

NASSAU COUNTY LEGISLATURE

FULL LEGISLATURE MEETING

HOWARD J. KOPEL

PRESIDING OFFICER

SPECIAL MEETING

STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BRUCE BLAKEMAN

County Executive and Legislative Building

1550 Franklin Avenue

Mineola, New York

Wednesday, March 6, 2023

7:10 p.m.

TAKEN BY: ALEXA LORENZO, OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER

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LEGISLATOR HOWARD KOPEL

Presiding Officer

7th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR THOMAS MCKEVITT

Alternate Presiding Officer

13th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR JOHN FERRETTI, JR.

Alternate Deputy Presiding Officer

15th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR SCOTT DAVIS

1st Legislative District

LEGISLATOR SIELA BYNOE

2nd Legislative District

LEGISLATOR CARRIE SOLAGES

3rd Legislative District

LEGISLATOR PATRICK MULLANEY

4th Legislative District

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LEGISLATOR SETH KASLOW

5th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR DEBRA MULE

6th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR JOHN J. GIUFFRE

8th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR SCOTT STRAUSS

9th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR MAZI MELESA PILIP

10th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR MICHAEL GIANREGORIO

12th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR C. WILLIAM GAYLOR, III

14th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR ARNOLD W. DRUCKER

16th Legislative District

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LEGISLATOR ROSE MARIE WALKER

17th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR SAMANTHA GOETZ

18th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR JAMES KENNEDY

19th Legislative District

MICHAEL PULITZER

Clerk of the Legislature

JAMES DARCY, ESQ.

Attorney for Clerk of the Legislature

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3 PRESIDING OFFICER KOPEL: We're
4 going to get started. As always, we
5 start with the Pledge of Allegiance. I
6 ask you to all rise and join the Pledge
7 to be lead by Legislator Goetz.

8 (Whereupon, the Pledge of
9 Allegiance is said by all.)

10 PRESIDING OFFICER KOPEL: Thank you.
11 Mr. Pulitzer, would you please call the
12 roll?

13 CLERK PULITZER: Thank you,
14 Presiding Officer.

15 Deputy Presiding Officer Thomas
16 McKevitt?

17 LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: Here.

18 CLERK PULITZER: Alternate Deputy
19 Presiding Officer John Ferretti?

20 LEGISLATOR FERRETTI: Here.

21 CLERK PULITZER: Alternate Deputy
22 Minority Leader Siela Bynoe?

23 LEGISLATOR BYNOE: Here.

24 CLERK PULITZER: Legislator Carrie
25 A. Solages?

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LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Legislator Debra
Mule?

LEGISLATOR MULE: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Legislator C.
William Gaylor, III?

LEGISLATOR GAYLOR: Present.

CLERK PULITZER: Legislator John
Giuffre?

LEGISLATOR GIUFFRE: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Legislator Mazi
Pilip?

LEGISLATOR PILIP: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Legislator Scott
Davis?

LEGISLATOR DAVIS: Present.

CLERK PULITZER: Legislator James
Kennedy?

LEGISLATOR KENNEDY: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Legislator Patrick
Mullaney?

LEGISLATOR MULLANEY: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Legislator Seth
Koslow?

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LEGISLATOR KOSLOW: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Legislator Scott
Strauss?

LEGISLATOR STRAUSS: Present.

CLERK PULITZER: Deputy Minority
Leader Arnold Drucker?

LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Legislator Rose
Marie Walker?

LEGISLATOR WALKER: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Legislator Samantha
Goetz?

LEGISLATOR GOETZ: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Legislator Michael
Giangregorio?

LEGISLATOR GIANGREGORIO: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Minority Leader
Delia DeRiggi-Whitton?

LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: Presiding Officer
Howard Kopel?

PRESIDING OFFICER KOPEL: Here.

CLERK PULITZER: We have a quorum,
sir.

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2 PRESIDING OFFICER KOPEL: Let me
3 let you all know that we have to wait a
4 minute or two. Please put your phones on
5 mute, if you haven't already.

6 (Whereupon, a brief recess.)

7 PRESIDING OFFICER KOPEL: Ladies and
8 gentlemen, it is my great pleasure to
9 introduce the county executive, County
10 Executive Bruce Blakeman.

11 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: Did
12 they have to stop the music, it's
13 definitely going to be more fun than my
14 speech (laughter).

15 First of all, I want to thank each
16 and every one of you for coming out here
17 tonight for our State of the County
18 speech. This is my third one, and I think
19 we've got a lot of great things to talk
20 about.

21 First of all, as I as I did in my
22 inauguration, I want to first, thank God,
23 as we say in my religion, HaShem, for
24 giving me the strength to be county
25 executive. I pray that God continues to

1
2 give me the wisdom, courage, and
3 compassion to serve the residents of this
4 great county to the best of my ability.
5 With that, I would ask you all to please
6 rise at this point for a moment of
7 silence as we remember, and we pray for
8 some of the people that we lost this
9 year.

10 (Whereupon, all rise.)

11 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: As you
12 all know, we had a very horrific bus
13 accident of our Farmingdale High School
14 band up in Orange County, and we lost two
15 great teachers, Beatrice Ferrari and Gina
16 Rose Pelletiere. We also had a horrible
17 drunk driving incident that took two of
18 our young athletes, two young tennis
19 players from Roslyn, Drew Hassenbein and
20 Ethan Falkowitz.

21 And we also want to remember our
22 veterans, our military that lost their
23 lives. We want to remember all of our law
24 enforcement personnel throughout the
25 country who gave their lives. We want to

1
2 also remember all our first responders.

3 In addition, we also mourn the
4 innocent victims of the HAMAS attack on
5 Israel, the recent loss of our military
6 personnel in Syria, and the recent loss
7 of police and EMT in the state of
8 Minnesota. So if we could have a moment
9 of silence, please.

10 (Whereupon, a moment of
11 silence is observed by all.)

12 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: Thank
13 you very much. Please be seated.

14 (Whereupon, all seated.)

15 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: First of
16 all, I want to thank our presiding
17 officer, Howard Kopel, and I want to
18 officially congratulate him on becoming
19 presiding officer. Let's have a hand for
20 Howard.

21 (Whereupon, applause.)

22 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: And
23 congratulations to our new Minority
24 Leader, Delia DeRiggi-Whitton.
25 Congratulations to you.

(Whereupon, applause.)

COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: And to all the members of the Legislature, both old and new, thank you for giving me this opportunity in these beautiful chambers here to address you all today.

I am blessed to have great, great colleagues in government that join with me: Our terrific Comptroller, Elaine Phillips. Thank you, Elaine; our Clerk, who does an amazing job and has done for decades now, Maureen O'Connell; and our District Attorney, Anne Donnelly, our chief law enforcement officer, who does such a great job each and every day for us to keep us safe here in Nassau County. And I want to especially thank and congratulate her on a re-election, our supervisor from North Hempstead Jen DeSena. Thank you so much. And Joe Saladino, I believe, is en route and will be here shortly from the great Town of Oyster Bay. So thank you to each and every one of you.

1
2 And thank you to all in the
3 audience, many of whom are part of our
4 administration. Thank you for your hard
5 work. Specifically, I want to thank all
6 of our union representatives and leaders
7 that are here today. We really
8 appreciate that you took the time off to
9 be with us so we could talk about
10 important issues.

11 And while I'm at it, I want to thank
12 our great county employees. Our employees
13 are doing an amazing job, whether it's a
14 blizzard or hurricane, whether it's our
15 police, our firefighters who work so
16 tirelessly to train volunteers here in
17 the County, to our EMTs. I want to thank
18 our doctors and nurses, our corrections
19 officers, our deputy sheriffs. Everybody
20 that works to make this a better county,
21 I want to thank you all for your hard
22 work and we couldn't do it without you.
23 It's the men and women who work for our
24 county each and every day that make all
25 of us look good. So thank you so much.

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2 I'm also proud to report that the
3 state of our county is strong and our
4 future is bright.

5 (Whereupon, applause.)

6 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: This
7 year is the 125th anniversary of Nassau
8 County and we have so much to celebrate.
9 We have a rich history dating back to
10 1899, when we first broke away from the
11 City of New York. I look forward to
12 holding many historical and celebratory
13 events throughout the year to mark this
14 historic occasion, and to stimulate our
15 small businesses and our economy with all
16 types of events and honor our past while
17 we continue to look to make our future
18 better.

19 Over the past year, my
20 administration has tackled issues head on
21 that have been swept under the rug for
22 far too long by previous administrations.
23 By making the tough decisions, we were
24 able to make the County safer and more
25 affordable for our residents.

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2 (Whereupon, applause.)

3 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: Since
4 taking office in 2022, I have sworn in
5 over 200 new police officers and added
6 more funds to increase the number of cops
7 on our streets. I have budgeted for 75
8 additional officers over and above the
9 headcount of the previous administration.
10 In Nassau County, we back the blue and we
11 fund our police.

12 (Whereupon, applause.)

13 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: Thank
14 you. Thank you. Let's hear it for our
15 cops.

16 (Whereupon, applause.)

17 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: Joe,
18 you just missed it, I said nice things
19 about you.

20 And because of the hard work of our
21 men and women in law enforcement, we have
22 reduced major crime by over 6% from last
23 year. That's thanks to Commissioner
24 Ryder and our intelligence-led and
25 community-based policing strategies, and

1
2 the financial investments that we have
3 made here in Nassau County for law
4 enforcement. And I want to congratulate
5 my partners in the Legislature for
6 joining me in that effort. Thank you.

7 (Whereupon, applause.)

8 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN:

9 Residential burglaries are down over 17%,
10 Grand larceny is down 7%, and stolen
11 vehicles are down from last year, almost
12 8%. But we have more work to do. I have
13 initiated Operation Overwatch, a roving
14 patrol unit of 20 cars, which we
15 instituted under my administration, to
16 serve both as a deterrent and to act as
17 the cavalry should an incident occur.

18 We also are tackling the migrant
19 crisis and cashless bail, which continue
20 to make our residents less safe. Nassau
21 County is not a sanctuary county.

22 (Whereupon, applause.)

23 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: There is
24 no migrant program in Nassau County.
25 Unfortunately, Nassau County has become a

1
2 border county because of the misguided
3 policies of the State and the City of New
4 York, who are a sanctuary state and a
5 sanctuary city. We don't want that here
6 in Nassau County -- the homelessness and
7 the crime.

8 While our school districts are
9 losing funding, the governor's budget for
10 this year earmarks \$2.4 billion of your
11 tax money for housing and legal aid and
12 transportation and food for migrants
13 entering our nation illegally. That's
14 bizarre and it needs to stop.

15 Tragically, fentanyl is pouring in
16 through our southern border and making
17 its way to this region. Unvetted migrants
18 have engaged in crimes depleting our
19 local resources.

20 I recently went to Washington and
21 testified in front of the Congressional
22 Committee on Homeland Security to urge
23 Congress and President Biden to secure
24 our southern border, to make sure that
25 we're safe throughout the nation and here

1
2 in Nassau County.

3 (Whereupon, applause.)

4 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: At home,
5 our Police and Sheriff's Department are
6 working closely with our federal
7 partners, including ICE and Customs and
8 Border Patrol, to make sure that we work
9 together to manage and fight back against
10 this foreign invasion.

11 (Whereupon, applause.)

12 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: Now,
13 when a crime is committed, and let's say
14 it's committed by a migrant who has no
15 ties to the United States, if they commit
16 a burglary, larceny or even other crimes,
17 they know that they can get away with it
18 because of the cashless bail law in New
19 York State. We have to repeal cashless
20 bail because what we're having is
21 criminals getting arrested and getting
22 out the very same day and committing
23 crimes. Our police are doing a great job
24 making those arrests. But the criminals
25 that are robbing homes and stores and

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2 being released before our cops can even
3 finish the paperwork is unacceptable.
4 Unfortunately, in New York State,
5 criminals have more rights than victims
6 and that has to end.

7 (Whereupon, applause.)

8 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: People
9 are getting hurt, property is getting
10 stolen and there are no consequences. So
11 again, we need to let our state
12 legislators know and the governor know
13 that this is unacceptable here in New
14 York State. The revolving door of
15 criminality is something that has to end,
16 and we must continue to work together to
17 make sure that happens. While some places
18 are defunding the police, here in Nassau
19 we are continuing to invest in our
20 police.

21 (Whereupon, applause.)

22 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN:
23 Commissioner Ryder is going to like this
24 one, it's his pet project.

25 We recently broke ground on our \$12

1
2 million Nassau County Police Department
3 Training Village, which will be completed
4 in October of 2025. It will be state of
5 the art, the best in the world, and
6 people not only will train here in this
7 region, but people from all over the
8 world will be coming here to train at our
9 new facility. Congratulations.

10 (Whereupon, applause.)

11 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: We also
12 broke ground on our new Second Precinct
13 station, which was destroyed by a fire. I
14 made the determination immediately after
15 inspecting the building that it wasn't
16 worth saving, and that we needed a new,
17 state of the art police facility in the
18 Second Precinct, so you will get that,
19 Joe Saladino.

20 (Whereupon, applause.)

21 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN:
22 Vulnerable children need protection and
23 we take that very seriously here in
24 Nassau County. My administration
25 instituted a program where now we are

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2 going to hire retired law enforcement
3 officers with a background in
4 investigations to assist our Department
5 of Social Services in reducing the
6 caseload in child protective services
7 cases that has been seriously backlogged
8 for years. When I came into office, there
9 were too many cases for too few
10 caseworkers and investigators, and we are
11 going to put an end to that. We are here
12 to protect our children and to make sure
13 that no child falls between the cracks.

14 (Whereupon, applause.)

15 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: We have
16 also hired 87 new corrections officers
17 since I took office in 2022, to ensure
18 that our jail is safe for our officers,
19 secure for our neighborhoods, and humane
20 for those we incarcerate. The sheriff
21 didn't even clap for that. Come on,
22 Sheriff.

23 (Whereupon, applause.)

24 PRESIDING OFFICER KOPEL: I might
25 add that Sheriff LaRocca is also doing an

1
2 outstanding job, as is our Chief Fire
3 Marshal, Michael Uttaro, one of the
4 consummate professionals. Thank you for
5 what you're doing.

6 (Whereupon, applause.)

7 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: We
8 continue to be fiscally prudent. We
9 continue to market this county, because
10 it's a great place to do business, to
11 visit, and to work.

12 While the previous administration
13 had proposed \$150 million tax increase
14 for 2024, my administration has
15 eliminated this tax increase.

16 (Whereupon, applause.)

17 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: There
18 will be no tax increase for 2024. There
19 will be no tax increase for the next
20 three years. We have a three year plan
21 that will not have a tax increase.
22 Despite the fact that we have record high
23 inflation, we are managing the county in
24 a prudent way, and we are doing things
25 that we know will increase the tax base

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2 so that we don't have to increase
3 property taxes.

4 (Whereupon, applause.)

5 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: Recent
6 reports from the Regional Planning
7 Council indicate that Nassau and Suffolk
8 County send over \$14 billion more in
9 taxpayer funds to Albany than we get
10 back. We are a cash cow. We are the piggy
11 bank for the State of New York. And you
12 know what? It would be nice if the State
13 would join us in some of the things that
14 are important to our residents, and not
15 things that are important to other
16 regions in the state.

17 (Whereupon, applause.)

18 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: My
19 administration has significantly reduced
20 the tax refund liability by \$437 million.
21 It was \$707 million in 2022. This past
22 year, we paid out only \$270 million,
23 saving our taxpayers over a half a
24 billion dollars.

25 (Whereupon, applause.)

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2 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: Due to
3 our aggressive marketing of the County,
4 through our program of going out and
5 advertising all Nassau County has to
6 offer, sales tax revenues have increased
7 by over \$165 million over budget this
8 last two years. Our economy is strong and
9 it's getting stronger because we are
10 finally letting people throughout the
11 world, not just the United States, know
12 what a great place this is, how we have
13 the best parks, the most beautiful
14 beaches. We've got world class shopping,
15 we've got great restaurants, we've got a
16 healthcare network that's second to none.
17 But more importantly, we've got great
18 people here in Nassau County. And a great
19 housing stock.

20 (Whereupon, applause.)

21 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: I am
22 happy to report that we have now closed
23 the books on 2023, and our surplus will
24 be in the tens of millions of dollars.
25 We're not running a surplus -- we're not

1
2 running a deficit, rather; no deficit
3 here. We're going to have a surplus this
4 year, and that will make life more
5 affordable for our residents here in
6 Nassau County.

7 (Whereupon, applause.)

8 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: Andy
9 Persich, who runs our our Budget and
10 Management Department here in the County,
11 and David Chang, our Treasurer, they
12 said, Bruce, we haven't had a county
13 executive in 12 years go to the rating
14 agencies and make the case for the fiscal
15 integrity of Nassau County. If you do
16 so, I think they'll be receptive to your
17 message of economic development. So I
18 went two consecutive days to New York
19 City. We met with all the rating
20 agencies, and I'm happy to report they
21 agreed with the policies of my
22 administration, and they gave us a bond
23 rating increase. So we upgraded our bond
24 rating, which is going to save our
25 taxpayers money when we go out to bond.

1
2 (Whereupon, applause.)

3 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: And we
4 can improve our roads and our
5 infrastructure with the extra money.

6 Again, the way to keep real property
7 taxes down is to expand the tax base, and
8 that's what we need to do. We need to
9 attract businesses and people to Nassau
10 County. If we lift the tax base, if we
11 increase economic development, we won't
12 have to increase property taxes and
13 that's a fixed cost on our young people;
14 it's a fixed cost on the middle class;
15 it's a fixed cost on our senior citizens.
16 And we have to protect our senior
17 citizens because they're the ones who are
18 the foundation of this county and built
19 this county. We've got to make sure it's
20 affordable for them to stay here in
21 Nassau County.

22 (Whereupon, applause.)

23 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: There's
24 been a lot of talk about Nassau
25 University Medical Center in the last

1
2 couple of days. Nassau University Medical
3 Center is a quality healthcare facility.
4 It is an important healthcare facility.
5 But some people are under the mistaken
6 impression that this is a County run
7 facility. It is not a County run
8 facility. It is a independent public
9 benefit corporation created by the state
10 with state employees, and they must pay
11 their fair share, making sure that those
12 who are uninsured or under-insured get
13 quality healthcare here in Nassau County
14 and the region. Nassau University Medical
15 Center not only takes care of our
16 population here in Nassau County that's
17 vulnerable, but we also do so for Queens
18 and Western Suffolk County. It is worth
19 saving. But how do we save an institution
20 that in 2017, state aid for NUMC was \$189
21 million and this past year, 2023,
22 shockingly, the State reduced their
23 investment to only \$30 million? This is
24 not the mismanagement of NUMC. This is
25 not because of the employees of NUMC who

1
2 were outstanding healthcare
3 professionals, from our nursing staff to
4 the people who provide maintenance and
5 security there. This is because the State
6 is defunding our only hospital here that
7 is a safety net for our most vulnerable.
8 Our voices need to be heard. When we are
9 sending over \$14 billion in Nassau and
10 Suffolk County more to the State than we
11 get back, it would be a pittance to send
12 down a \$100 million a year, which is a
13 lot less than what was given in 2017,
14 2018, 2019 and 2020. Because, you know
15 what? The management of the hospital has
16 improved and is getting better, but you
17 can't take away \$150 million plus in
18 state aid and expect it to operate. It's
19 important for our residents. It's
20 important for our firefighters with a
21 burn center. We should make sure that we
22 let the State know that they have to
23 fulfill their obligations to Nassau
24 County and this region.

25 (Whereupon, applause.)

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2 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: The
3 State is now interjecting itself, sadly,
4 in our local elections, by changing local
5 elections from odd years to even years.
6 That means that our local officials, our
7 county and town officials like Jen
8 DeSena, they're going to have to run in
9 presidential and gubernatorial years.
10 Now, can you imagine how long the ballot
11 will be? There's already ballot drop off
12 in those years.

13 What about the local issues? Our
14 community issues that will get drowned
15 out by federal and state issues. This is
16 outrageous. For 125 years, our elections
17 have been held on odd years. Why are they
18 changing it now? I would say it's
19 blatantly political, it's cynical and
20 it's wrong. It's instructive to note,
21 they didn't change the law for New York
22 City. The mayor and the city council are
23 still going to run on odd years. So if
24 they claim they're saving money and being
25 more efficient, why aren't they doing it

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2 in New York City, which is much larger
3 than Nassau and Suffolk County, and much
4 larger than every other county in the
5 state of New York? It's not fair to our
6 residents, and it's not right. And I'm
7 calling on all of our elected officials
8 on the county and town level to step up
9 and say, this is wrong. This is partisan
10 politics. It's blatantly political, and
11 we have to change it back to where it
12 was.

13 (Whereupon, applause.)

14 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: It seems
15 the State is always coming up with
16 another ingenious way to tax the
17 residents of Nassau County. Now they have
18 congestion pricing. If you work in
19 downtown New York City, downtown
20 Manhattan, you now have to pay a large
21 fee, they're talking about \$24, just for
22 the privilege of driving south of 60th
23 Street in Manhattan. There are people
24 that go to school there. There are people
25 that work there. There are people that

1
2 want to visit there. Maybe their kids are
3 living there. It's not right. It's a tax
4 on people who live outside of Manhattan.
5 It's a tax on the people of Brooklyn and
6 Queens, Bronx and Staten Island, Nassau,
7 Suffolk County, Westchester County. It's
8 a tax and it's not right. And by the way,
9 I think it's foolish because a lot of
10 people are going to get fed up and
11 they're going to shop here in Nassau
12 County, and they're going to move here to
13 Nassau County.

14 (Whereupon, applause.)

15 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: We have
16 to continue to fight against congestion
17 pricing.

18 For over 25 years, there has been
19 proposal after proposal after proposal
20 for development of the HUB and they've
21 all failed. I put forth a proposal that
22 got the backing of almost everybody in
23 the Legislature; it passed 17 to 1. That
24 proposal would put a world class hotel,
25 entertainment center, convention center,

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2 and world class spa and casino here in
3 Nassau County creating thousands of
4 permanent jobs and thousands of
5 construction jobs, over \$5 billion in
6 construction. It would keep the men and
7 women of Nassau County working. It would
8 provide permanent jobs. It's good for the
9 economy. It'll provide \$100 million to
10 Nassau County, to the Town of Hempstead,
11 and to the communities that members of
12 the Legislature serve to make them better
13 and more affordable. We've got to
14 support that application. We gotta back
15 that application.

16 (Whereupon, applause.)

17 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: If the
18 licensing process is fair and even and
19 based on the merits, Nassau County should
20 get that gaming license and we will be
21 the highest grossing casino in the United
22 States, guaranteed.

23 Again, we have to be mindful that we
24 have working people in our building
25 trades, in service unions. They're going

1
2 to get jobs. It's going to provide for
3 their kids. They're going to have
4 apprentice programs with Nassau Community
5 College so kids coming out of community
6 college will have a career waiting for
7 them. It makes sense that we back this
8 proposal.

9 Hofstra University continues to
10 prosecute this hurtful lawsuit aimed to
11 frustrate our efforts. They should be
12 ashamed of their NIMBYism.

13 Hofstra President Susan Poser lied
14 about her collusion with another gaming
15 entity competing for a gaming license in
16 Queens. What a poor role model for
17 Hofstra and its students. Susan Poser, if
18 successful, will destroy our effort to
19 produce thousands of union jobs here in
20 Nassau County, and it is wrong.

21 (Whereupon, applause.)

22 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: We have
23 to make sure that we let President Poser
24 know that her job is to work with us, not
25 work against her host county.

1
2 Speaking of our great unions, our
3 CSEA, our police unions, our corrections
4 officers, all the wonderful people that
5 work here in Nassau County, when I came
6 into office, longevity is something that
7 had been going on for years and years and
8 years and couldn't be solved. We solved
9 it in a few months. We got everybody
10 together. I personally took part in the
11 negotiations and the mediation. And you
12 know what? We fixed it. The problem was
13 good for the taxpayers and it was good
14 for our workers.

15 (Whereupon, applause.)

16 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: We also
17 have signed agreements with all of our
18 unions but one, which we will resolve
19 hopefully in the next couple of weeks.
20 Finally, the men and women who work for
21 the County will have labor peace, and
22 they will have the security of knowing
23 what their contract is in the future and
24 what benefits they have for themselves
25 and their families.

1
2 During the course of the CSEA
3 contract negotiation, which I believe
4 resulted in a fair deal for both sides,
5 the Union came to us and asked us to
6 change their healthcare plan to make the
7 figures work. And within months, after we
8 made this agreement and our employees
9 joined the State insurance fund
10 Excelsior, the State, with very little
11 warning, canceled the program, putting
12 our employees healthcare in jeopardy.
13 Another blow against Nassau County by the
14 State. I don't think it's a coincidence.
15 It's funny, as soon as Nassau County and
16 their CSEA employees entered the State
17 run Excelsior Health Plan, it was
18 canceled. I don't think there's a
19 coincidence there. I think that we need
20 to stand up, our union employees need to
21 stand up and tell state government to
22 stop playing games with their lives.

23 (Whereupon, applause.)

24 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: This
25 past year, we had phenomenal events in

1
2 every corner of the county. We had record
3 breaking concerts, including the 40,000
4 people who came out to see Boyz II Men in
5 Eisenhower Park, a truly phenomenal event
6 of a stature and amount that we've never
7 seen in Nassau County.

8 For the first time, we held the
9 Korean American Games here in Nassau
10 County, with over 10,000 participants and
11 fans coming from around the world to
12 compete in athletic events here in Nassau
13 County.

14 My first order of business as county
15 executive was to restore the Empire Games
16 for the physically challenged, and make
17 sure that Nassau County was the home to
18 this great state athletic event, and that
19 we hold this at Mitchell Field and some
20 of our other facilities so that our
21 physically challenged can have an
22 opportunity to be in a premier athletic
23 competition and display and showcase
24 their athletic abilities. I urge you all --

25 (Whereupon, applause.)

1
2 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: If you
3 want inspiration, go to the games for the
4 physically challenged. They truly are
5 real athletes and we are blessed to have
6 have their competition here in Nassau
7 County.

8 And for the second year in a row we
9 have held the Feliz Navidad ceremony and
10 celebration at Mitchell Field partnering
11 with the United States Marine Corps and
12 Toys for Tots so that the Spanish
13 speaking residents of Nassau County could
14 be a part of County Christmas events and
15 enjoy the holiday season, the most
16 wonderful time of the year.

17 This year in 2024, already we held a
18 Chinese Lunar New Year celebration at the
19 Tilles Center just a few weeks ago, and
20 we had over 2000 people of Asian American
21 background who came to enjoy the Lunar
22 New Year. It was a wonderful, wonderful
23 experience. It's something that we are
24 going to make bigger and better each and
25 every year, because it was a lot of fun

1
2 and our residents really appreciated it.

3 (Whereupon, applause.)

4 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: We've
5 also had numerous meetings with the black
6 and Hispanic, local minority owned
7 businesses. We talked to them and had
8 forums with them, and we've actually
9 engaged in making the process easier for
10 our minority owned businesses to operate
11 and do business with the County of
12 Nassau. I think that's a great thing
13 that we need to do and it's too long in
14 not coming. I made it a priority that we
15 would leave no community behind and make
16 sure that all of our local, minority
17 owned businesses had an equal opportunity
18 to do business here and in the county of
19 Nassau.

20 (Whereupon, applause.)

21 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: We were
22 approached recently by former Congressman
23 Steve Israel, who used to represent parts
24 of Nassau County. And he told me that it
25 was a desire of his all his life to have

1
2 a big, beautiful book festival here in
3 Long Island. And this year they've chosen
4 the beautiful community of Oyster Bay to
5 have the first Gold Coast Book Festival,
6 of which Nassau County will participate
7 and sponsor. And we will make this the
8 biggest and best book festival in America
9 in the coming years.

10 (Whereupon, applause.)

11 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: So we
12 promote literacy so our kids know the joy
13 of reading books.

14 I was approached recently, very
15 recently, in the last six months, by the
16 International Cricket Commission. They
17 had been looking for a place to hold
18 their World Cup, which is basically the
19 second largest sporting event in the
20 world. They were negotiating with New
21 York City, and Mayor Adams was very much
22 in favor of it. But some of the City
23 Council members were giving them a
24 tremendous amount of grief and problems.
25 They said, look, we like Mayor Adams. We

1
2 agree with him that New York City is a
3 great place, but we got to look for
4 another place. They were going to leave
5 the region. They were going to leave this
6 area and not hold an event in the New
7 York Metropolitan region. They
8 approached me and they said, would you be
9 interested in having the World Cup of the
10 International Cricket Commission? And I
11 didn't know much about cricket at all,
12 other than a lot of our residents seem to
13 enjoy playing it. And I said, yeah, I
14 would be interested. I was interested but
15 didn't know that much about it. And they
16 said, our India versus Pakistan event
17 will eclipse your Super Bowl here in
18 America. I said, what are you talking
19 about? He said, well, how many people
20 watch the Super Bowl? I said, I'm not
21 sure, hundreds of millions? He goes,
22 about 250 million. He goes, the India
23 versus Pakistan event, which I believe
24 Nassau County can get, will have 1.2
25 billion people watching around the world.

1
2 What a great place and a great venue to
3 showcase all that we have to offer here
4 in Nassau County. And I said, yes. And
5 with the approval of the County
6 Legislature, we now have the first World
7 Cup of International Cricket ever held in
8 the United States here in Nassau County.
9 And yes, we got the premier event, India
10 versus Pakistan.

11 (Whereupon, applause.)

12 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: We have
13 a temporary modular stadium, the same one
14 that was used at Formula One in Las
15 Vegas, the same one that's used in
16 professional golf tournaments around the
17 world. They are busy constructing that
18 stadium right now. That is providing
19 jobs, that is providing work. There's a
20 multiplier effect with our local
21 businesses who will benefit. We will
22 have so many new visitors from around the
23 world coming to Nassau County to
24 appreciate everything we have here, and
25 it is going to be an economic tremendous

1
2 driver for our county and for the
3 businesses located there. So we are very
4 happy. And I want to thank the
5 International Cricket Commission for
6 choosing Nassau County for their premier
7 event. Thank you so much.

8 Some people think that I am critical
9 of Governor Hochul. I am when I think
10 she's wrong. And when I think she's
11 right, I'm going to compliment her as
12 well. I am very pleased that the State of
13 New York will be hosting at Belmont State
14 Park, the number one golf event in the
15 world, the Ryder Cup, right here in
16 Nassau County. It's going to be a great
17 event. And yes, it is an international
18 competition. More people will be coming
19 in again from outside to see what Nassau
20 County has to offer. And contrary to what
21 our Police Commissioner says, the Ryder
22 Cup was not named after him.

23 (Whereupon, applause.)

24 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: I also
25 want to be fair and compliment the

1
2 governor for approving the New York
3 Racing Association's \$400 million
4 investment in the renovation of Belmont
5 Racetrack. It's long overdue. It's home
6 to the most important leg of the Triple
7 Crown, and it will provide, again, more
8 and more jobs and better opportunities.
9 It'll be a financial boom to that part of
10 the county. We are very happy that the
11 Elmont community will continue to host
12 Premier Racing because of the investment
13 being made at Belmont Racetrack.

14 When I came into office, the
15 assessment system was a complete
16 disaster, with error after error being
17 made and being uncovered by our
18 residents, and it cost us a lot of money.
19 My administration, working with
20 Comptroller Elaine Phillips, has gotten
21 under the hood and made the assessment
22 system more fair, more accurate, more
23 transparent and more user friendly, and
24 we are going to continue to improve. By
25 doing that, we have significantly reduced

1
2 our tax refund liability by over a half
3 \$1 billion. We will continue to improve
4 our assessment system. It's working. And
5 I made a pledge and a promise, and that
6 promise is going to be kept. Thank you.

7 (Whereupon, applause.)

8 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: We have
9 allocated over \$13.8 million in opioid
10 funds to various organizations for opioid
11 prevention, treatment, and enforcement.
12 And that money is being put to good use.
13 There are those who say we should take
14 the \$90 million and just spend it. No. We
15 are taking a very measured, methodical
16 and important choice to make sure that
17 whoever gets these funds uses them in the
18 right way. So basically, we're giving the
19 money out on an annual basis. We've got a
20 four year plan now, and we have given it
21 to organizations like the Catholic Health
22 System. We have given it to NUMC to
23 support their substance abuse programs
24 and their mental health programs. And
25 we've given it to a lot of community

1
2 based organizations. We will continue to
3 give all of that money out, but we will
4 do it so it is done where the money is
5 spent wisely.

6 (Whereupon, applause.)

7 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: But, as
8 we tackle the opioid epidemic that has
9 plagued our country, the Federal
10 Government continues to have porous
11 borders where people can come over. We
12 don't know who they are. They haven't
13 been vetted. They could be terrorists.
14 They could be criminals. We know some of
15 them are engaged in drug dealing, and
16 they're bringing deadly fentanyl into the
17 United States that's making its way here.
18 That's killing 300 of our young people in
19 America each and every day. We will not
20 be safe in the United States until we
21 seal our borders and then the fentanyl
22 will dry up, and it will make a safer
23 place for all of us.

24 (Whereupon, applause.)

25 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: Until

1
2 that happens, we will continue to work
3 with our local agencies to make sure that
4 anybody who has an abuse problem gets the
5 treatment and the care they need.

6 (Whereupon, applause.)

7 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: Nassau
8 County is home to one of the largest
9 Jewish populations in the world. On
10 October 7th, it was a terrible day for
11 many of the residents here in Nassau
12 County who had friends and family that
13 lived in Israel. Israel has been our
14 closest ally in the Middle East, and they
15 share the same democratic principles that
16 we do. When our residents of Nassau
17 County saw the terror that was inflicted
18 in Israel by a terrorist organization,
19 HAMAS, we within three days, organized a
20 rally of 6000 people to support the
21 people of Israel at our Harry Chapin
22 Lakeside Theater in Eisenhower Park,
23 where every race, religion and ethnic
24 group participated in support of our
25 ally. We will continue to support the

1
2 State of Israel.

3 (Whereupon, applause.)

4 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: Thank
5 you. Thank you. Sit down, it's almost
6 over (laughter).

7 We've also had a tumultuous last ten
8 days. I was hearing from many girls and
9 women who participate in girls and women
10 only sports that they were concerned
11 about what was happening around America,
12 where biological males were injecting
13 themselves into female and girls leagues
14 and teams, and it created an unsafe
15 environment, unfair competition, and
16 quite frankly, it was wrong. So I issued
17 an executive order to protect the women
18 and girls of Nassau County from that type
19 of bullying. And it is bullying. We are
20 not anti-transgender. We are not
21 transphobic here in Nassau County. And my
22 order made sure to mention that those who
23 are biological males who wanted to
24 identify as transgender females, had an
25 opportunity to compete. They could

1
2 compete against other biological males.
3 They could compete in co-ed leagues and
4 teams where everybody knew that the
5 competition was going to be mixed between
6 males and females. And if they want, our
7 great Commissioner of Parks and
8 Recreation, Commissioner Belyea, and I
9 will sit down. If they want to start a
10 transgender league or a transgender team,
11 we are a loving county. We are home to
12 every race, religion and ethnic group and
13 every lifestyle. But the bullying of
14 women is something that we cannot accept
15 here in Nassau County. We don't want
16 unsafe environments for our girls. They
17 work hard. They train hard. And for
18 decades we have been working on ways to
19 make it more fair for women to compete in
20 athletics and sports. We've been doing
21 that for 50 years since the passage of
22 Title IX, and we have to nurture and
23 support that. The only way to do it is
24 to keep women's sports and girls sports
25 for biological females, and not

1
2 biological males who want to bully their
3 ways onto those teams. That is not
4 acceptable.

5 (Whereupon, applause.)

6 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: We will
7 abide by the law. We will abide by the
8 Federal Constitution. Under Federal Law
9 and our United States Constitution, women
10 are a protected class, and we will
11 continue to make sure that we fight for
12 their right to be safe, secure and have a
13 level playing field to compete.

14 So I ask all of you, especially our
15 legislators who are here today, to join
16 us in this common sense approach so that
17 we can have fair competition and we can
18 have a community and a county where
19 people know transparently what they're
20 competing against and who they're
21 competing against.

22 Legislature, I ask you to join me.

23 (Whereupon, applause.)

24 COUNTY EXECUTIVE BLAKEMAN: In
25 closing, Nassau County is one of the best

1
2 places to live in America. It is a
3 welcome home, as I said, to every race,
4 every religion, ethnic group and
5 lifestyle. But this is no time for us to
6 rest on our laurels. I will continue to
7 work with you to fight to keep Nassau
8 County safe, affordable, and on a path of
9 continued prosperity. And with the help
10 of my colleagues, especially the
11 honorable members of this Legislature,
12 the best is yet to come.

13 Thank you. God bless Nassau County
14 and God bless the United States of
15 America. Stay safe.

16 (Whereupon, applause.)

17 (Whereupon, the State of the
18 County concludes.)
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF NEW YORK)

: SS.:

COUNTY OF NASSAU)

I, ALEXA LORENZO, a Notary Public
for and within the State of New York, do
hereby certify:

That the above is a correct
transcription of my stenographic notes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
set my hand this 6th day of March, 2024.

Alexa Lorenzo

Alexa Lorenzo

NC FULL LEGISLATURE STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS 03.06.2023

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