

QUEENS TODAY

JANUARY 30, 2024

A 61-YEAR-OLD MAN WAS HIT BY A stray bullet that was meant for someone else in South Jamaica on Thursday, the Daily News reports. The unnamed man was walking outside the Market Fresh Supermarket on Sutphin Boulevard near 109th Avenue around 8 p.m. on Thursday. At the same time, 39-year-old Shazad Hoosain allegedly opened fire on a 23-year-old man. The target was hit in the arm, police said, but several bullets missed the 23-year-old and hit the uninvolved victim in the arm and chest. Both were taken to Jamaica Hospital and are expected to survive. Hoosain was arrested at the scene and was charged with attempted murder, assault and reckless endangerment.

A MULTI-CAR CRASH RESULTED IN downed utility poles, power lines and trees in Hollis over the weekend, ABC reports. The crash happened along 111th Avenue near Francis Lewis Boulevard just after 2:30 p.m. on Saturday. The damage from the crash resulted in mangled car parts and destruction all over the street. Two people were taken to the hospital with minor injuries, and the cause of the crash is still under investigation.

ON FRIDAY, COUNCILMEMBER JULIE Won hosted a sit-down, family-style dinner, and resource event at Legal Outreach and Hope Astoria for migrants and asylum seekers living in District 26 shelters. The lawmaker's office says there are 36 shelters in her Western Queens district. "With more than 8,000 new neighbors living in 36 shelters in our district, we are proud to host our second community dinner for migrants and asylum seekers to not only show them that they are welcome, but that they are a part of our district," said Won. "Since taking office, we have continued to advocate for critical resources, including long-term housing, access to health and mental health services, education, and wraparound services. As our new neighbors continue to seek asylum in our sanctuary city, my office will continue to advocate for the state and federal government to do more to ensure that we are providing pathways to permanent residency, expedited work authorizations, legal services, and more."

MORSCHER'S PORK STORE IN RIDGE-wood is closing on Saturday after seven decades of Queens business, Spectrum News reports. The shop was opened in 1955, catering to the heavily German neighborhood with recipes for homemade meat products from the old world. Over the years, it adjusted as people from European countries moved into the community. "We always changed gears to fit the people of the neighborhood, so they could come into the store and have a piece of home just for the moment they were here," co-owner Herbert Morscher said.

Judicial conduct commission boss decries gov's proposed cuts



Robert Tembeckjian, the administrator of the Commission on Judicial Conduct, appeared before the state legislature on Thursday, Jan. 25, 2024.

Screenshot via NYS Senate

By Jacob Kaye
Queens Daily Eagle

The head of the state's Commission on Judicial Conduct called on state lawmakers last week to boost the commission's funds after a similar request was denied by the governor in her proposed budget.

Appearing before both the State Senate and Assembly, the commission's administrator, Robert Tembeckjian, called Governor Kathy Hochul's proposed budget for the watchdog commission disappointing, and told lawmakers that without the increased funding, the commission's work would be put in jeopardy.

Tembeckjian originally requested the commission's approximately \$8 million budget be

increased by \$770,000 but was only given a \$184,000 increase in Hochul's executive budget proposal.

The over 75 percent reduction in the fiscal request not only would affect the commission's ability to conduct investigations into complaints made against the judiciary, which have increased each year over the past several years, but would also make it impossible for the commission to fund its staff's mandatory salary increases or pay for the software needed to manage its work, Tembeckjian said.

"All of the tools that we need to efficiently and effectively meet this burgeoning challenge are unaddressed in this budget," Tembeckjian said.

Most lawmakers at the recent budget hearing appeared to be sympathetic to Tembeckjian's request.

"To think that we would be attempting to balance the budget...at the expense of the integrity of our judicial system is frankly unacceptable and outrageous," said State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal, who serves as the chair of the Senate's Judiciary Committee. "We will fight to resist those cuts."

The independent commission is made up of 11 members, who together receive and investigate and publicly discipline judges for engaging in ethical misconduct.

While the commission has yet to release its

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'Anarchist' Astoria brothers busted with bombs, ghost gun arsenal and hit list

Two brothers in Astoria were arrested this week after an armory of ghost guns and explosives were found in their apartment by law enforcement.

Photo via Queens District Attorney/Twitter

By Ryan Schwach
Queens Daily Eagle

Two Queens brothers were arrested and indicted this week on myriad charges after an arsenal of weapons and alleged hit list were found in their Astoria home, Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz said on Monday.

Andrew and Angelo Hatzigelis, ages 39 and 51 respectively, face 130 criminal charges after an investigation and search of their 36th Avenue apartment uncovered the arsenal, which includes illegal ghost guns and improvised explosives.

Also found in the apartment was what the DA called "anarchist propaganda" and a "hit list," which had "cops," "judges," "politicians," "celebrities" and "banker scum" written on it. The list did not include specific names of any individuals, according to prosecutors.

The investigation into the brothers included a joint operation which involved the DA, NYPD, U.S. Homeland Security, the New York State Police, the United States Postal Inspector and the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

See story on page 2

Queens men arrested with armory and a 'hit list'

Continued from page 1

"Today's charges underscore the harsh reality that our communities contain a small number of people who conceivably harbor evil intent," said NYPD Commissioner Edward Caban. "This cache of weapons – including explosives and untraceable, 3D-printed ghost guns – had the potential to wreak horrendous carnage."

Using "prior intelligence," the DA said the investigation was launched into the purchase of firearm component parts, accessories and the manufacture of illegal ghost guns by the brothers.

On Jan. 17, law enforcement conducted a warrant of the Hatzigelis' apartment in the Dutch Kills neighborhood of Western Queens.

The search allegedly unearthed an armory of weapons and explosives.

That included eight improvised explosive devices commonly known as IEDs, two loaded AR-15-style ghost guns, four 9mm ghost gun pistols, one partially constructed AK-47-style ghost gun, smoke bombs, several hundred rounds of ammunition and pieces and tools to construct the illegal 3D printed ghost guns.

The search also uncovered body armor and metal knuckles.

Also troubling, law enforcement found a radio set to the frequency of the 114th Precinct, which polices the Astoria community, as well as several notebooks containing instructions on



The Queens District Attorney announced the arrests of two brothers and seizure of a treasure trove of weapons and explosives from an Astoria apartment.

Photo via Queens district attorney

how to build explosives and spread "propaganda."

The explosives found at the apartment, which is located directly across from the Con Edison power plant, forced others living there

to evacuate the building.

The investigation led to the arrests of the Hatzigelis, and the subsequent 130-count indictment.

The massive indictment includes eight

counts of criminal possession of a weapon in the first degree, nine counts of criminal possession of a weapon in the second degree, 47 counts of criminal possession of a weapon in the third degree, six counts of criminal possession of a firearm, eight counts of reckless endangerment in the second degree, 14 counts of criminal possession of a weapon in the fourth degree, six counts of criminal sale of a firearm in the third degree, 15 counts of make/transport/dispose/deface weapons and dangerous weapons, three counts of unlawful purchase of body armor, one count of attempted criminal possession of a weapon in the third degree, one count of attempted criminal possession of a firearm, and three counts of unlawful possession of a pistol or revolver ammunition, and nine counts of unlawfully dealing with fireworks and dangerous fireworks.

The brothers are awaiting arraignment at the time of this writing, and are due back in court on Feb. 15.

They face 25 years in prison each.

"The city is safer today," Katz said in a statement. "My Crime Strategies and Intelligence Bureau launches investigations every day so that we find illegal weapons, including guns and in this case explosive devices. We cannot measure the number of lives that were saved, but we do know that these weapons will never hurt anyone."

Paul Vallone, former Queens councilmember, dies at 56

By Jacob Kaye
Queens Daily Eagle

Paul Vallone, a former Queens councilmember and member of one of the borough's most notable political families, died over the weekend of an apparent heart attack. He was 56.

Vallone most recently served as the deputy commissioner of the city's Veterans Services, an appointment he received from Mayor Eric Adams, who called Vallone "a true public servant and New Yorker" on Sunday.

Vallone followed in the footsteps of his brother, father and grandfather when he first was elected to public office in 2014. That year, he began his first of two terms in the City Council, representing parts of Whitestone, Flushing, College Point, Little Neck, Bayside, Bay Terrace, Auburndale, Beechhurst, Douglaston and Malba in District 19.

Introducing nearly 800 pieces of legislation during his time in the Council, Vallone's time in office was focused on bringing the Eastern Queens district closer to city services, the former lawmaker told the Eagle several months before his final term ended at the close of 2021.

"When I'm looking back during those eight years, we are handing off a well-oiled, well-funded, steamrolling machine in District 19, and I think that's my greatest accomplishment," Vallone said.

Vallone was one of the earliest councilmembers to embrace participatory budgeting, offering constituents the opportunity to vote for capital projects they believed should be funded



Former Queens City Councilmember Paul Vallone, who was most recently serving as the deputy commissioner of the city's Veterans Services, died over the weekend at age 56.

File photo via NYC Council Photography

by the councilmember's office. District 19 consistently saw the highest number of participatory budgeting votes in the city during Vallone's time in office.

"It was a beautiful way to create community involvement in your own tax dollars," Vallone told the Eagle in 2021.



Now-Council Speaker Adrienne Adams shared this photo of former Councilmember Paul Vallone following his death over the weekend.

File photo via Adams/X

Vallone's career in public office was largely to be expected.

Vallone's grandfather, Charles J. Vallone, served as a judge in Queens County Civil Court from 1955 until his death in 1967; his father, Peter Vallone, served as city councilmember in Astoria from 1974 until 2001 and was the council's first-ever speaker; and his brother, Peter Vallone Jr., served as a city councilmember in the same seat as their father until 2012 when he became a judge in Queens County Civil Court.

For nearly 50 years, there was a member of the Vallone family in the New York City Council. That streak ended when Vallone was term-limited out of office at the end of 2021.

Despite his family's history, Vallone attempted to carve out his own lane by moving out of Astoria and to Northeast Queens.

After a failed bid for the District 19 seat in 2009, Vallone won the Democratic nomination and the general election in 2013. He took over the seat from former Councilmember Daniel Halloran, who had just recently been indicted on corruption charges.

As his second term was coming to a close, Vallone made one final attempt to again follow in the footsteps of his family through a bid for a Civil Court seat in Eastern Queens.

In a major upset, Vallone lost his race against Republican candidate and now-Judge Joseph Kasper in November 2021.

Shortly after losing the election, Vallone was brought on by the mayor to serve in the Adams administration as a deputy commissioner, a role he held until his death.

"The borough of Queens and our entire city mourn the loss of Paul Vallone, a true public servant and New Yorker," Adams said in a statement on Sunday. "A true son of Queens, he upheld a family legacy through his service in the New York City Council and with the New York City Department of Veterans' Services. Throughout his time in office, the blue-collar community he represented knew they had a fighter from the neighborhood representing them in City Hall."

"It was an honor to serve alongside him, and I know New Yorkers will join me in keeping the Vallone family in your hearts today," the mayor added.

Elected officials and community leaders from across Queens and the city shared their memories of Vallone over the weekend.

"Paul Vallone was the epitome of a public servant, a true champion for Northeast Queens and an unrelenting advocate for veterans," Queens Borough President Donovan Richards said in a statement. "But more than anything, Paul was a loving husband, a proud father and a loyal friend to everyone who — like me — had

the honor of knowing him."

Rep. Grace Meng, who shared a number of constituents with Vallone when he was in office, said that she was "devastated" by his death.

"He was a terrific friend and public servant," Meng said. "But he was also a wonderful person and a great human being."

"I will always treasure our friendship and working together to improve the lives of Queens residents," she added.

Vallone is survived by both of his parents, his wife Anna-Marie, his daughters Catena and Lea and his son Charlie.

Visitation will be held at Joseph Farena and Sons funeral home on Thursday, Feb. 1 from 2 to 9 p.m. The Astoria funeral home is located at 38-08 Ditmars Blvd.

Vallone's funeral will be held on Friday at 11 a.m. at St. Andrew Avelino Catholic Church, located at 35-60 158th St. Following the funeral, a burial service will be held at Calvary Cemetery.

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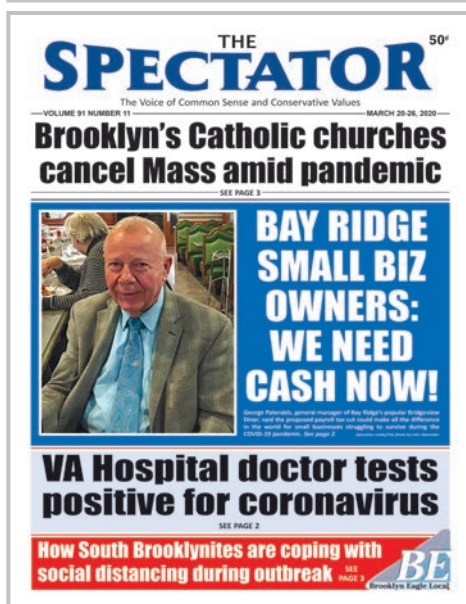
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Jen Hopewell,
Assistant to the Publisher
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Red signals: Retail spaces in transit system still not moving

By Jose Martinez
THE CITY

Shops inside the year-old Long Island Rail Road hub deep beneath Grand Central are likely to remain vacant until 2025.

The Staten Island Ferry's Whitehall and St. George terminals, whose 20 retail spaces were filled to capacity with small businesses before the coronavirus pandemic, are now looking for four new tenants.

And at the once-bustling Turnstyle Underground Market inside the 59th Street-Columbus Circle station, just six of nearly 40 shops and kiosks were open on a recent weekday morning as riders hustled past to catch the subway.

"You walk through and more than half the stores are closed," commuter Wayne Roberts, 49, said while walking through the retail passageway that opened in 2016 inside the MTA's seventh-busiest station. "There's nobody really buying anything and it's almost like a waste of space."

But as subway, rail and ferry ridership draws closer to pre-pandemic levels, MTA and city officials say they are optimistic about a coming retail revival in and around transportation hubs.

While just 60 of the 190 retail spaces in the subway system are currently filled 17 others have tenants whose plans are under review or construction, MTA spokesperson Joana Flores told THE CITY. The remaining 113 will be marketed over the next nine months to a year or have licenses under negotiation, she added.

"The resurgence of ridership has sparked a revival of retail, with local businesses and national chains seeing a renewed vibrancy in marketing to the MTA's millions of daily riders," Flores said.

Still, it's a steep climb for the transportation authority, which last year saw its revenue from retail in the subway sink to less than \$3 million, Crain's New York Business reported in October — down from \$9.5 million prior to the pandemic. Across its entire transportation network, the MTA's intake from retail space rent sank from \$72 million in 2019 to \$35.7 million in 2022, but has since climbed back to more than \$50 million, according to Crain's.

Of course, the MTA has a budget of more than \$19 billion, which means the retail dip only affects decimal places, but every penny counts.

"Every dollar the MTA receives in revenue is needed," said Kate Slevin, executive vice president for the Regional Plan Association. "Hopefully, the return of ridership will help bring back some of the businesses that bring riders convenience in their daily lives — the shoe shiners, cleaners, food stores."

Getting Creative

The hoped-for retail boost is in line with commuters returning to various modes of transportation — weekday subway and commuter rail usage has climbed to nearly 80% of pre-pandemic levels, according to MTA data, while the city Trans-



A vacant retail space in a renovated wing of Penn Station, Jan. 25, 2024.

Credit: Alex Krales/THE CITY

portation Department says the Staten Island Ferry's ridership climbed to 15.7 million last year, down about 7 million from 2019.

The Port Authority Bus Terminal in Midtown, which has approximately two dozen retailers, is actively marketing spaces for new tenants, a spokesperson said. The sprawling complex last year had an average of 98,000 departing passengers on weekdays, down from 125,000 before the pandemic.

Meanwhile, transit officials are finding novel uses for their empty spaces.

"As retailing in transit has evolved, the MTA is also recognizing new opportunities to creatively occupy some former retail units in ways — like displaying artwork — that culturally enrich communities," said Flores.

The transit agency began soliciting ideas in November for artists' or nonprofit groups' rent-free use of retail spaces in the subway system that Jamie Torres-Springer, president of MTA Construction & Development, described at the time as "uniquely challenging to fill."

"We are looking to activate vacant spaces to improve the station atmosphere," she said at the time. "This initiative seeks partners who can offer engaging and creative activations like art installations or nonprofit programming to provide a socially beneficial use and bring more life to the station's environment."

The environmental differences are stark at Grand Central.

Up at the old Grand Central Terminal, 75 of 92



Several retail spaces were vacant at the Turnstyle Underground Market at 59th Street-Columbus Circle, Jan. 24, 2023.

Credit: Jose Martinez/THE CITY

retail spaces are filled inside the landmark rail hub, according to the MTA. But several stories below, the new Grand Central Madison's 25,000-square-foot retail corridor is devoid of any shops except for a few carts that sell coffee and cupcakes.

"I even walked up the other way, thinking

maybe there is some stuff there because it says 'Shops,'" said Margie Caggiano, 68, who commutes to Long Island daily through Grand Central Madison. "But it's nothing — it's bleak."

MTA Chairman and CEO Janno Lieber said ambitious retail plans for the sprawling multi-level complex had to be sidelined because of the pandemic.

"We were bidding the retail, it just so happened in the middle of COVID," he said last week at an event marking Grand Central Madison's first year of passenger train service. "And at the time, the retail industry was flat on its back and nobody was making new investments."

The MTA now expects to issue a request for proposals on the retail spaces at the end of March and plans to open a restaurant/bar in the passageway later this year.

Across town, in the newly redeveloped Penn Station concourse that links the 1/2/3 and A/C/E subway lines, several popular chains are now open, with more — including Shake Shack, Raising Canes and Pollo Campero — set to open later this year, according to Vornado Realty Trust. One block west, in the Moynihan Train Hall, new businesses and eateries have arrived in the three-year-old hub.

For all the new additions to the various transportation hubs, several commuters said they focus more on reaching their destinations on time than on shopping options.

"Coffee, a little food or snacks would be nice while you wait," said Gio Portugal, who was waiting for an LIRR train to Jamaica from Grand Central Madison. "But for the most part, I think people are just trying to get in and out."

THE CITY is an independent, nonprofit news outlet dedicated to hard-hitting reporting that serves the people of New York.



A few concession carts were the only retailers visible on the concourse of the new Grand Central Madison, Jan. 23, 2023.

Credit: Jose Martinez/THE CITY

Cybercrime Victims who Aren't Proficient In English are Poorly Protected, Undercounted

By Fawn Ngo
The Conversation

In the United States, the Internet Crime Complaint Center serves as a critical component in the FBI's efforts to combat cybercrime. The center's website provides educational resources to help individuals and businesses protect themselves from cyberthreats and also allows them to report their victimization by submitting complaints related to internet crimes. The Internet Crime Complaint Center also publishes annual reports summarizing the current state of internet crime, trends and notable cases.

However, the information and resources, including the reporting form, posted on the center's website are only available in English. This excludes a substantial number of internet users and victims of cybercrime: people with limited English proficiency. In addition to leaving out many people who are more vulnerable to cyberthreats, one consequence is that the Internet Crime Complaint Center's annual Internet Crime Reports are incomplete and inaccurate.

The lack of information and resources on cybersecurity and internet safety in languages other than English on the Internet Crime Complaint Center website further widens the "security gap," a divide that has emerged between those who can manage and mitigate potential cybersecurity threats and those who cannot. Because there isn't an appropriate reporting mechanism and structure for people with limited English proficiency to report their victimization, data and statistics on cyber victimization within this population are severely limited.

Cybercrime and prevention

I'm a criminologist. My colleagues and I conducted focus groups with a sample of adult internet users with limited English proficiency to examine their experiences with nine forms of cybercrime and explore their knowledge of cybersecurity. The study is slated to be published in a forthcoming issue of the International Journal of Cybersecurity Intelligence and Cybercrime.

We recruited 18 Spanish- and six Vietnamese-speaking internet users for the study based on the evidence that limited English proficiency individuals in the U.S. tend to be Latino or Asian, and among the Asian ethnic groups Vietnamese Americans are the least proficient in English.

We asked participants whether they had encountered any of the following during the previous 12 months:

- They received a phishing email, which is a deceptive message with the intent of tricking them into divulging sensitive information such as login credentials, personal details or financial information.
- Their computer was infected with a computer virus.
- They received online harassment; for example, a message from someone that threatened, insulted or harassed them.
- They were the victim of an online scam; for example, they sent money to an individual or organization that they encountered online and later found to have misrepresented themselves.
- They were notified that their financial account had been hacked.
- They were notified that their email,

social media, shopping or other account had been hacked.

Study participants encountered all nine types of cybercrime. The most common types of cyber victimization they experienced were computer virus, reported by seven participants; phishing emails, reported by six participants; notification that their financial account had been hacked and their personal data was at risk, reported by six participants; and notification that another type of account had been hacked, reported by six participants.

We asked participants whether they had engaged in the following cybersecurity measures during the previous 12 months:

- Have antivirus, anti-spyware, or firewall software installed on their computer and laptop.
- Create strong passwords for their online accounts.
- Employ two-factor authentication procedure.
- Avoid unsecured wireless networks such as free Wi-Fi at airports.
- Avoid websites that are not protected by Secure Sockets Layer, or SSL, encryption, meaning look for URLs to begin with https rather than http.
- Use a strong password or encryption to secure their home's wireless network.
- Employ email filters to block suspicious senders and attachments.
- Check email senders and attachments to avoid phishing and online scams.
- Be cautious when providing personal information to a third party.
- Take extra steps such as shredding documents with personal information to prevent data theft.

The answer choices were yes, no and I don't know. In all cases except creating strong passwords, more participants reported "no" than "yes," and in all cases, the combination of participants who reported "no" and "I don't know" significantly exceeded the number of participants who reported "yes."

Closing the security gap

Executive Order 13166, signed in 2000, requires federal agencies to improve access to services for people with limited English proficiency. U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland issued a memorandum on Nov. 21, 2022, directing the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division to share best practices and exchange information about language access with other federal agencies.

I believe that it's important to close the security gap and attain accurate data and statistics on cyber victimization. Internet- and computer-based crime is one of the fastest-growing security threats in the U.S.

Getting a full and accurate picture of the problem requires that data and statistics on cybercrime and cyber victimization include victims who have limited English proficiency as well as those who are English-proficient.

And just as public campaigns related to health and safety tend to be available in multiple languages to reach diverse audiences, I believe all users, regardless of their language skills, should have the knowledge and skills to protect themselves from cybercrime.

Fawn Ngo is an assistant professor of criminology at the University of South Florida.





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Howie Roseman: He's No Failure, But His Team Was

By Andy Furman
Brooklyn Daily Eagle

Quite simply, the Philadelphia Eagles collapsed this season.

And there's more than one reason — but it's not Howie Roseman.

Howie Roseman — make that Brooklyn-born Howie Roseman — is a two-time NFL Executive of the Year and architect of the team's first Super Bowl championship in franchise history.

Yes, there are teams out there that would die for a Howie Roseman, who serves as executive vice president/general manager for the franchise.

The 2023 edition of the Philadelphia Eagles started 10-1, and that was followed by losing six of their last seven games.

How? Why did it happen?

Well, back in August, ESPN ranked Philadelphia's roster as "The Best in the NFL."

Yes, the team had one of the league's best and youngest quarterback stars, Jalen Hurts, a top offensive line and a better-than-average receiving group.

Pro Football Focus also ranked the Eagles' roster as the best in the league, writing in early September: "The Eagles have the best quarterback in the NFC. They have



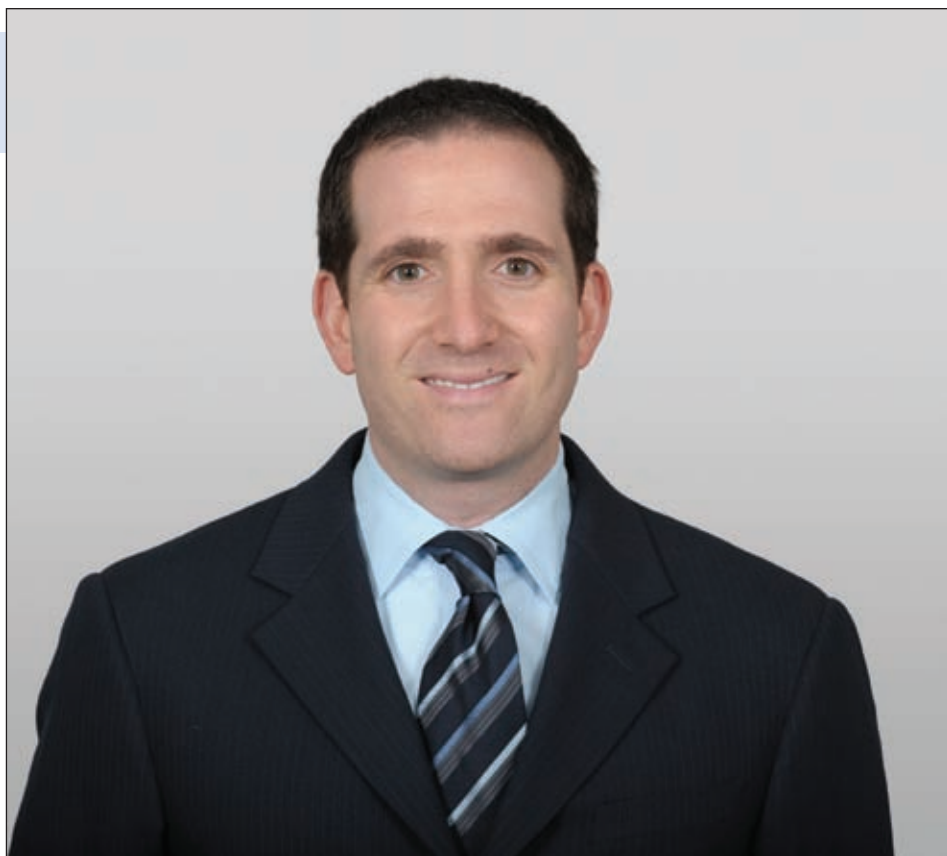
"Philadelphia Eagles' Nick Sirianni, right, speaks during a news conference with Howie Roseman at the NFL teams' practice facility, Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2024, in Philadelphia.

AP Photo/Matt Slocum



Philadelphia Eagles general manager Howie Roseman arrives for the NFL Super Bowl 57 football game between the Kansas City Chiefs and the Philadelphia Eagles, Sunday, Feb. 12, 2023, in Glendale, Ariz.

AP Photo/Matt Slocum



A 2009 photo of Howie Roseman, executive vice president and general manager for the Philadelphia Eagles.

AP file photo

dynamic weapons on offense. Nobody in the league is better in the trenches. There are sore spots in the middle of their defense, but they have as good a chance as anybody to get back to the Super Bowl."

Ugh — didn't happen. But you can't blame the so-called experts. After romping to last year's NFC championship and coming up three points short of winning the Super Bowl, they'd raced out to the league's best record at Thanksgiving and appeared on course for a return trip to the sport's biggest stage.

And from that 10-1 start, the Eagles dropped five of six entering the Monday night wildcard playoff — a 32-9 loss to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers — a team they thrashed in October.

But back to Roseman. It's somewhat amazing that a man who had never stepped on a football field, or worked with a team at any level, could have the success at the highest level of football.

He led the Eagles to their second Super Bowl appearance in five years with a different head coach and quarterback, becoming the first GM to accomplish that

feat since 1980.

Before joining the Eagles in 2001, Roseman sent hundreds and maybe thousands of letters to NFL executives over the course of a few years until he landed an interview.

Joe Banner, who was the Eagles' president at the time, told the story of Roseman's persistence during an appearance on the "Rich Eisen Show" podcast.

"I started getting letters from this complete stranger who identified himself as a recent graduate of Fordham Law School and the University of Florida undergrad about his desire to work in the NFL. He was absolutely sure that given the opportunity he would be a great general manager," Banner said on the podcast that was reprinted in "Philadelphia Magazine."

"He sent these letters every single day, for a couple of years," Banner said. "I got a letter from Howie Roseman every day."

A lot of writing, and a lot of postage.

Banner wasn't alone. He learned that Mike Tannenbaum, the New York Jets' director of contracts at the time, was also getting Howie Roseman's letters.

Roseman was hired by the Eagles as an intern to work on salary cap issues in 2000. He was promoted to salary of football administration in 2003 and was later promoted to vice president of football administration in 2006.

He was named the Eagles' general manager on January 29, 2010. So how did a guy from Brooklyn with no football experience on any level end up, at 37, becoming the youngest GM in the NFL?

Roseman opened-up to Philadelphia Magazine, and said when he was eight years-old he met John Elway's dad on an airplane flight. He talked the guy's ear off for two hours.

The elder Elway was so impressed by the boy's acumen that he said he should be on TV. According to the magazine report, Howie said someone finally believed in him. He'd long been telling people he wanted to one day run a football team.

In his biography, Roseman states he'd watch the NFL draft on TV and would keep binders stuffed with player stats and a draftee board in his college apartment.

Perhaps that's one way to enter the NFL.

It's worked for Brooklyn's Howie Roseman.

Andy Furman is a Fox Sports Radio national talk show host. Previously, he was a scholastic sports columnist for the Brooklyn Eagle. He may be reached at: andyf@brooklyneagle.com Twitter: @AndyFurmanFSR



Our World In Pictures

GAZA — Looking for a more peaceful city — refugees flee to avoid attacks directed at Hamas: Palestinians arrive in the southern Gaza town of Rafah after fleeing an Israeli ground and air offensive in the nearby city of Khan Younis on Monday, Jan. 29, 2024. Israel has expanded its offensive in Khan Younis, saying the city is a stronghold of the Hamas militant group.

Photo: Fatima Shbair/AP



BALTIMORE — A kiss for a winner — Taylor has a concert in Japan the night before the Super Bowl in Vegas... but she says she'll make it: Taylor Swift kisses Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce after an AFC Championship NFL football game against the Baltimore Ravens, Sunday, Jan. 28, 2024, in Baltimore. The Kansas City Chiefs won 17-10.

Photo: Julio Cortez/AP



PARAGUAY — Striking overhead view of toxic drainage into a river: People fish next to drainage that flows into the Paraguay River in Asuncion, Paraguay, Sunday, Jan. 28, 2024.

Photo: Jorge Saenz/AP



SANTA CLARA — 'We're going to the Super Bowl in Vegas — but they might not let me wear these pants': San Francisco 49ers tight end George Kittle, middle left, celebrates with his wife, Claire, after the NFC Championship NFL football game against the Detroit Lions in Santa Clara, CA, Sunday, Jan. 28, 2024. Kittle and his wife will go up against tight end Travis Kelce and Taylor Swift in Vegas.

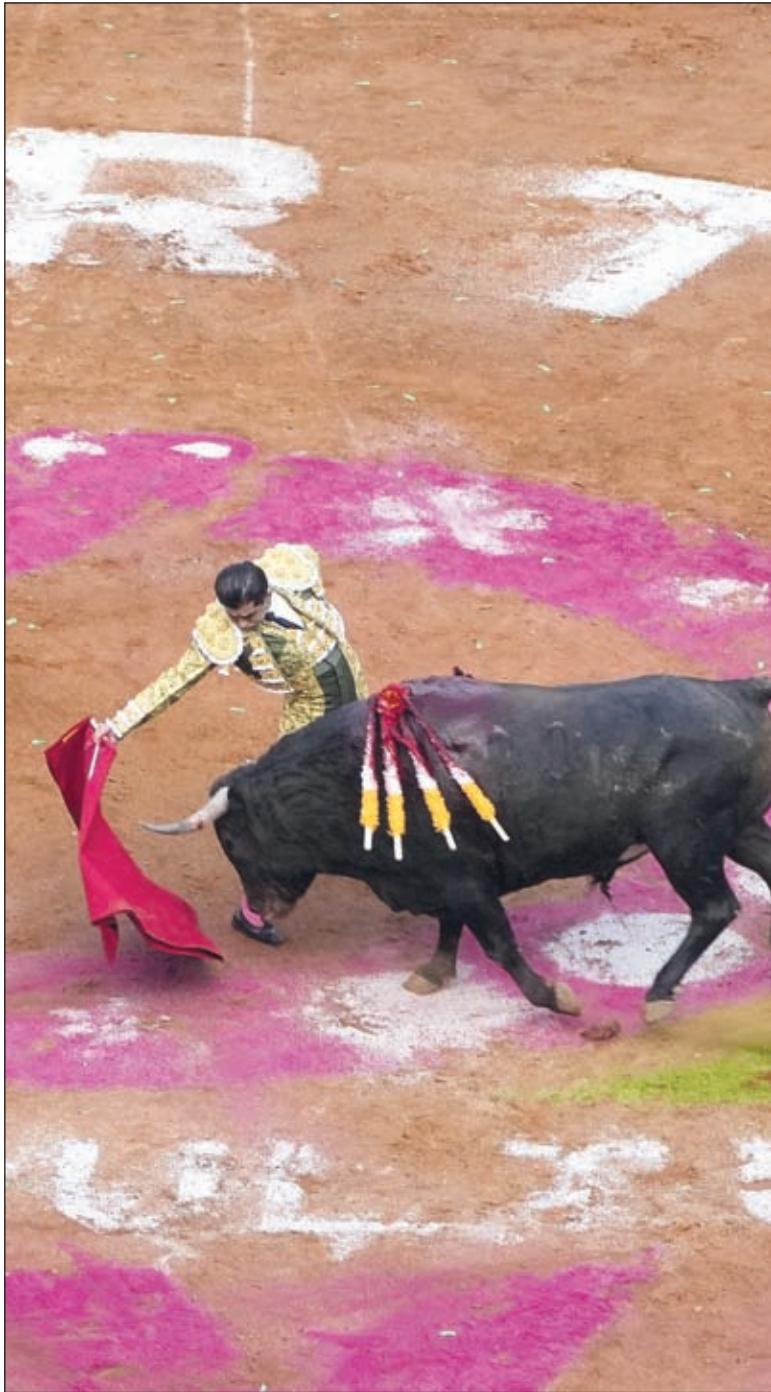
Photo: Mark J. Terrill/AP



Our World In Pictures

RIO DE JANEIRO — A long way from Penzance — a pirate costume, another Carnival event: A reveler dressed as a pirate takes part in a pre-carnival street party in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Sunday, Jan. 28, 2024.

Photo: Bruna Prado/AP



MEXICO CITY — Bullfighting is back — people want the ceremony, the spectacle and the blood: A bullfighter performs at the Plaza Mexico, in Mexico City, Sunday, Jan. 28, 2024. Bullfighting returned to Mexico City after the Supreme Court of Justice overturned a 2022 ban that prevented these events from taking place in the capital.

Photo: Fernando Llano/AP



COLUMBUS — ‘Kids, this is no place to take a nap...’: Madison Chock and Evan Bates compete in championship ice dance at the U.S. figure skating championships on Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024, in Columbus, Ohio.

Photo: Sue Ogrocki/AP



FLORIDA — That ‘clinking sound’ — recalling the words of the Sam Cooke classic ‘That’s the sound of the men working on the chain gang’: Members of Brevard County’s chain gang, prisoners convicted of nonviolent misdemeanors, wear chains around their ankles as they pick up trash along a roadside, Thursday, Sept. 14, 2023, in Titusville, Fla. Participation in the chain gang, created by county Sheriff Wayne Ivey as a crime deterrent, is voluntary and sometimes has a waitlist to join.

Photo: Rebecca Blackwell/AP

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In NYC schools, substitute teachers are systematically denied COVID sick pay

By **Teddy Ostrow**
Chalkbeat/New York Focus

This story was published in partnership with New York Focus, a non-profit news site investigating how power works in New York state. This is the first installment in a two-part series reported with support from the Economic Hardship Reporting Project.

Shane Lorenzen finally caught COVID days before Christmas in 2022.

A substitute teacher in New York City, he knew the state offered paid COVID leave to public employees — a key protection for essential workers put in place early in the pandemic. But when he asked his school payroll secretary about it, she informed him that as a sub, he didn't qualify.

Like thousands of substitutes, Lorenzen helped prop up the city's education system throughout the pandemic. He signed up in March 2020 to staff one of the education centers for the children of health care professionals, transit workers, and other frontline employees when regular schools were closed to other kids. During the omicron wave in January 2022, he was in the classroom as thousands of teachers went on sick leave.

When Lorenzen tested positive himself, the denial of paid leave felt like a slap in the face. He tried to insist — and was asked not to come back to his school.

Substitutes have been entitled to paid COVID leave since the state mandated the benefit in 2020, the New York state Department of Labor confirmed. But many subs assumed they didn't qualify and never requested the benefit. And in New York City, many were denied even if they did ask.

The city Department of Education instructed schools to exclude nearly all substitute teachers and substitute paraprofessionals from the benefit, according to internal emails New York Focus obtained through a Freedom of Information Law request.

"Generally speaking substitutes ... would not be eligible to receive the excused leave at full pay for up to two weeks if they needed to quarantine," the DOE advised schools in an email. "They would not be paid for any time not worked."

"I got COVID recently, and last year," said one former substitute teacher in Bushwick who requested anonymity out of fear of employer retaliation. "[COVID leave] wasn't a conversation that was had between me and the school."

An education department spokesperson confirmed that during the pandemic, staff received guidance indicating that per diem workers — the teachers and paraprofessionals employed on a day-to-day basis who make up the majority of the substitute workforce — do not qualify for sick leave or other benefits normally provided to full-time staff. The spokesperson later contradicted this guidance, telling New York Focus in a phone call that subs could receive paid COVID leave if they provided a "quarantine order," as required by the March 2020 state law.

Asked to elaborate, the department did not acknowledge the contradiction, only reiterating that per diems were not included in its guidance for schools.

The state Labor Department confirmed that per diem workers are included in the mandate.

"NYC DOE (including substitute teachers or sub paraprofessionals) qualify for paid COVID leave," the Labor Department press office wrote. The DOE did not respond to the state agency's apparently contradictory interpretation of the law.

Among subs, the lack of support has added to a sense that the school system sees them as disposable — even after they stepped up to help the city in a time of great need.

"I saw a couple of my coworkers get sick and get taken out in an ambulance, and I never saw them again," said Lorenzen, recalling the fear and uncertainty of the pandemic's early days. "And they were subs. They were subs or paras."

While much attention has been paid to the sacrifices that full-time teachers made and the harms that students sustained during the pandemic, substitutes like Lorenzen played a critical role in holding the system together.

As sickness, refusal to abide by vaccine mandates, and burnout pushed thousands of teachers out of their posts, the city's teacher attrition rate reached a decade high in 2022, with 2,000 few-



Shane Lorenzen insisted on claiming his pay for COVID leave. Then he lost his job.

Marco Postigo Storel

er teachers in the system than five years earlier. Full-time teachers are still calling out sick at higher rates than before the pandemic, and the crisis may worsen as the United States experiences one of the largest surges in COVID cases since 2020, with New York flagged as a hot zone by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In a public resolution addressing schools' difficulties in hiring substitutes, the United Federation of Teachers recently asked the DOE to make nominations for substitute teachers and sub paras more flexible, and to offer subs pay differentials in "hard-to-staff" schools.

But while full-time teachers are still being offered COVID leave, subs remain in the lurch.

"There's no safety net for me," said the former Bushwick sub. "It was disappointing because there was this whole chatter about 'essential workers,' but it just felt like I wasn't getting taken care of as a worker in the city."

The DOE did not respond to requests for the number of substitutes in the city system, nor how many of them got sick with COVID. But based on broader figures — over 75% of Americans have contracted the virus at least once; over 35,000 short-term substitute teachers work in New York state; and well over 100,000 COVID cases have been confirmed among DOE staff since September 2020 — it's likely that thousands of New York City substitutes have contracted the virus.

Although some subs work at their schools on longer-term appointments, many are still paid by the day — usually at a \$200 rate. They typically don't get employer-funded health insurance or paid sick days. But in March 2020 — when Lorenzen became a sub — the state passed a law, which is still in effect, granting some private and all public sector workers between five and 14 days of paid sick leave for Covid isolation and precautionary quarantines.

During severe coronavirus surges, DOE administrators tasked with answering COVID leave questions advised school staff that most substitutes did not qualify for paid COVID leave in at least 57 responses, according to emails New York Focus obtained via FOIL. (Initial senders' names were redacted, but the number of threads suggests that dozens of schools inquired about the issue.)

Just four complaints were filed against the DOE for failing to provide substitutes paid COVID leave, according to Labor Department officials, who declined to provide further details about the cases. DOE officials said they received only one related complaint from the Labor Department, which was promptly addressed.

As teachers called out sick, schools grew increasingly desperate to place subs in classrooms, many in longer-term assignments. The DOE resorted to offering "special financial incentives" to subs when COVID rates were highest — up to \$100 extra per day, according to emails sent to substitutes and obtained by New York Focus.

According to Lorenzen, there were periods during bad COVID surges, like the omicron wave, when most of the teachers in his school were substitutes. Others described a similar reliance.

"We reopened the schools back up and kept them open," said Joe Diodato, a full-time teacher who subbed for a year and a half in the Bronx beginning in the winter of 2020. "It only happened because of subs."

While subs often teach to supplement other jobs, some rely on substitute teaching as their primary source of income. From the three days Lorenzen was absent due to COVID isolation, he lost \$615.75 from his paycheck. Other subs may have lost north of \$2,800.

"Earned sick days are particularly important for low-wage workers who, absent sick leave, lack the savings, access to credit or assets needed to buffer against lost earnings if they need to take time off," wrote Hilary Wething, an economist with the Economic Policy Institute who co-authored a report on state paid sick leave policies, in an email to New York Focus.

Paid leave can also protect the health of other staff and students by keeping people home when they're sick. One substitute at a school in Brooklyn, who requested anonymity, said that he felt forced to work while down with the flu in order to pay his bills.

"I endured the whole week of just being sick," he said. "I could not even speak, and I just did the job."

When his school's payroll secretary told Jack Ganley he was ineligible for leave, a teachers

union representative instructed him to file a complaint with the Labor Department. Ganley, a substitute paraprofessional at a Brooklyn elementary school, decided not to file a complaint — or even raise the issue with school administrators.

"I can guarantee what the response would be, which would be we can't help you," Ganley said.

Multiple workers described a culture of retaliation in New York City public schools, with little recourse available to subs who are fired for filing grievances or otherwise challenging school administrators. Many of the subs who spoke to New York Focus requested anonymity for that reason.

Lorenzen was the only substitute interviewed who made a persistent attempt to claim his benefits.

When Lorenzen got sick, he emailed Nelson Mandela School for Social Justice in Crown Heights, where he was substitute teaching full-time. Aware of the March 2020 law, Lorenzen made sure to mention COVID leave in his initial communication.

"I'm hoping that at this point I am entitled to sick pay, as I cannot afford to take time off, but do not want to come in if I am still symptomatic," wrote Lorenzen in a December 20, 2022, email, reviewed by New York Focus, to Nelson Mandela's payroll secretary and principal.

He tested positive the next day and stayed home for the last three days before winter break.

The payroll secretary wished him well, but ignored his inquiry regarding sick leave.

After winter recess ended, Lorenzen returned to the classroom and asked the school repeatedly whether he would receive pay for the missed days. The school eventually said he wouldn't because he wasn't a full-time employee, though documents he provided to New York Focus show he was indeed working as a full-time substitute.

But it shouldn't have mattered, Lorenzen believed. He shared with the school a public personnel memo from the DOE stating that part-time workers qualified for the leave, too. According to a United Federation of Teachers spokesperson, subs have previously won their paid sick days through the union grievance process by citing the memo.

In a conversation on January 9, 2023, a recording of which was shared with New York Focus, Nelson Mandela principal Matthew Anderson told Lorenzen that the problem was technical: Because of an issue with payroll codes, the school was operationally incapable of releasing the benefits. Anderson did not respond to multiple email requests for comment.

It seems the principal's hands were tied. The Education Department did not appear to have distributed the appropriate codes for per diem employees, payroll memos obtained through a public records request confirmed. Only "long-term substitutes" classified as "part-time" — rather than "per diem" — workers qualified for COVID leave, as officials told schools in dozens of emailed messages.

Lorenzen kept on insisting, sending email after email. Then, less than two weeks after returning from winter recess, an assistant principal informed him that it would be his last day at Nelson Mandela. Originally, Lorenzen said, his position was supposed to last until June.

Anderson, the principal, told Lorenzen that he was being let go for budgetary reasons and that the school had teachers returning to fill his position, according to a recording of their meeting that day. A DOE spokesperson noted that terminations of subs' positions are typical upon the return of a regular staff member or a shift in school needs, especially during the pandemic.

When Lorenzen suggested that the school was retaliating against him, Anderson chided him for being confrontational.

"I don't have anything to do with the money you're missing," he said. "Continue with the process and you'll get your money. That's an issue with the city and central services."

Lorenzen filed a complaint with the Labor Department shortly after he lost his position, but he has not heard back.

Nearly a year later, he's still waiting to receive his benefits.

Chalkbeat is a nonprofit news site covering educational change in public schools.

2ND DEPARTMENT/ PUBLIC LEGAL NOTICES

SUPPLEMENTAL SUMMONS

STATE OF NEW YORK SUPREME COURT COUNTY OF QUEENS INDEX NO. 710646/2023 WELLS FARGO BANK, N.A., PLAINTIFF, V. WILLIAM GUERRERO, YESY CEVALLOS, CHARLTON RODRIGUEZ, NY STATE DEPT OF TAXATION AND FINANCE, TRANSIT ADJUDICATION BUREAU, CITY OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PARKING VIOLATIONS BUREAU, CITY OF NEW YORK ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL BOARD, WACHOVIA BANK, N.A AS TRUSTEE FOR BAYVIEW, JOHN DOE, DEFENDANTS, TO THE ABOVE NAMED DEFENDANTS: YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED TO ANSWER THE COMPLAINT IN THIS ACTION AND TO SERVE A COPY OF YOUR ANSWER, OR IF THE COMPLAINT IS NOT SERVED WITH THIS SUMMONS, TO SERVE A NOTICE OF APPEARANCE ON THE PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEYS WITHIN THIRTY DAYS AF-

TER THE SERVICE OF THIS SUMMONS, EXCLUSIVE OF THE DAY OF SERVICE, AND IN CASE OF YOUR FAILURE TO APPEAR OR ANSWER, JUDGMENT WILL BE TAKEN AGAINST YOU BY DEFAULT FOR THE RELIEF DEMANDED IN THE COMPLAINT. NOTICE YOU ARE IN DANGER OF LOSING YOUR HOME IF YOU DO NOT RESPOND TO THIS SUMMONS AND COMPLAINT BY SERVING A COPY OF THE ANSWER ON THE ATTORNEY FOR THE MORTGAGE COMPANY WHO FILED THIS FORECLOSURE PROCEEDING AGAINST YOU AND FILING THE ANSWER WITH THE COURT, A DEFAULT JUDGMENT MAY BE ENTERED AND YOU CAN LOSE YOUR HOME. SPEAK TO AN ATTORNEY OR GO TO THE COURT WHERE YOUR CASE IS PENDING FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON HOW TO ANSWER THE SUMMONS AND PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY. SENDING A PAYMENT TO YOUR MORTGAGE COMPANY WILL NOT STOP THIS FORECLO-

SURE ACTION YOU MUST RESPOND BY SERVING A COPY OF THE ANSWER ON THE ATTORNEY FOR THE PLAINTIFF (MORTGAGE COMPANY) AND FILING THE ANSWER WITH THE COURT. THIS IS AN ATTEMPT TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. THE FOREGOING SUMMONS IS SERVED UPON YOU BY PUBLICATION PURSUANT TO AN ORDER OF HONORABLE MORGAN C. LANCMAN, JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, SIGNED THE 16TH DAY OF JANUARY, 2024 AT JAMAICA, NEW YORK. THE OBJECT OF THIS ACTION IS TO FORECLOSE A MORTGAGE ON THE FOLLOWING PROPERTY: BLOCK: 9159 LOT: 40 ALL THAT CERTAIN PLOT PIECE OR PARCEL OF LAND, SITUATE, LYING AND BEING IN THE BOROUGH AND COUNTY OF QUEENS, CITY AND STATE OF NEW YORK, BOUNDED AND DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS: BEGIN-

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2ND DEPARTMENT / New Business Formations

CASSENA DIETARY SERVICES LLC

CASSENA DIETARY SERVICES LLC FILED ARTS. OF ORG. WITH THE SECT'Y OF STATE OF NY (SSNY) ON 12/1/2023. OFFICE: QUEENS COUNTY. SSNY HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS AGENT OF THE LLC UPON WHOM PROCESS AGAINST IT MAY BE SERVED AND SHALL MAIL PROCESS TO: THE LLC, 225 CROSSWAYS PARK DR, WOODBURY, NY 11797. PURPOSE: ANY LAWFUL ACT. #213412

RIVER & SQUARE LLC

RIVER & SQUARE LLC ARTS. OF ORG. FILED WITH SSNY ON 1/5/2024. OFF. LOC.: QUEENS CO. SSNY DESIG. AS AGT. UPON WHOM PROCESS MAY BE SERVED. SSNY SHALL MAIL PROCESS TO: THE LLC, 13310 39TH AVE BSMT, FLUSHING, NY, 11354. GENERAL PURPOSES. #213853

HM HOOPS LLC

HM HOOPS LLC. ARTS. OF ORG. FILED WITH THE SSNY ON 01/04/24. OFFICE: QUEENS COUNTY. SSNY DESIGNATED AS AGENT OF THE LLC UPON WHOM PROCESS AGAINST IT MAY BE SERVED. SSNY SHALL MAIL COPY OF PROCESS TO THE LLC, 77-20 82ND STREET, GLENDALE, NY 11385. PURPOSE: ANY LAWFUL PURPOSE. #213996

HURRICANE STEVE, PLLC

HURRICANE STEVE, PLLC, ARTS OF ORG. FILED WITH SEC. OF STATE OF NY (SSNY) 9/29/2023. CTY: QUEENS. SSNY DESIG. AS AGENT UPON WHOM PROCESS AGAINST MAY BE SERVED & SHALL MAIL PROCESS TO STEVE NEUMANN, 912 CORNAGA AVE, FAR ROCKAWAY, NY 11691. PURPOSE: LAW #214011

QUADRILLION 65 GAMES LLC

QUADRILLION 65 GAMES LLC, ARTS OF ORG. FILED WITH SEC. OF STATE OF NY (SSNY) 1/5/2024. CTY: QUEENS. SSNY DESIG. AS AGENT UPON WHOM

PROCESS AGAINST MAY BE SERVED & SHALL MAIL PROCESS TO 7725 79TH PL, GLENDALE, NY 11385. GENERAL PURPOSE #214013

164 JEWEL LLC

164 JEWEL LLC ARTS. OF ORG. FILED WITH SSNY ON 1/18/2024. OFF. LOC.: QUEENS CO. SSNY DESIG. AS AGT. UPON WHOM PROCESS MAY BE SERVED. SSNY SHALL MAIL PROCESS TO: THE LLC, 164-10 JEWEL AVE, FRESH MEADOWS, NY 11365. GENERAL PURPOSES. #214215

F34 LLC

F34 LLC ARTS. OF ORG. FILED WITH SSNY ON 1/11/2024. OFF. LOC.: QUEENS CO. SSNY DESIG. AS AGT. UPON WHOM PROCESS MAY BE SERVED. SSNY SHALL MAIL PROCESS TO: THE LLC, 61-20 GRAND CENTRAL PKWY #B611, FOREST HILLS, NY 11375. GENERAL PURPOSES. #214447

11105

JAB CONSULTING NYC LLC

NOTICE OF FORMATION OF LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY (LLC). NAME: JAB CONSULTING NYC LLC. ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION FILED WITH SECRETARY OF STATE OF NEW YORK (SSNY) ON 11/13/2023. NY OFFICE LOCATION: QUEENS COUNTY. SSNY HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS AGENT OF THE LLC UPON WHOM PROCESS AGAINST IT MAY BE SERVED. THE POST OFFICE ADDRESS TO WHICH THE SSNY SHALL MAIL A COPY OF ANY PROCESS AGAINST THE LLC SERVED UPON HIM/HER IS THE LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY 2180 38TH ST APT A3, ASTORIA, NY, 11105. PURPOSE/CHARACTER OF LLC: ANY LAWFUL PURPOSE. #214014

11367

DYNAMIC HAND PT PLLC

NOTICE OF FORMATION OF PROFESSIONAL LIMITED LIABILITY COMPA-

NY (PLLC). NAME: DYNAMIC HAND PT PLLC. ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION FILED WITH SECRETARY OF STATE OF NEW YORK (SSNY) ON 12/12/2023. NY OFFICE LOCATION: QUEENS COUNTY. SSNY HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS AGENT OF THE PLLC UPON WHOM PROCESS AGAINST IT MAY BE SERVED. THE POST OFFICE ADDRESS TO WHICH THE SSNY SHALL MAIL A COPY OF ANY PROCESS AGAINST THE PLLC SERVED UPON HIM/HER IS THE PLLC 71-15 PARK DRIVE EAST , 1ST FL FLUSHING, NY, 11367. PURPOSE/CHARACTER OF PLLC: FOR THE PRACTICE OF PHYSICAL THERAPY. #213844

HAZY DREAMERS LLC

NOTICE OF FORMATION OF LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY (LLC). NAME: HAZY DREAMERS LLC. ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION FILED WITH SECRETARY OF STATE OF NEW YORK (SSNY) ON 9/30/2023. NY OFFICE LOCATION: QUEENS COUNTY. SSNY HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS AGENT OF THE LLC UPON WHOM PROCESS AGAINST IT MAY BE SERVED. THE POST OFFICE ADDRESS TO WHICH THE SSNY SHALL MAIL A COPY OF ANY PROCESS AGAINST THE LLC SERVED UPON HIM/HER IS THE LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY 15001 77TH RD, FLUSHING, NY, 11367. PURPOSE/CHARACTER OF LLC: ANY LAWFUL PURPOSE. #213906

11415

SHIPNYC LLC

NOTICE OF FORMATION OF LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY (LLC). NAME: SHIPNYC LLC. ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION FILED WITH SECRETARY OF STATE OF NEW YORK (SSNY) ON 10/23/2023. NY OFFICE LOCATION: QUEENS COUNTY. SSNY HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS AGENT OF THE LLC UPON WHOM PROCESS AGAINST IT MAY BE SERVED. THE POST OFFICE ADDRESS TO WHICH THE SSNY SHALL MAIL A COPY OF ANY PROCESS AGAINST THE LLC SERVED

UPON HIM/HER IS GEORGE BRISITA 31 COVERT AVENUE, FLORAL PARK, NY 11001. PURPOSE/CHARACTER OF LLC: ANY LAWFUL PURPOSE. #213821

11418

STYLE LOUNGE LLC

NOTICE OF FORMATION OF LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY (LLC). NAME: STYLE LOUNGE LLC. ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION FILED WITH SECRETARY OF STATE OF NEW YORK (SSNY) ON 1/2/2024. NY OFFICE LOCATION: QUEENS COUNTY. SSNY HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS AGENT OF THE LLC UPON WHOM PROCESS AGAINST IT MAY BE SERVED. THE POST OFFICE ADDRESS TO WHICH THE SSNY SHALL MAIL A COPY OF ANY PROCESS AGAINST THE LLC SERVED UPON HIM/HER IS WAI YIN CHENG 8429 101ST STREET, RICHMOND HILL, NY, 11418. PURPOSE/CHARACTER OF LLC: ANY LAWFUL PURPOSE. #213828

11428

RIGHT WAY HOME REMODELING, LLC

NOTICE OF FORMATION OF LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY (LLC). NAME: RIGHT WAY HOME REMODELING, LLC. ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION FILED WITH SECRETARY OF STATE OF NEW YORK (SSNY) ON 10/25/2023. NY OFFICE LOCATION: QUEENS COUNTY. SSNY HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS AGENT OF THE LLC UPON WHOM PROCESS AGAINST IT MAY BE SERVED. THE POST OFFICE ADDRESS TO WHICH THE SSNY SHALL MAIL A COPY OF ANY PROCESS AGAINST THE LLC SERVED UPON HIM/HER IS SEERAJ GANESH 91-27 215TH STREET, QUEENS VILLAGE, NY, 11428. PURPOSE/CHARACTER OF LLC: ANY LAWFUL PURPOSE. #214017

A famed NYC museum is closing two Native American halls. Harvard and others have taken similar steps

By Philip Marcelo
Associated Press

New York's American Museum of Natural History is closing two halls featuring Native American objects starting Saturday, acknowledging the exhibits are "severely outdated" and contain culturally sensitive items.

The mammoth complex across from Central Park on Manhattan's Upper West Side is the latest U.S. institution to cover up or remove Native American exhibits to comply with recently revamped federal regulations dealing with the display of Indigenous human remains and cultural items.

The museum said in October that it would pull all human remains from public display, with the aim of eventually repatriating as much as it could to Native American tribes and other rightful owners.

Sean Decatur, the museum's president, said in a letter to staff Friday that the latest move reflects the "growing urgency" among museums to change their relationships with tribes and how they exhibit Indigenous cultures.

"The halls we are closing are vestiges of an era when museums such as ours did not respect the values, perspectives, and indeed shared humanity of Indigenous peoples," he wrote. "Actions that may feel sudden to some may seem long overdue to others."

Earlier this month, Chicago's Field Museum covered several displays containing Native American items. Harvard University's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology has said it would remove all Native American funerary items from its exhibits. The Cleveland Museum of Art is another institution that has taken similar steps.

Shannon O'Loughlin, head of the Association on American Indian Affairs, a national group that has long called for museums to comply with the federal requirements, welcomed such developments but said the true test is what ultimately becomes of the removed items.

"Covering displays or taking things down isn't the goal," she said. "It's about repatriation — returning objects back to tribes. So this is just one part of a much bigger process."

Todd Mesek, a Cleveland Museum of Art spokesperson, said the institution is consulting with Native American groups to secure their consent to display certain items as well as reviewing archival records to determine if there is already some agreement on record.

Jason Newton, a Harvard spokesperson, said the Pea-

body is committed to returning all ancestral remains and funerary items and has more than doubled the number of staffers working toward that end in recent months. The museum also announced this month that it would cover the expenses of tribal members traveling to campus as part of the repatriation process.

The revised regulations released in December by the U.S. Department of the Interior are related to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990. The changes include expanded requirements for consulting with and receiving tribes' consent to exhibit and conduct research on Indigenous artifacts, including human remains and funerary, sacred and cultural objects.

Native American groups have long complained that museums, colleges and other institutions dragged out the process of returning hundreds of thousands of culturally significant items.

"The only exception to repatriation is if a museum or institution can prove they received consent at the time the item was taken," O'Loughlin said. "But most institutions can't do that, of course, because these items and bodies were usually taken through violence, theft and looting."

Decatur said in the letter that rather than simply covering up or removing items in the Eastern Woodlands and Great Plains Halls, the ones closing this weekend, the decision was made to shutter them entirely because they are "severely outdated."

Meanwhile, some displays elsewhere in the museum, including ones showcasing Native Hawaiian items, will be covered, he added.

Decatur acknowledged one consequence of the closures will be the suspension of visits to them by school field trips. The Eastern Woodlands Hall, in particular, has been a mainstay for New York-area students learning about Native American life in the Northeast.

The museum remains committed to supporting the teaching of Indigenous cultures, Decatur said, and officials are reviewing the new federal regulations to understand their implications.

O'Loughlin of the Association on American Indian Affairs said there isn't as much gray area as museum officials might suggest.

"The new regulations make it crystal clear," she said. "It doesn't prohibit research. It doesn't prohibit exhibiting native cultural heritage. It only requires prior and informed consent before doing so."

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Pratt Institute's Graduate Facilities in Fine Arts And Photography Will Soon Move to Navy Yard

By Brooklyn Eagle Staff

Pratt Institute's MFA in Fine Arts and MFA in Photography facilities are scheduled to move soon from the Pfizer Building on Flushing Avenue to the new Dock 72 building in the Brooklyn Navy Yard (BNY), enabling access to a growing creative community on the edge of Pratt's Brooklyn campus.

Dock 72 features floor-to-ceiling windows with abundant natural light and expansive views of the Manhattan skyline. The space is expected to be complete and occupied by the fall term, starting in August 2024.

Pratt's graduate facilities in fine arts and photography will occupy 62,570 square feet across the entire third floor of Dock 72. The new location will include 100 individual artist's studios, seminar and critique spaces, gallery spaces, a computer lab, fabrication shops and a black box for performances and projections.

"Expanding Pratt Institute's footprint in the Brooklyn Navy Yard provides our graduate fine arts and photography students with exceptional studios and access to a powerful community of diverse creatives and professionals," Pratt Institute President Frances Bronet said.

"There is a long-standing connection between manufacturing and art, much of which is steeped in the practice of making and creating. The corridor that connects Pratt and the Brooklyn Navy Yard brings together emerging artists with Navy Yard designers, fabricators, inventors, and business owners. We look forward to the exchange between Pratt's painters, sculptors, photographers, researchers and new media graduate students and the incredible production facilities at the BNY," Bronet added.

Pratt and the Brooklyn Navy Yard share a history of and commitment to expanding the ranks of local working professionals, from Pratt Institute founder Charles Pratt's dedication to increasing access to education and training to the Brooklyn Navy Yard's robust workforce that has powered decades of manufacturing and production. Also, manufacturing has historically been influenced, inspired and transformed by continued engagement with artists.

Pratt students and faculty will have easy access between Pratt's existing campus and Dock 72, allowing them to coordinate studio visits, exhibitions, conver-



The Dock 72 building at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, described as a hub of creative collaboration and innovation.

Photo courtesy of Pratt Institute



The third floor of Dock 72 is expected to be complete and occupied by the fall term, starting in August 2024.

Photo courtesy of Pratt Institute

sations, and shop work. The new location also ushers in a permanent space for students to host their thesis shows.

"Moving our facilities into Dock 72 will prove to be a game changer," said Pratt School of Art Dean Jorge Oliver. "In addition to offering ample space and amenities, the building presents our students with

incredible views that will inspire them in their artistic endeavors, as well as opportunities to engage with other creatives in the Navy Yard."

Dock 72 is nestled in a hub of technological, entrepreneurial and artistic activity. The Navy Yard, originally a shipyard for the U.S. Navy, is now an engine for local

economic development and a magnet for working professionals and creative innovators through its vast manufacturing and commercial spaces.

These spaces house more than 450 businesses, including pioneers in metal fabrication, glass production and robotics, as well as the Research Yard, a 20,000-square-foot facility led by Pratt that opened on site in 2023 to unify the institute's research activities.

Situated on the East River waterfront, Dock 72 serves as a visual reminder of New York's position as an urban archipelago, an issue being explored in interdisciplinary ways across Pratt, particularly through its role as a core partner of the New York Climate Exchange on Governors Island.

The Brooklyn Navy Yard is also served by a wide array of transportation options, including the NYC Ferry, on-site parking, Citi Bike access, bus service, and Wi-Fi-equipped shuttle service to major subway lines, affording easy access to New York City's contemporary art scene and opportunities beyond the studio confines.

The Dock 72 building has been optimized for energy efficiency and features a food hall, lounge areas, outdoor terraces and rooftop gardens.



An aerial view of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, one of Brooklyn's most important locations for industrial, commercial and creative development. Photo courtesy of Claire Holmes/Risa Heller Comm.

'Greed and revenge' drove 2 men accused of killing Run-DMC's Jam Master Jay, prosecutors say



In this March 2, 1988 file photo the rap group Run DMC poses at the 31st annual Grammy Awards in New York City. From left, Joseph "Run" Simmons, Darryl "DMC" McDaniels, and the late Jason Mizell "Jam Master Jay." Opening statements began Monday in the federal murder trial of Karl Jordan Jr. and Ronald Washington, who were arrested in 2020 for the murder of Jam Master Jay.

AP Photo/Mark Lennihan, File

By Philip Marcelo
Associated Press

Two men accused of killing Run-DMC's Jam Master Jay were both close to the trailblazing DJ, but were driven by "greed and revenge" over a failed drug deal when they ambushed him at his recording studio more than 20 years ago, prosecutors argued as the men's trial began Monday.

In opening statements in Brooklyn federal court, Assistant U.S. Attorney Miranda Gonzalez laid out the prosecution's case that Karl Jordan Jr., the hip-hop star's godson, and Ronald Washington, a childhood friend, killed the 37-year-old in 2002 after they were cut out of a lucrative cocaine deal. Both men have pleaded not guilty.

While the case languished for almost two decades until Jordan and Washington were arrested in 2020, becoming one of the hip-hop world's most elusive mysteries, Gonzalez told jurors that they would hear from eyewitnesses who were in the studio that night, and that the pair confessed their involvement to others.

"Each defendant was proud that they had taken down Jam Master Jay and got away with it," she said.

Washington's lawyer Ezra Spilke, however, argued the case was held together with "tape and glue" and declared that prosecutors have "no clue" who killed Jay, who was born Jason Mizell.

"This case is about 10 seconds, 21 years ago," he said. "It's a blink of an eye, a generation ago."

The men face at least 20 years in prison if convicted. The government has said it would not seek the death penalty.

Mizell worked the turntables alongside rappers Joe "Run" Simmons and Darryl "DMC" McDaniels as the group helped bring hip-hop into the mainstream in the 1980s with hits like "It's Tricky" and a remake of Aerosmith's "Walk This Way."

Run-DMC famously espoused an anti-drug stance in lyrics and PSAs, but Gonzalez said that as the spotlight faded, Mizell turned to the drug trade, serving as a middleman to sellers and buyers across the country. A few simple calls, she said, could earn him "hundreds of thousands" of dollars.

Mizell had allegedly acquired 10 kilograms (22 pounds) of cocaine, which Washington, Jordan and others planned to distribute in the Baltimore area. But the dealer involved in the sale refused to work with Washington, cutting both defendants out of a potential \$200,000 payday, she alleged.

Gonzalez said that in the days leading up to his death, Mizell acted troubled and carried a gun. On the night of Oct. 30, 2002, however, he barely had time to react when the two men and an accomplice, Jay Bryant, showed up at his studio in Jamaica, Queens. Bryant was charged last year after he was seen going into the building the night of the killing and his DNA was recovered at the scene. He will be tried separately.

Prosecutors say Washington waved a gun and ordered one person to lie on the floor, while Jordan shot Mizell in the head at point-blank range, killing him instantly. Another shot hit and wounded another man in the studio at the time, Mizell's friend Uriel "Tony" Rincon, before the killers fled, Gonzalez said.

"It was an ambush, an execution," she said. "He was murdered in his own studio by people he knew."

Still, police struggled to close the case because witnesses initially weren't forthcoming. The people in the room at the time didn't identify the killers for months even years later, Gonzalez said.

Lawyers for Jordan and Washington argued that the police still haven't figured it out, and they urged jurors to be skeptical of witnesses who are cooperating in exchange for leniency on their own legal troubles.

Spilke, Washington's lawyer, questioned

why his client would want to kill Mizell since Washington was an alcoholic, relied on the rap star financially and was living on Mizell's sister's couch at the time.

"Why bite the hand that feeds you?" Spilke said.

In a Playboy article published a year after the killing, Washington was quoted as saying he was on his way to the studio the night of the killing when he heard gunshots and saw Jordan fleeing.

Washington's lawyers also questioned Monday why none of the people with Mizell at the time of his death bothered to call police. Instead, Randy Allen, a friend and business partner who was among those in the studio, went directly to a nearby police precinct to report the shooting, they said.

Jordan's lawyer John Diaz, meanwhile, said his client wasn't even at the studio that night.

His attorneys have said in court documents that Jordan, then 18, was at his pregnant girlfriend's home at the time of Mizell's death and that witnesses can place him there. He was first named as a possible suspect in the slaying in 2007, while he was on trial for a string of armed robberies, though he maintained he had no involvement.

Jordan also faces gun and cocaine charges in the trial to which he has pleaded not guilty. While he has no prior adult criminal record, prosecutors allege he has continued to be involved in narcotics trafficking and say they have footage of him selling cocaine to an undercover agent.

The trial will resume Tuesday after the jury heard Monday from three police officers, including crime scene investigators who collected evidence and a detective who was among the first on the scene.



The body of Jason Mizell, a.k.a. Jam Master Jay, a member of the pioneering rap trio Run DMC, is removed from a recording studio where he was shot and killed, Wednesday, Oct. 30, 2002 in the Queens borough of New York. Opening statements are set for Monday in the federal murder trial of Karl Jordan Jr. and Ronald Washington, who were arrested in 2020 for the murder of Jam Master Jay.

AP Photo/Newsday, Ken Sawchuk

STEM jobs on brink of eclipsing Wall Street in NYC economy

By Greg David
THE CITY

New York City may be known around the world as the center of global finance, but it is scientists, engineers and tech workers who are primarily responsible for recent growth in high-paying jobs.

The number of New Yorkers working in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)-related jobs surged by 67% between 2011 and 2022, reaching 193,000, according to a report released Monday by the city's Economic Development Corporation (EDC). That's about the same number of people who currently work on Wall Street.

STEM jobs in NYC pay an average of \$193,000, 65% higher than the average of all private sector jobs, the EDC study also found.

The number of STEM companies in New York City has increased as well, fueled in part by an increased emphasis on STEM degrees at the city's colleges and universities.

The EDC analysis is the latest in a series of research reports that spotlight the increasing diversity of the city's economy, making New York City less dependent on swings in the stock market. But one major problem remains: STEM workers tend to be whiter, live in Manhattan and identify as male.

"We have seen finance and real estate fade a bit over the last 10 to 15 years and STEM is what is filling the gap," said Melissa Pumphrey, EDC's Senior Vice President for Economic Research and Policy.

The EDC study looked at sectors with a high percentage of STEM occupations such as advanced manufacturing, software development, information technology, engineering and scientific research. Other reports on the tech sector included fields such as online publishing or streaming me-

dia, but EDC excluded those because they do not employ many engineers or scientists.

In addition to the explosive job growth, the report found that STEM jobs created downstate occurred almost exclusively in New York City proper.

The report also concluded that the number of STEM companies grew by 52% to a little more than 13,000. Most are small, with an average of just 6 employees. And while the overall STEM workforce may not be diverse, its entrepreneurs are increasingly people of color, with BIPOC ownership increasing from 26% to 40%.

"The report is a wakeup call that STEM enabled professions are driving the city forward and are the future of middle class jobs in New York," said Jonathan Bowles, executive director of the Center for an Urban Future which has issued its own reports on the growth sectors of the city economy. "These fields are not only where the economy is going, they represent an opportunity to add middle and high wage jobs."

STEM Education

Much of the growth has been based on the increasing number of STEM degrees being awarded by local colleges and universities. Some 467,000 New Yorkers aged 25 or older have STEM degrees, and in 2021, 29% of all degrees were in STEM, up 8% in the decade.

The increase is primarily the result of a concerted effort to build the STEM pipeline by improving the quality of education, adjusting programs to give students more scheduling flexibility and making STEM curriculum more inclusionary, instead of using introductory classes to wash out students, says Meghan Groome, Senior Vice President of the Academy of Science.

"Universities, whether CUNY, SUNY or private schools, have really focused on not only get-



Nanotronics high-tech manufacturing hub at Brooklyn Navy Yard, April 28, 2021.

Credit: lev radin/Shutterstock

ting more kids into STEM, they have thought a lot about how to make STEM more welcoming while keeping the rigor," she said.

Like tech in general, STEM workers do not reflect the demographics of the city as a whole. For example, two-thirds of New Yorkers with any advanced degrees are people of color but only 50% of STEM degree holders are BIOPIC. Only a third of STEM degree holders are women.

One key to increasing representation in STEM jobs, says Bowles, is bankrolling efforts like the CUNY 2X Tech program, which help increase enrollment in technology degree-granting programs, boost the number of students graduating with technology credentials, and help students

land paid internships and job offers in the tech sector.

In December, Mayor Eric Adams announced the city would provide \$10 million to expand the program to five more campuses. Until then, the initiative was serving fewer than 1,400 students a year across all CUNY campuses.

"Many policymakers dismiss STEM jobs because they are not sufficiently diverse. But instead they should embrace tech-related occupations, and pull out all the stops to ensure that a lot more New Yorkers of color are able to access them," said Bowles.

THE CITY is an independent, nonprofit news outlet dedicated to hard-hitting reporting that serves the people of New York.

Congress in rare agreement on E-Bike battery bill pushed by NY reps

By Rachel Holliday Smith
THE CITY

In New York City, officials have tried what they can to rein in dangerous e-bikes and e-scooters as the poorly manufactured batteries in the devices continue to kill and injure city residents.

In just the first three weeks of 2024, there were nine fires related to those batteries and eight injuries. Since 2019, the first year the FDNY started tracking the data, injuries related to battery fires have increased 1,053% from 13 to 150 in 2023.

Last year, 18 people died in battery-related fires, up from six deaths the year before.

To combat the trend, officials have passed local legislation that bars the possession or sale of refurbished lithium-ion batteries. A committee hearing on Wednesday in the City Council will discuss a slate of more local e-bike safety measures. Gov. Kathy Hochul this month said she plans to propose a bill banning their sale. And leaders in the city's public housing have moved to limit the number of e-bikes per household.

But safety experts say the only way to truly curb the threat is to regulate them at the source: as they are manufactured.

That will require federal legislation in the most sharply divided and least productive Congress in a generation. But, surprisingly, regulating the devices' batteries seems to be one of the only issues on which House Republicans and Democrats agree these days.

A bill is now pending in Congress to give the Consumer Product Safety Commission an explicit directive to create federal, mandatory standards for how to safely build and import those batteries. (Without that, CPSC doesn't have the regulatory authority to make a mandatory standard on its own.)

Democratic New York senators Chuck Schumer and Kristin Gillibrand and Rep. Ritchie Torres (D-The Bronx) began a push last year for legislation to give the commission the go-ahead it needs to fast-track new rules.

Without that permission, said Will Wallace, associate director of safety policy at Consumer Reports, manufacturers would have to abide by safety standards only voluntarily — something

many e-bike and e-scooter makers have ignored.

"We are nowhere near substantial compliance," Wallace said. Without that, poorly made products flood the market, which lead to battery malfunctions, explosions and fires.

As the bill winds its way through the House of Representatives, Wallace noted, it has had a remarkable base of support. Last spring, a first hearing on the bill at the CPSC saw disparate stakeholders all saying the same thing: Please regulate.

"It was incredibly striking because ... you had 15 or 20 different people there from industry, from consumer groups, from the FDNY and everybody was there saying: We need a federal rule," Wallace said.

This past fall, the bill achieved a rare occurrence in the steeply divided, Republican-led House: unanimous approval.

Just after the chaotic hunt for a new speaker played out, the battery bill quietly sailed through its subcommittee in early November. It again passed the House's Energy and Commerce Committee unanimously in early December.

"This bill had universal support and it was voted out with members on the record. It was voted out unanimously on a bipartisan basis," Wallace said.

From here, the bill must go to the House floor for a vote by the full body. Rep. Ritchie Torres told News 12 Bronx earlier this month that "we're confident we're going to pass it on a bipartisan basis this year."

The movement is encouraging, consumer product safety experts say, but it will hardly be an overnight fix.

First, the bill must wind its way through the

Senate. Requests to the office of Schumer and Gillibrand were not immediately returned about its status there.

Even if the bill sails through the full House, and does the same in the Senate, a mandatory standard wouldn't start applying to the industry for at least another year or so, experts said.

Still, the legislation is a good step to Ibrahim Jilani, consumer technology director at UL Solutions, the product safety company formerly known as Underwriters Laboratories. He said he constantly hears from fire officials across the U.S. who are trying to figure out how to stem the tide of e-bike and e-scooter battery fires. Some are trying to replicate the local legislation New York City has created.

"I am getting calls from every fire department you would imagine in this country," he said.

Fire officials from New York have been particularly vocal on the subject. Earlier this month, FDNY Commissioner Laura Kavanagh traveled to Washington, D.C. to speak about the problem at the U.S. Conference of Mayors. She emphasized that the issue is "by no means [only] a New York City problem."

"We met with a bipartisan group of legislators on the Hill yesterday and every one of them has had a lithium-ion battery fire in their district," she said at the Jan. 18 visit.

To Jilani, the solution is not to just regulate these specific lithium-ion batteries, but to make a federal mandate for any lithium-ion battery operated devices "or it will just re-emerge under another group of products and then there will be more loss of life, more property damage, more injuries," he said.

If you total up all the people who have been hurt, died or had property damaged from various lithium-ion batteries over the years — from power banks, to hoverboards, vaping devices and power tools — Jilani says it's not just a few hundred but tens of thousands of people.

"This is a no-brainer to keep people safe from dangerous goods. And it's been an ongoing epidemic for a decade," he said.

THE CITY is an independent, nonprofit news outlet dedicated to hard-hitting reporting that serves the people of New York.



An e-bike rider had an extra battery stored on their cycle, June 27, 2023.

Credit: Ben Fractenberg/THE CITY

Judicial conduct commission head asks lawmakers to restore gov's budget cuts

Continued from page 1

year-end report detailing the number of complaints it received, investigations it launched and disciplinary actions it took against judges in 2023, Tembeckjian said that last year's numbers were even larger than the numbers seen by the commission in 2022, which hit an all-time high.

In 2022, the commission received 2,439 complaints against New York judges, 500 more complaints than it received the year prior and nearly 1,000 more than it received in 2020.

Tembeckjian said last week that in 2023, the commission received nearly 400 more complaints than it did in 2022.

With the exception of a dip in the number of complaints made in 2020 – likely related to the pandemic – the number of complaints made to the state commission have been on the rise in the past decade.

Compared to the commission's 10-year average, there were 26 percent more complaints made in 2022.

Each year, around 6 percent of those complaints lead to investigations. Of those cases, around 1 percent result in disciplinary measures.

Of the approximately 2,800 complaints the commission received in 2023, around 550 were launched into full-fledged investigations.

In total, the commission publicly disciplined 17 judges in 2023, including 13 who were either removed from office or who agreed to resign and publicly committed never to run for office again, according to Tembeckjian.

Among the judges it recommended be removed from office last year was Randy Hall, a former justice of the Dickinson Town Court of Broome County.

The commission had received several complaints from a judicial colleague of Hall's and two of his court clerks about alleged sexual harassment perpetrated by the former judge.

After an investigation, the commission found that Hall had made a number of sexually inappropriate comments to those he worked with and openly mocked a mandatory sexual harassment training program. The commission's investigation also found that Hall had used his position as a judge to attempt to gain the upper hand in a petty dispute at a gas station that prompted a response from the local sheriff's office.

Though only one in four of the complaints the commission received in 2023 significantly indicated judicial misconduct – a relatively consistent average year-to-year – Tembeckjian said that those investigations require “significant attention from the commission and its staff.”

In 1978, the year the commission was cemented into the state's constitution, the commission had 63 people working full time on its staff. To start 2024, the commission had 49 members.



Governor Kathy Hochul proposed increasing the Commission on Judicial Conduct's budget by only a fraction of what the commission's administrator originally requested.

File photo by Susan Watts/Office of Governor Kathy Hochul

“We really need to pay attention to the degree of appropriate funding that's called for us to be able to meet this daunting and growing challenge,” he said. “I'm sorry to say, and I'm disappointed to say that this executive budget, this recommendation falls short.”

Lawmakers appeared eager to fight against Hochul's recommendation last week.

And it wouldn't be surprising if they chose to recommend fulfilling Tembeckjian's budget request to its full amount. In the time Tembeckjian has led the commission, the legislature has increased its budget by \$3 million more than what the governor's office has recommended.

“I'm happy to say that I have had fruitful conversations with the governor's executive staff... [who I think are] very aware of the commission's unique and independent constitutional status, but still, somehow when the executive budget comes out, the numbers are wanting,” he said. And so, I come to you. Over the years, I'm more than gratified to say that the legislature has made up for the shortcomings in the executive budget.”

A MORE TRANSPARENT COMMISSION

The legislature has spent the past several years attempting to pass legislation to close what they have dubbed a loophole in the Com-

mission on Judicial Conduct's procedure and make its process less opaque.

A bill introduced last year by Hoylman-Sigal would require that any investigation opened into a judge be made public. Currently, the commission is not required to make any of its investigative work public unless it substantiates the allegations made against the subject of the complaint.

Additionally, the bill would require that any judge subject to investigation file a written response to the allegations and that that written response be made public as well.

Under the legislation, the commission would continue to have the power to keep complaints that don't result in an investigation under wraps.

The legislation also aims to close a loophole in the commission's investigation process which opponents of former Chief Judge Janet DiFiore say she exploited on her way out of the door.

Currently, investigations into judges must come to an end if the subject of the investigation retires. The bill would allow the commission's investigations to continue until their completion, regardless if the judge is an active member of the judiciary or not.

Tembeckjian, who supports the legislation, said that in the commission's history, around

700 judges have resigned while under active investigation.

“That number, I think, would be redressed by the legislation,” the administrator said at the recent budget hearing.

DiFiore, whose management of the court system was frequently criticized by members of the legislature including Hoylman-Sigal, resigned in August 2022 while under investigation by the commission.

At last year's budget hearing, Tembeckjian declined to comment specifically on the reported investigation into the former chief judge, but said that “it is often the case that if a judge, particularly one who is who has been the subject of news reports about potential misconduct, leaves office early, it is often the case that [an investigation] is at least a factor in their early departure.”

In the past year, support for the legislation has grown. At the same budget hearing last week, Chief Administrative Judge Joseph Zayas said that he would support the effort by the state legislature to pass the bill.

Later in the hearing, Tembeckjian said he was “heartened” by Zayas throwing the weight of the court system behind the bill.

“It's certainly my hope that this bill will pass and that the governor will sign it,” Tembeckjian said.

Bronx legal office under fire for fraudulent immigration services

By Robert Abruzzese
Queens Daily Eagle

A Bronx immigration lawyer was sued by the state last week after he allegedly orchestrated a fraud scheme that preyed on hundreds of immigrants looking to establish their lives in the U.S., New York Attorney General Letitia James said.

The lawsuit alleges that from 2018 to 2023, Kofi Amankwaa, along with Sylvester Boateng, Nana Adoma Kontoh, Betty Smith, and Kofi Amankwaa, Jr., deceitfully charged immigrants thousands of dollars for services that ultimately led to deportations and green card denials.

The group is accused of filing false petitions under the Violence Against Women Act, falsely claiming their clients' children were abusing them, without the clients' knowledge. The alleged illegal conduct resulted in severe

consequences, including deportations and denial of lawful permanent residency applications.

Parallel to James' civil action, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York has filed criminal charges against Amankwaa and Kofi Amankwaa Jr.

“People who immigrate to America are often vulnerable and simply trying to build better lives for themselves and their loved ones,” said James. “When these immigrants sought help from attorneys claiming to act in their best interests, they were taken advantage of and harmed instead. This cruel and illegal scheme led to them being separated from their families and deported.”

The investigation uncovered multiple instances of misconduct and was brought to investigators' attention by Queens Assemblymember Catalina Cruz.

In one case, Ricardo Velazquez, a Bronx father, was deported after being misled by Amankwaa to leave the U.S. and then re-enter. Another client was instructed to falsely claim abuse by her daughter, which led to the denial of her residency application and initiation of deportation proceedings.

Furthermore, Kontoh, who is not an attorney, allegedly misrepresented herself, providing unlawful legal advice and encouraging clients to lie to immigration authorities. Amankwaa Jr. is also accused of illegally providing legal advice without being admitted to practice law in New York.

Amankwaa and his son also appeared before SDNY Magistrate Judge Sarah Netburn last week.

According to the complaint in the SDNY, from September 2016 to November 2023, the defendants met with clients and directed them

to sign fraudulent petitions under penalty of perjury, falsely stating they were abused by their U.S. citizen children.

The scheme involved using advance parole travel documents based on these fraudulent petitions, enabling their clients to travel and re-enter the U.S. and subsequently apply for lawful permanent resident status. However, many of the applications were denied due to fraud, among other reasons, with the defendants typically charging \$6,000 plus administrative fees for their services, prosecutors said.

In November 2023, following numerous client complaints, Amankwaa's law license was suspended. Both Kofi Amankwaa and Kofi Amankwaa Jr. face charges of conspiracy to defraud the United States and commit immigration fraud, each carrying a maximum sentence of five years, and immigration fraud, with a maximum sentence of 10 years.