds)

I will wrap up.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you, Ms. Glick.

MS. GLICK: He taught me that it was important to know what you felt in your heart and to follow that.

And I would be remiss if I didn't say that Jim Tallon, who was the Majority Leader and went on to head the United Hospital Fund, was again, an unbelievable orator and a brilliant man and a kind and generous human being who cared about the members, and as Majority Leader, had to manage not just organizing cats, but cats on acid.

So Many more people here that I served with, including folks on the other side, who were in their own way terrific human beings and gave so much to this State.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Ms. Walsh on the resolution.

MS. WALSH: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I -- I, too, am kind of sad that there are so many empty seats. I remember when I first came to the Assembly and we did the first one that I remember, there were -- there were a lot more people here. And I -- I think that it's -- it's a real sign of respect for -- for this whole Body and all of us together that we're -- we're all, in our own way, making some kind of an impression, whether it's gonna be a lasting one, whether someone will remember us. It makes you think about that a little bit.

I -- I wanted to talk a little bit about Bobby D'Andrea. So, Bobby was just the most energetic, smiling -- he was a -- he was, I would say, a retail politician in the very best sense of that phrase. He -- he was just -- could not be exhausted. If there was a chicken barbecue and he was driving by, it was like the wheel just turned and he went in and he was there. And he was there for his people, he was there for his constituents and they knew it. And I can't imagine what it would have been like in his life to have tried to get through a grocery line or any place that he went because everybody knew him. Everybody knew him. And still -- and they still talk about him. And as has been said, I consider it a great compliment when somebody draws a comparison because that's -- that's a fine comparison, to have come up through local government, as he did, and to -- he and his brothers owned a liquor store in Saratoga Springs from the '60s on, and if you want to get to know your constituents, that's a great way to do it. And a small businessman, and went on after the Assembly to go on and be extremely productive in the rest of his life. And I can -- I continued to see him out at functions, and he gave me some great advice when I started.

And so to his wife -- to his wife Theresa -- he only passed a few weeks ago -- to his wife Theresa, to his five children including Faust and his wife Karen who I know quite well; to his eight grandchildren and his two great-grandchildren, I continue to express my sympathies. We were all better for knowing him.

I also wanted to tell a quick Gary Finch story. It's

really not one that I saw with my own eyes, but it is kind of a legendary story. And it has to do with Animal Advocacy Day, which we had here yesterday. I heard a story that there was a horse -- I did see the horse myself, a mini horse named Fritz -- and somehow some people got Fritz on to the elevator and brought Fritz up to Gary's office and walked the horse in there. And Gary was extremely concerned because he didn't try -- he didn't really show it, but he was concerned because he had a beautiful oriental carpet in his office and he was very concerned about what Fritz might do to it. But he had a very, very dry sense of humor, which I think probably came with his background as a -- as a funeral director, but was so -- he just -- very, very funny and very kind and was very kind to me when I started.

And last, but certain -- certainly not least, I did want to mention Pat Casale because we still all see and work with his son Dan, who's in -- in these halls. And he -- he was just so well-known in Troy, knew -- knew everybody. You talk about -- in my family we call it "playing the name game" when my aunties would sit down and talk about this person who was married to that person, and who went to school with that person. That's playing the name game. And I think Pat and now Dan can play it better than almost anybody else. They -- they knew everybody and they knew how we were all connected.

So to all of these people and everybody on this list, I think it's -- it's lovely that we're doing this again this year, and I hope we keep that tradition going.

Thanks.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Palmesano on the resolution.

MR. PALMESANO: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker and my colleagues.

I would like to talk about my good friend Gary Finch, who, as Mr. Ra pointed out, next week it will be two years since we lost him. Beyond his 20 years serving in this -- in this Body, as Mr. Ra mentioned also, he was a funeral director where he owned and operated Brew-Finch Funeral Homes. He was a compassionate, caring person in voice to assist families at their most difficult time. He made an impact there just like he made an impact here.

In the Assembly, for those of you who didn't know Gary or serve with him, he was, quite frankly, a very intelligent, great, kind, just a wonderful human being with an incredible sense of humor. And again, which Mr. Ra mentioned, he could play a joke on you with the straightest of faces and hold you out there as long as he wanted to, until he was ready to let you go. Again, yes, he was a great storyteller. You know, as a new member who stepped on this floor in 2011, Gary quickly became a mentor and friend, offering words of wisdom and advice, just as I'm sure others can attest to as well.

Yes, I was invited to his office for some chocolate milk and to talk and have some advice and wisdom, just like others. I have that office now. It's still Gary's office as far as I'm concerned. I have a picture in my office of him to remind me. Gary's impact upon

me and so many others are still felt today and will be felt long beyond the years he served on this earth.

You know, Gary was a storyteller so I have a couple of stories I'd like to share about Gary. The first story was, right here in this seat where I sit, when Leader Kolb said, *This is gonna be your new seat*, sitting next to me was our -- our Ways and Means Ranker Bob Oaks, our current Minority Leader, Republican Leader Will Barclay who sat right there (indicating), and sitting right to the end was Gary Finch. And I remember when I got here early because I was excited to be in the role, and Gary came down with his bag and he got there and he turned around and looked at me and he goes -- this look of disgust came upon his face, he goes, *What the hell's going on here? No one consulted with me about this. Where's the Leader? I need to talk to him.* Of course, Gary was kidding. But then, just as we always go out to dinner with our colleagues, you know, or after dinner we stayed around and had, you know, a drink, just to talk, you know, when these days get to us, and I remember Gary left the conversation and went off to the side to call his wife Marsha like he always did. And after a while he didn't come back so I went over to talk to Gary and I go, *Gary, you doing okay?* He goes, *Yes.* I go, *Okay, good.* But then I looked down at the table where his phone was. It said "Marsha." One hour and 30 minutes, 33 seconds, 34 seconds. I go, *Gary, are you still talking to Marsha?* He looked down at his phone and hit the end call button and he goes, *That's not good.*

(Laughter)

And one time I remember Gary hosted a dinner for some of us and occasionally we'll do a toast and I knew it was coming so I kind of prepared a special toast. It was kind like a poem to him. I think he kind of liked it. So I have one today, and it's called "A Toast to Gary Finch." Would you join me and raise your imaginary glass and toast to a gentleman who had so much class? To our Gary Finch, we miss you. There is no doubt. I know you would tell us not to worry, and please do not pout. You were a mentor, and of course a very dear friend. We knew you had -- we knew you always had our backs to the very end. You were indeed our conscious, you were our soul. You know how to pick us up when we were feeling low. Your actions and humor kept us happy and going. We still share your stories, and yes, we keep on doing.

So as I conclude, would -- would you please join me and raise your glass to toast our beloved friend, Gary Finch, a gentleman who had oh, just so much class? To Gary.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Manktelow on the resolution.

MR. MANKTELOW: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for allowing me to say a few words this afternoon about a gentleman that back when he served here I didn't know him. He served here from 1973 to 1978. He served three terms. Back then, I was still in middle school and high school. I really had no idea what the State Assembly was. But as life went on, we got to know each

other. And what I found out was really remarkable, and some of the things that Jim shared with me and one I always remember. Even though he served just three terms here, he made an impact not only here, but back home. He was a veteran of the Army's 1st Infantry Division. He was a New York State Trooper. He was the Wayne County Sheriff. He was an F.B.I. graduate. He also served as the police and fire commissioner and so many more things. But as a former town supervisor and when I got elected to this position, he came up and told me one thing that I will never forget. He says, *Brian, he says, just remember, the things you do in life go by so fast. And I want to share one thing to you about being an elected official. That being an elected official is about a time of service. About a time to spend someplace and do everything you can to serve. It's not a time to be there as a career. Do your job, do it well, move on and let someone else do it. And he says, Because, as I said, life goes by so quick. You have family, friends, loved ones. Spend some time with them and you'll be a successful Assemblymember.*

So to Jim, thank you for those words, and Madam Speaker, thank you allowing to say a few words about him. He was really a blessing to me.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Weprin on the resolution.

MR. WEPRIN: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I knew many of the individuals on this list who I did not serve with, and that was mainly through my father who served

here for almost 25 years and was Speaker at the end of his life.

But I'd like to speak briefly about George Friedman, who just passed away a couple of weeks ago; Alan Hevesi, who was elected on the same day as my father in 1971; Albert Vann and Shelly Silver.

George and Alan Hevesi actually had something very much in common; they were both known for their oratory skills and debate skills, per se, and they were both great leaders as far as debate and persuading individuals. And they were also mentors to many of the junior members, and they -- they had that in common. And I was very, very saddened to hear about George's passing just about three weeks ago.

I'd also like to mention somebody who I did not serve with in this Body, but I did serve with in the City Council, and that's Al Vann. Al Vann and I got elected on the same day to the City Council in 2001, and he -- we had something else in common. He was born on November 19th, as were my twins, Max and Stephanie. And I would make sure to call Al almost every year to wish him a happy birthday and he would always ask -- ask about my twins. A couple of years on November 19th he actually beat me to it and would call me. Al and I had a great relationship in the City Council. He was able to bring the experience he had up here for over 20 years to the City Council, and really brought knowledge and history that council members were not aware of and really contributed significantly to -- to that Body.

And finally, as Deborah Glick so elegantly stated, I'd like to talk about Shelly Silver. I served with Shelly when I first got elected, he was Speaker. And he was really a -- was a good listener and really worked so hard in building consensus and mentoring members of the Assembly. It's -- it's unfortunate the last years of his life that he had to go through, what he went through. But he was really a great leader. And for so many years, when Governor Pataki was Governor and the Senate was controlled by the Republican Party as well, he was really the leader of the Democratic Party and certainly this Body. So I think it's -- it's unfortunate that he didn't get the true recognition he deserved because of the tragic events at the end of his life, but he was still a great leader, a great public official, and I think it's important that we recognize that.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Ms. Lupardo on the resolution.

MS. LUPARDO: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I rise to say a few words about James Tallon. James Tallon served the Binghamton area with distinction for many years, from 1974 until 1993. He was the Health Committee Chair for about eight years before Assemblyman Gottfried had that position for a very long time. He was our Majority Leader for five years. And for those of us who aspired to get into elected office and to aspire to public service, he was a towering figure locally. Those of us who could

spend time around him volunteered just to be near him and to see how he -- he navigated State politics. He was deeply inspirational to me and was someone who I tried to emulate. When I got elected, he was my go-to advisor for the first few years. And I would go to him when I had the thorniest of problems to try to sort out, and he always had the same thing to say to me, and that was, *Always act with integrity. No matter what you're doing, treat everyone fairly and with integrity. And there will be times when you will have to vote your conscience over the vast majority of your constituents.* And he said, *Those are going to be the most difficult times for you. But if you do vote your conscience, be prepared to be as honest as you can with your constituents and they will understand if you at least give them the time and provide the effort to explain why you had to vote the way you -- you did.* And I've had to employ that on a few occasions where I just could not bring myself to vote in a certain way that my constituency would have wanted, but I think they appreciated the explanation and my being honest with them. Always be honest is what he said.

I will say this: Jim Tallon was a Star Trek fan. He believed in curiosity, equality, and the advancement of all life. So I think if he were here today he would probably want me to wish to all of you the famous Star Trek comment to "Live long and prosper."

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Benedetto on the resolution.

MR. BENEDETTO: Thank you very much, Madam

Speaker, and I thank the Speaker for introducing this -- this resolution. It -- it just gives us a moment, a few moments to reflect on people that you've come across from this Chamber. I have always respected the people who have served in this Chamber and currently serving in this Chamber; no more so than -- than yesterday in that wonderful debate that we had considering out -- the bill before us.

I look at this list of people before me, and I -- I think about Susan John, who -- who I served with. And -- and I just learned so much from her. When I first came here, Susan gave me one of my first bills that I had, expanding the whistleblower protections in this State. And -- and she guided me in so many different areas. And -- and she was such an intelligent person and caring person. It was certainly an honor to serve with her.

I see this list and I reflect on Shelly Silver, and -- who led this Chamber more for than any other leader ever did, and did it so well. And remember the time that Shelly brought me into his office one day. We were in conference, and the conferences can, as you all know, run on for hours and it gets a little tedious at times. Always good, but tedious at times. And Shelly brought me into his office and he -- I forget what it was about, but it wasn't any -- anything monumental. And then he just started talking about his father and his father's hardware store that he had and how he priced screws for a certain amount. And I was wondering what was going on here, why was he doing this? And I realized, yeah, he thought it was tedious, too, and just wanted to get out of that -- that, you know, conference in

there. He had -- I think about his sense of humor. It was a very dry sense of humor, and I smile. And it comes up a lot, because at the end of every single year we always have the same question on our mind, *When are we gonna get out of this place and get back to our homes?* And that discussion was going on in this particular year, and someone raised the question, *Shelly, are we gonna finish on Friday, and are we gonna finish in daylight?* And Shelly said to him in that deep voice of his, *Yes, yes. We'll finish Friday and we will finish in daylight. Of course it's June 24th and daylight doesn't end 'til 9 o'clock, but we will finish.* And everybody kind of smiled and (inaudible) we were in for a long day.

And lastly, I have to really just say a word about George Friedman, who just passed away a month ago. I never served with him. I -- I was told by many people who had served with him that he -- in a -- in a -- a -- a group of so many intelligent people, that he was just a cut above everybody else. And you just didn't want to get into a debate on the floor with George because he was that good in defending what he was advocating for. I didn't serve with him, but I served in the Bronx where he was the Bronx Democratic Leader for so many years. And he was a good man, and I was quite sad three, four weeks ago when I heard that he had passed away. And I wasn't -- we were up here and I wasn't able to get down to pay my proper respects.

So to George Friedman, to Shelly Silver, to Susan John and to so many others here that I served with, I respect you all, and I thank you for letting me know you.

Thank you, Madam Chair [sic].

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Conrad on the resolution.

MR. CONRAD: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise to celebrate the life of John LaFalce, who we just buried on Monday. Although I didn't know John as an Assemblymember -- he was here well before my parents even met -- John was a congressman for 30 years, representing Western New York and the Niagara Frontier and had quite a legacy. A man of faith who voted his conscience. Someone who worked with the folks from Love Canal to fiscal policies. He was a true force. I had the opportunity to write letters to him in high school and elementary school about issues, and he replied back. Later in life he became my biggest critic on the town board where we were neighbors, and he told me how bad I was doing. But I jokingly say that because we were very good friends. We would often go for lunch and would tell me what's wrong, so we fixed it and -- and he said, *You have the power to do that bill. You can make that happen.* And I have to say that I -- I'm not the only person from Western New York that has a shared experience with John, but I certainly will miss him and I wish a lot for his family because he was quite a legend in Western New York.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Dinowitz on the resolution.

MR. DINOWITZ: Thank you.

I wanted to talk a little bit about Franz Leichter.

Franz Leichter, when I got to know him, was a State Senator, my State Senator. But he was elected to the Assembly in 1968. And this is a very long list; it's pretty jarring looking at a five-year list here.

Franz Leichter came to the United States as a refugee in 1940, and his -- his mother was murdered in a concentration camp. He became a lawyer and he accomplished much. But when he was elected to the Assembly, he was in the Minority. He was one of the people who co-wrote the abortion law in New York State. And he was always a renegade, a rebel. He -- he always stood up to the powers that be. In fact, I think he liked being in the Minority. He was elected to the State Senate the same year that the Democrats took the Majority in the Assembly. So if he had stayed in the Assembly he would have been in the Majority for the first time. But he went to the Senate and he ran against an entrenched incumbent in a primary against the political machine at the time, and he was elected to the State Senate. He was always in the Major -- in the Minority in the State Senate. He served until the end of 1998. We overlapped four years, and we shared an office. He had a desk space in my office, I got to know him very well. And this was a guy who was able to accomplish a lot as a member of the Minority by simply speaking out. He stood up against the banks, he was a major force for reform. And he was an early supporter of marriage equality and legalization of marijuana way back when no -- nobody would talk about stuff like that. He -- without him, I don't think we would have had that. The

Hudson River Park. So he accomplished a lot. But to me he was also a mentor. I learned a lot from him during the years that we worked together, and I was sad when he retired. But we -- we had those four years. And he -- I -- I would have to say that he probably accomplished -- accomplished more than anybody else could have as a member of the Minority in the State Senate. Because you can't always get everything done when you're in the Minority. But he did. He just did, by sheer force of his will and his knowledge. So I -- I miss him, and -- and it's a tremendous loss.

And there's another person I wanted to mention, and some people may be surprised that I'm mentioning him, and that's George Friedman. I first got to know George Friedman back in, I'm gonna -- I shouldn't date myself, but back in the -- a little bit before the mid-'70s. We were political rivals. I was much younger than him. But he was the head of the political -- the Regular Organization Political Club and he got elected to the Assembly in 1976. And I was kind of the leader of the -- a small reform Democratic club. So we fought each other every single year, and usually -- usually they did better than us, I'll admit that. When I ran for the Assembly in 1994, at that point he was the Democratic County Leader and he had been in the Assembly by that point, I guess, for 18 years. And even though I got the Democratic nomination because we ha the county committee in my district, it was a special election, he fought me and tried to block me and I won. And when I came here he was one the people who got up and welcomed me. I -- I think it was -- I guess it was a

real welcome. He introduced me as Landslide Dinowitz because I won by this much. But I won. But we became friendly, and although we only overlapped by less than a year because he was elected as Supreme Court justice in 1994. We actually got to know each other and became friendlier over the years; myself, my wife and him and his wife. And whether we were on the opposite sides, which we usually were, or not, he was a -- a decent guy, he was a smart guy. And his contribution, I think, in the Assembly and in the Bronx was very significant. So, he recently passed away, and as Mike said, we couldn't get down to his funeral. It was on one of the days we had to vote on one of those bills, which is -- is unfortunate. But he -- he -- his contribution was very significant and I, for one, appreciate him; both Franz Leichter and George Friedman.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Ms. Walker on the resolution.

MS. WALKER: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me an opportunity to speak on the resolution.

First I want to state that while I have not or did not have an opportunity to serve with the Honorable Alan Hevesi, that I believe as a student of life and history that I learn a little bit more about him each time I hear his son get up and speak, whether it is on this Assembly floor, when we are deliberating bills, the budget and/or otherwise. And so I am truly honored to be able to serve in this very little capacity with you to be able to take a little bit of statesmanship not just from your dad, but from you, vicariously. And I appreciate

you for it.

And one of the great folk who did have an opportunity to serve with the Assemblymember was Assemblyman Al Vann. Assemblymember Vann, I was so honored to have been able to have the privilege of sitting at his feet. And even in many instances where I had an opportunity to carry his briefcase, it was probably one of the simplest honors and greatest acknowledgements that I received as a young political operative, young lawyer, and a kid who grew up in Ocean Hill-Brownsville who was a beneficiary of part of the Assemblyman's greatness. As a teacher, he started the African-American Teachers -- an African-American teachers organization, which was the group that organized the Ocean Hill-Brownsville teacher's strike. In this Ocean Hill-Brownsville teacher's strike, there were a number of parents within the community who was [sic] looking at the education of their children, saying that they wanted to have a choice and a say in the budgets and the -- and the hiring and the processes of the education of their children. And they all galvanized together in order to protest what was happening. As a result of that was a pilot program, of course, which was a part of the Board of Education, which was the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Pilot Community District where we had this level of community control which sadly, I know we don't -- we don't have that anymore based on mayoral control. But I believe that Mr. Vann was ten times before his time in -- in thinking about that.

He was a pillar in Black politics. We know that he

would teach us a lot about Swahili, and we would call him Mwalimu, which was Swahili for "great teacher." One of his partners was Jitu Weusi, who was a co-founder of the African-American Teachers Association which focused on Black leaders and Black teachers and a Black school curriculum and a curriculum that was culturally relevant to students of color.

He was a teacher at (inaudible) School 271, which, of course, was the showdown for the local control in '68. His ascension from being teacher to leader was his -- his becoming an Assemblymember from 1974 to 2001, and during that time he was elected and reelected the Chair of the New York State Black and Puerto Rican Legislative Caucus. During this time, he had a number of wins, including working together with a coalition of other Assemblymembers in order to create more seats throughout the State of New York for Black ascension to power. After that, we know that he became a City Councilmember, and we were able to serve under the leadership of and then alongside the Assemblymember Annette Robinson.

So of course we stand on the shoulders of greatness. Looking at Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, one of the organizations that he masterminded; thinking about the Brownsville Community Development Corporation, we know today that we owe a huge debt of gratitude to Assemblymember Al Vann.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Braunstein on the resolution.

MR. BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise to remember my former boss, Shelly Silver.

Before I came to the Assembly, I worked in Speaker Silver's 250 Broadway office in Lower Manhattan. And, you know, a lot have talked about his impact as Speaker, but I think it's important to remember he never lost focus of where he came from. He was born and raised on the Lower East Side, and despite anything that was going up here in Albany, he always had his pulse on his district. And I remember, you know, up here he's the Speaker; when he was down on Grand Street, you know, he was a neighbor, he was a friend. And he delivered for that community on the Lower East Side for all the years that he was here, and I think it's important for all of us sometimes to remember that our district is the most important responsibility.

I also am grateful for his help in helping me start my career. You know, I was 29 years old, I had just graduated law school and, you know, I went to the Speaker and told him I was thinking of running for the State Assembly. You know, I -- I had a lot to learn and I needed help and I needed guidance. And I don't think I would be here today if it wasn't for his support.

And then, you know, just finally, someone mentioned Shelly's dry sense of humor and he used to have these phrases. And one of his phrases was about the budget, and used to always say, *Nothing's done 'til everything's done*. Right? And I think just with

this budget and the way things are going right now, I think we should remember what Shelly would say, *Nothing's done 'til everything's done.*

So thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes on the resolution.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on this resolution, and I also want to thank the Speaker for presenting it to us because it's been since '21 that we've had this opportunity to share our remembrances and our memories of previous colleagues. And I remember the first time I had this experience, it was like, Now this is the place to be. This is where you really learn the character, the integrity, the morals and the values of this House that we all serve in. Because you hear about people who were here before you that demonstrated that. And it's exciting to know that -- well, I guess it's not so exciting because it makes me feel like I'm probably the oldest person here -- but I actually knew ten of these people, and personally knew them.

I knew former Congressman LaFalce because he represented a congressional district in Western New York.

I knew Honorable Alan Hevesi because I worked on his campaign from Western New York. And quite frankly, I sat right in front of him in the Chambers when I first got here.

I knew Gary Finch. And I remember him telling me about how his family had buried Harriet Tubman. He actually brought

artifacts in to the Chambers to show me, to prove it that it was his family's funeral home that buried Harriet Tubman, whose burial site I have been to numerous times and never even thought about who was the funeral home that buried her. But -- and Gary did have quite a sense of humor about the whole thing, too.

I knew Fran Pordum, not because he was an Assemblymember, but because he was from Erie County as well.

And I knew Pat Casale because he was a -- he -- he liked to tell jokes. We had a lot of fun laughing about things that had nothing to do with legislative business or anything to do with these Chambers. We just had fun.

And also, I knew Al Vann because my predecessor and Al Vann were like this (indicating) on many issues that they worked on. I remember Al bringing buses of people from Brooklyn to Buffalo to help us understand how to work on issues in and around our community. And I remember buses of people -- Black people from Buffalo going to Brooklyn to learn from the work that Al Vann was doing in that community. So, it's amazing how people can have an impact on your life that you never suspected that they would.

Sheldon Silver. I mean, when I first came here I had an apartment and somebody wanted to bring me to dinner. I was like, *Oh, I might not want to go to dinner because I didn't drive, I took the train this time.* He was like, *Oh, don't worry about it. Shelly will pick you up.* I was like, *Are you kidding me? The Speaker is gonna pick me at my...* And yes, he did come pick me up, and it was really a

delightful dinner. And what did he want to talk about? Not the committees I was trying to get on, not anything about legislation. He wanted to talk about hockey. I don't even like hockey.

(Laughter)

But he loved hockey and he wanted to talk about it. And since I couldn't engage him on that topic, then we had to talk about our children. And so that actually brings people into a perspective that you wouldn't know that they had from reading about them in the newspaper.

And lastly, of course, Susan John. It's been said multiple times, but that was a smart woman. She was super brilliant, and she was always right ahead of any issue that came before us. I remember when she first introduced the labor bill that she worked on for, like, a long, long time before she left here and never was able to get that passed. And eventually I remember finally when Cathy Nolan was able to pass that bill that Susan had worked so hard and so long on. And it just really warms your heart to know that memories never die, and neither does love.

So thank you for the opportunity to speak.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Will members please rise for a moment of silence honoring the lives and distinguished careers of deceased Assemblymembers.

(Whereupon, a moment of silence was observed.)

The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9:00 a.m.

(Whereupon, the House stood adjourned until
Thursday, May 1st at 9:00 a.m., that being a Session day.)