

1. State Of The County Address Transcript

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NASSAU COUNTY LEGISLATURE

RICHARD NICOLELLO
PRESIDING OFFICER

STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS

Elmont Memorial High School
555 Ridge Road
Elmont, New York

Wednesday, March 24, 2021
6:10 P.M.

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A P P E A R A N C E S :

LEGISLATOR RICHARD J. NICOLELLO

Presiding Officer
9th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR HOWARD KOPEL

Deputy Presiding Officer
7th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR DENISE FORD

Alternate Presiding Officer
4th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR KEVAN ABRAHAMS

Minority Leader
1st Legislative District

LEGISLATOR CARRIE SOLAGES

3rd Legislative District

LEGISLATOR DEBRA MULE

5th Legislative District

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2 LEGISLATOR C. WILLIAM GAYLOR III
3 6th Legislative District
4
5 LEGISLATOR VINCENT T. MUSCARELLA
6 8th Legislative District
7
8 LEGISLATOR ELLEN BIRNBAUM
9 10th Legislative District
10
11 LEGISLATOR DELIA DERIGGI-WHITTON
12 11th Legislative District
13
14 LEGISLATOR JAMES KENNEDY
15 12th Legislative District
16
17 LEGISLATOR THOMAS MCKEVITT
18 13th Legislative District
19
20 LEGISLATOR LAURA SCHAEFER
21 14th Legislative District
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23 LEGISLATOR JOHN FERRETTI, JR.
24 15th Legislative District
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LEGISLATOR ANDREW DRUCKER
16th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR ROSE WALKER
17th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR JOSHUA LAFAZAN
18th Legislative District

LEGISLATOR STEVEN RHOADS
19th Legislative District

MICHAEL PULITZER
Clerk of the Legislature

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21

2 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Mr.

3 Pulitzer can you call the roll please?

4 MR. PULITZER: Thank you. Deputy
5 Presiding Officer Howard Kopel.

6 LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Here.

7 MR. PULITZER: Alternate Deputy
8 Presiding Officer Denise Ford.

9 LEGISLATOR FORD: Here.

10 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Siela
11 Bynoe. Legislator Carrie Solages.

12 LEGISLATOR SOLAGES: Here.

13 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Debra
14 Mule.

15 LEGISLATOR MULE: Here.

16 MR. PULITZER: Legislator C.
17 William Gaylor the Third.

18 LEGISLATOR GAYLOR: Present.

19 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Vincent
20 Muscarella.

21 LEGISLATOR MUSCARELLA: Here.

22 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Ellen
23 Birnbaum.

24 LEGISLATOR BIRNBAUM: Here.

25 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Delia

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21

2 DeRiggi-Whitton.

3 LEGISLATOR DERIGGI-WHITTON:

4 Here.

5 MR. PULITZER: Legislator James

6 Kennedy.

7 LEGISLATOR KENNEDY: Here.

8 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Thomas

9 McKevitt.

10 LEGISLATOR MCKEVITT: Here.

11 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Laura

12 Schaefer.

13 LEGISLATOR SCHAEFER: Here.

14 MR. PULITZER: Legislator John

15 Ferretti, Jr.

16 LEGISLATOR FERRETTI: Here.

17 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Arnold

18 Drucker.

19 LEGISLATOR DRUCKER: Here.

20 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Rose

21 Marie Walker.

22 LEGISLATOR WALKER: Here.

23 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Joshua

24 Lafazan.

25 LEGISLATOR LAFAZAN: Here.

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21

2 MR. PULITZER: Legislator Steven
3 Rhoads.

4 LEGISLATOR RHOADS: Present.

5 MR. PULITZER: Minority Leader
6 Kevan Abrahams.

7 LEGISLATOR ABRAHAMS: Here.

8 MR. PULITZER: Presiding officer
9 Richard Nicolello.

10 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Here.

11 MR. PULITZER: We have quorum
12 sir.

13 LEGISLATOR NICOLELLO: Good
14 evening and welcome to the 2021 State of the
15 County. I'm Presiding Officer Rich Nicolello
16 and I thank you for joining us tonight. I
17 want to extend a special thank you to the
18 Elmont Memorial High School and the Sewanhaka
19 Central High School District for hosting this
20 meeting of the Nassau County Legislature this
21 evening.

22 I would like to now introduce
23 Nassau County Executive Laura Curran to
24 deliver her 2021 State of the County address.

25 COUNTY EXECUTIVE CURRAN: Thank

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 you. Good evening. I'm Nassau County
3 Executive Laura Curran. I'd like to welcome
4 Presiding Officer Nicoletto, Minority Leader
5 Abrahams and the 17 other members of the
6 Nassau County Legislature with us in person or
7 virtually. Thank you to Elmont Memorial High
8 School, Principal Dockery and Sewanhaka
9 Central School District for hosting this
10 year's address. Go Spartans.

11 And to our residents at home, thank
12 you for joining me as we recap this year. One
13 we are not likely to forget and to look
14 forward to the year ahead.

15 I feel like we've come full
16 circle. Just one year ago today I postponed
17 my State of the County address that was to be
18 held right here at Elmont Memorial, in order
19 to direct the Nassau County response to the
20 COVID-19 crisis. Every single day since,
21 Nassau County has been at war, to save lives,
22 to keep our businesses afloat, to keep our
23 economy open and to keep our kids in school.

24 Standing here now, I see a future
25 brighter than ever. And tonight, I'll tell

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 you exactly how Nassau County is seizing this
3 once in a century opportunity to come back
4 stronger than we've imagined.

5 In the weeks and months to come,
6 our main priority is getting everyone eligible
7 in Nassau County vaccinated. We'll need to
8 keep our budget balanced as we drive forward
9 on the road to recovery. We'll continue to
10 act with the sense of urgency and focus that
11 our residents deserve. And we cannot let
12 anything slow us down. I'll speak to each of
13 these issues and more tonight, but before I
14 continue, this week I've ordered flags lowered
15 to half staff to remember the 3,021 residents
16 we've lost to COVID-19. I ask you to join me
17 in pausing for a moment of silence in honor of
18 their memory.

19 To the families and loved ones of
20 those we've lost, our hearts are with you.
21 It's been a time of loss for so many. Too
22 many precious lives lost. Businesses lost.
23 Jobs lost. Critical time in the classroom for
24 our children, lost. Lost moments with loved
25 ones. The losses in our lives are hard to

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 count. But the way Nassau County residents
3 have stepped up these past 12 months has been
4 nothing short of heroic. The many health care
5 workers and first responders, parents and
6 teachers, young men and women making a
7 difference, big or small, in their
8 communities.

9 Like LILAC, a group of Syosset High
10 School students raising money to provide PPE
11 and lunches for health care workers. Or Tori
12 Brown, a fifth grader at Baldwin's Lenox
13 School, who started her own cake business to
14 support families hit hard by the pandemic.
15 Our residents have shown real character.

16 I must especially thank the
17 county's frontline workers, beginning with the
18 finest health department in the nation led by
19 the incomparable Dr. Larry Eisenstein. Nassau
20 has long had an award-winning health
21 department, but this year Dr. Larry and his
22 team truly out did themselves.

23 I'm also grateful for the hundreds
24 of Nassau County medical reserve corps
25 volunteers and our fire marshal's office who

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 have stepped up to support our COVID response
3 and our vaccination effort. More than 32
4 percent of the total county population has
5 received at least one shot of the COVID-19
6 vaccine, the highest percentage of any large
7 New York State county.

8 The COVID-19 vaccine is safe, it's
9 effective, and it's the key to ending this
10 pandemic and to kickstarting our economic
11 recovery. I call it the passport back to
12 normal.

13 Nassau has had the most efficient
14 vaccine operation in the state, working to get
15 shots in arms and using every last vial. The
16 county distributions sites have turned around
17 100 percent of the doses that we've received.
18 We've built the infrastructure to swiftly
19 distribute the vaccine. And if you're
20 eligible, make an appointment and roll up your
21 sleeve.

22 Health equity is a cornerstone of
23 our vaccine strategy, and the county is
24 working closely with trusted community
25 messengers like educators and clergy, to build

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 confidence in the vaccine and to increase
3 access to communities disproportionately
4 affected by this pandemic. I want to thank
5 our Vaccine Equity team, Kyle Rose-Louder,
6 Carolyn McCummings and Andrea Ault-Brutus.

7 Nassau will continue vaccinating as
8 many people as we can in all communities so we
9 can save lives, get our economy roaring, our
10 businesses fully open and our kids back into
11 the classroom for good.

12 As county executive, I've done
13 everything in my power to keep our schools
14 open. Schools are the safest place for our
15 kids and a high quality education system is
16 the foundation of our county. I've seen up
17 close how teachers and administrators have put
18 their students first in uncertain and
19 difficult times, especially as they
20 implemented plans to safely and responsibly
21 reopen.

22 As schools continue reopening,
23 Nassau County will be working closely with
24 districts to help schools access FEMA funding
25 that will allow for investment in IT and

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21

2 improved ventilation in buildings.

3 I want to recognize Tavora Buchman,
4 Dr. Buchman, a member of Dr. Larry's
5 Department of Health team, who helped provide
6 districts with the guidance that they needed
7 to do in-person learning and get our kids
8 safely back on the field, court, mat and
9 rink. Through DOH and our trusted community
10 leaders, Bishop Lionel Harvey, Dr. Aaron Glatt
11 and Dr. Isma Chaudry, among many others, we
12 got the word out about worshipping safely,
13 testing availability, access to vaccine and
14 help for those in need.

15 I would also like to thank Farrah
16 Mozawalla, Lionel Chitty and Amy Flores from
17 our outreach offices for their important
18 work.

19 In response to a heartbreaking rise
20 in food insecurity, the county put food on the
21 table for more than 35,000 Nassau families
22 through partnerships with Island Harvest and
23 Long Island Cares food banks. We provided
24 relief for those unable to pay the rent and
25 pioneered an innovative restaurant relief

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 program that is now being used as a model at
3 the state level. More than 200 restaurants
4 located all over the county have received
5 grants of up to \$10,000 so far. This program
6 is still open and I urge our restaurant owners
7 to apply.

8 At the beginning of the crisis, I
9 formed an Economic Advisory Counsel that
10 helped me guide a pro-business response and
11 recovery for Nassau County. Already, the
12 county has delivered millions in loans and PPE
13 to our small businesses through the Boost
14 Nassau initiative. I fought to loosen
15 restrictions on businesses when it made sense,
16 helping push for the safe reopening of malls,
17 barber shops, nail salons, bowling alleys,
18 movie theaters, gyms and catering halls and
19 more.

20 Even when it hasn't been easy
21 politically, I've advocated for businesses
22 that have followed the rules and are just
23 trying to get by. And I'll continue to
24 advocate for common sense reopening.

25 The county has made it a priority

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 to do everything possible to attract and grow
3 commerce in Nassau. My administration has cut
4 red tape that has strangled development in
5 this county for decades, such as reducing
6 timeframes for approvals from our Department
7 of Public Works. We've utilized Industrial
8 Development Agency, IDA, incentives across
9 industry sectors, where doing so drives a net
10 benefit for taxpayers. This is certainly the
11 case for transformative projects like the Long
12 Beach Super Block and the redevelopment of the
13 Cerro Wire site.

14 After an era of neglect of our
15 infrastructure, my mantra as county executive
16 has been simple, roads, roads, roads. Nassau
17 County has embarked on the most ambitious road
18 repaving program in decades, increasing the
19 annual average lane miles of roads repaved
20 between 2019-2021 by more than 70 percent
21 compared to the average annual lane miles
22 resurfaced in the three years before I took
23 office. And we're not taking our foot off the
24 pedal. Now is the time to rebuild and I
25 believe infrastructure will power Nassau's

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 economic recovery.

3 Across the county, I've outlined 12
4 projects that Nassau has positioned for
5 upcoming federal stimulus funds to finish up.
6 The total value generated by these projects is
7 nearly \$400 million, with more than 3,300
8 construction jobs generated. And let's get
9 our minority vendors tied into those
10 opportunities. We need businesses in every
11 community to grow and to thrive on Long
12 Island.

13 To that end, we've teamed up with
14 our partners in Suffolk to identify and
15 address disparities in access, so we can help
16 entrepreneurs across the island to take their
17 business to the next level.

18 Though these are difficult times, I
19 will never give up on our main streets. Prior
20 to the pandemic we experienced a historic
21 revitalization of our downtowns with new
22 transit-oriented development and walkable
23 communities that attract young people. I'm
24 pleased to see that the work continues, most
25 recently in Hicksville.

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21

2 When it comes to rethinking how we
3 use public spaces during the pandemic, Nassau
4 has led the way. Our first-of-its-kind Open
5 Space pilot program was a smashing success
6 with outdoor dining and retail providing both
7 a town square feeling for downtowns, while
8 also boosting revenue for businesses
9 struggling to make ends meet. That's why
10 we'll build on the Open Streets program this
11 summer by allowing further flexibility for
12 businesses and local municipalities who want
13 to give the outdoors a try.

14 During the peak of the COVID-19
15 crisis I made three commitments for my
16 administration's budget. No property tax
17 increases, our law enforcement and frontline
18 workers will have the resources they need and
19 we will maintain fiscal integrity. And I kept
20 these promises. Although the worst of the
21 storm is over, we have a lot to tackle. And
22 we can handle it because of our fiscal
23 discipline before the crisis.

24 Nassau County ended 2019 with a
25 surplus, which allowed us to navigate the

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 financial devastation of 2020 better than
3 most. We successfully refinanced county debt
4 and avoided harmful cuts to life-saving
5 resources and programs that keep our
6 communities healthy and safe. The county does
7 not collect an additional cent of property
8 taxes. And there will be no layoffs of county
9 workers, who have served as our front line
10 when we needed them most.

11 And for the first time in 15 years,
12 Moody's has upgraded Nassau County's bond
13 rating to positive, citing, quote, a third
14 consecutive year of improved financial results
15 and ongoing budget and management discipline.

16 The newly-passed American Rescue
17 Plan will help the county continue to deliver
18 relief and we'll take a methodical, targeted
19 and bipartisan approach to make sure we
20 recover as one Nassau and bounce back stronger
21 than ever.

22 An important building block in our
23 financial turnaround is completing collective
24 bargaining with our county unions. After
25 reaching agreements with detectives and

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 superior officers in the police department, we
3 have a few to go. Securing quality agreements
4 is one of my highest priorities. We have
5 terrific employees in Nassau County, and I
6 want to settle these contracts and provide
7 certainty for our workforce on wages and
8 benefits. The men and women who are employed
9 in Nassau County deliver every day for our
10 residents and I will continue to stand by
11 them.

12 At the same time, my administration
13 will continue policies of fiscal restraint so
14 that the county can finally, after almost a
15 decade, end the state's control over county
16 finances.

17 My first campaign for county
18 executive was about a promise that I wouldn't
19 just do what was popular, I would do the right
20 things for the right reasons. In the face of
21 the usual politics and pandering, we fixed a
22 broken property assessment system that has
23 bankrupted our county. Everyone knows taxes
24 on Long Island are too high and that's why the
25 county has not collected one additional cent

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 more in property taxes since I've been county
3 executive.

4 We took several steps throughout
5 the pandemic to provide relief to taxpayers
6 whenever possible. Delaying deadlines, waving
7 fees, and pausing assessments to protect
8 homeowners from the pandemic's economic
9 impact.

10 And if you disagree with your
11 updated market value of your property you will
12 always have the right to file a grievance.
13 Homeowners have until April 30th to file their
14 grievances.

15 I will never stop fighting to
16 protect taxpayers from any hikes, including
17 when it means holding utilities like PSEG Long
18 Island and LIPA accountable. And ensuring
19 every dime of taxpayer funds are wisely spent
20 on the high quality services our residents
21 expect and deserve.

22 As county executive, my first job
23 is keeping you safe, and as I speak to you
24 tonight, Nassau County is the number one
25 safest community in America, according to US

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 News and World Report. Our county is enjoying
3 record low crime rates. Compared to a decade
4 ago, major crime has been cut by a third.
5 We've doubled down on our commitment to build
6 trust between police and the communities they
7 serve, and the results are paying off. But
8 we're not resting on our laurels.

9 2020 saw a nationwide call to
10 improve policing and we heard that call in
11 Nassau, kicking off more than 150 community
12 meetings that gave law enforcement, protest
13 organizers and community members a seat at the
14 table.

15 I want to commend the young men and
16 women, such as the Men of Elmont, some of whom
17 are with us here tonight, for their commitment
18 to making positive change in their
19 communities.

20 The dialogue we started helped
21 inform a comprehensive police reform plan
22 passed by the county legislature in a
23 bipartisan manner. I'm proud to announce that
24 for the first time in history, Nassau County
25 police officers will wear body cameras, a

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 proven tool for accountability, safety and
3 improved officer performance.

4 Our plan includes unprecedented
5 steps to increase police data transparency,
6 enhance mental health response, provide
7 additional de-escalation and anti-bias
8 training and ensure our force reflects the
9 diversity of our communities. I commend
10 police commissioner Patrick Ryder and his
11 entire team for their efforts in this
12 important work.

13 Tonight, I'd like to honor the
14 memory of William J. Willett, one of the first
15 African-American officers on the force who
16 ended his 48-year career as the first black
17 police commissioner in Nassau County. The
18 Nassau County Police Department headquarters
19 will soon be named in honor of Willett, who
20 blazed a trail for so many. It is a further
21 tribute to Commissioner Willett that the
22 current highest ranking chiefs of the Nassau
23 County Police Department are diverse in both
24 race and gender.

25 I'm very proud of our law

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 enforcement. They put their lives on the line
3 every day. Something we should never forget.
4 I'll never forget when moments after being
5 sworn in on January 12, 2018, I was informed
6 that officer Willard Gomes, a young officer on
7 highway patrol, was struck by a drunk driver
8 and was hanging on for his life. I went to
9 visit officer Gomes and witnessed firsthand
10 the dangers officers face every day just doing
11 their jobs. We should never take this bravery
12 for granted.

13 We should never be afraid to talk
14 about ways to improve policing. But there
15 will be no defunding the police in Nassau
16 County. Our law enforcement will always have
17 my respect and I will always have their back.
18 In these times, it's important to demonstrate
19 that maintaining public safety, supporting the
20 police and improving policing are common goals
21 for every community. You may not read about
22 it often, but it is possible to do it all.
23 Nassau County is proof.

24 So, how did Nassau County earn that
25 number one safety ranking? It's important for

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 us to credit the Nassau County PD, the
3 district attorney, fire marshal and fire
4 service, sheriff's office, probation, medics,
5 OEM and other first responders for the
6 outstanding job they've done for us.

7 However, another important takeaway
8 from Nassau becoming the safest in America is
9 that intelligence-led, community-based
10 policing works. Intelligence-led policing
11 can't work without a collaborative approach
12 that combines problem-solving policing,
13 information sharing and enhanced intelligence
14 operations. The system depends on cooperation
15 among various agencies at the federal, state
16 and local level and perhaps most importantly,
17 a close bond between law enforcement and the
18 local community. This approach gets results.

19 Nassau's partnership with federal
20 and state partners, along with close
21 cooperation from the community, has been key
22 to our success in eradicating gang violence
23 and stemming the flow of deadly drugs like
24 Fentanyl into our neighborhoods.
25 Intelligence-led policing recognizes that

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 society cannot arrest its way out of problems
3 and instead focuses on partnering with the
4 community to identify potential victims,
5 repeat offenders and then provide low-level
6 offenders the opportunity to change their
7 behavior before getting in trouble for a more
8 serious crime.

9 Nassau has invested in proactive
10 community partnerships that promote this
11 model, such as alternatives to incarceration
12 peer programs for juvenile offenders.

13 On the topic of legalized cannabis,
14 the concerns raised by the Community Task
15 Force I convened two years ago remain
16 unanswered, including law enforcement's
17 inability to detect impaired driving. These
18 questions must be answered.

19 We must continue to invest in smart
20 policing and continue to build trust between
21 police and the communities they serve. That's
22 why Nassau County has increased the number of
23 problem-oriented police officers. POP
24 officers. We're expanding the Police Athletic
25 League for the first time in 50 years with new

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 programs right here in Elmont, Roosevelt and
3 Lawrence, allowing police to build
4 relationships with young people through
5 sports, crafts, educational programs and
6 more.

7 We know it's important that our
8 police receive the highest level of training,
9 but since 1982, Nassau County's law
10 enforcement officers haven't had access to a
11 permanent training facility. Instead of
12 learning in a state-of-the-art police academy,
13 the men and women we depend on for our safety
14 have been shuffled through the temporary and
15 overly costly facilities. That ends with this
16 administration and this county legislature.

17 In a few months, thanks to public
18 and private support gathered through the
19 Nassau County Police Department Foundation, we
20 will open the Nassau County Training and
21 Intelligence Center right on the Nassau
22 Community College campus.

23 And speaking of openings, Belmont
24 here we come. The soon to come home for our
25 New York Islanders marks another economic

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 milestone for Nassau County. I want to thank
3 the state, the Islanders and the NHL for their
4 partnership. The new UBS Belmont arena will
5 achieve three critical goals, boost our
6 economy, bring the Islanders home to Long
7 Island, where they belong, and expand our
8 public transit network. Three goals, a hat
9 trick for Nassau County.

10 For decades, advancement in public
11 transportation on Long Island was at a
12 standstill. Now, the state is building the
13 first full-time Long Island Railroad station
14 in almost 50 years. When the Elmont station
15 opens, it will ease congestion and provide a
16 new green public transit option. We will
17 continue to support investments in rail
18 connections and fight short-sighted service
19 reductions.

20 Now is the time to build confidence
21 in public transit. And given the recent \$14
22 billion in stimulus the MTA received, recent
23 service reductions were a huge mistake. We
24 have invested too much, in the Moynihan
25 Station, in east side access, and must not

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 back away from efforts to be connected
3 regionally.

4 The pandemic has disrupted life as
5 we know it, but I believe Nassau is primed to
6 win the future. Our real estate market is
7 booming like no other, with property values
8 skyrocketing. Nassau is the place to be.

9 Building a Nassau County that can
10 thrive in this new era, however, requires us
11 to embrace forward-looking change and not wait
12 until it's too late. I'd like to thank the
13 Nassau County Legislature for unanimously
14 approving amendments to the Coliseum lease and
15 Nassau Hub development plan that grant Nassau
16 Live and developer RXR time to firm up plans
17 for a new entertainment district, with the
18 iconic Coliseum at center stage. Let's
19 position the building for success, to
20 complement rather than compete with the new
21 UBS Belmont arena. This will be the
22 transformative project we have always
23 envisioned and now is the time to make it
24 happen.

25 Fighting COVID-19 and reopening our

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 economy has, of course, been our central focus
3 this year. But recent extreme weather events
4 remind us of something we can't ignore,
5 climate change is real and it is happening
6 now. Just like with COVID, Nassau County has
7 been thrust onto the front line. Extreme
8 weather events, shifting seasons, more intense
9 rainfall, changes to marine life, including an
10 increase in sharks by the shore and dramatic
11 sea level rise, these accelerating trends pose
12 a threat to our way of life on Long Island.

13 Some say the climate crisis is too
14 big or too distant a problem for local
15 governments to address. I disagree because I
16 know that what we do here matters. Like how
17 Nassau was thrust into the epicenter of a
18 global pandemic, we are on the front line of
19 climate crisis because we are a low-lying
20 island. We ought to lead the way on climate,
21 not just to preserve our own health and
22 safety, but to demonstrate that government
23 need not abandon bold leadership in difficult
24 times.

25 That's why last year I committed

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 the county to become a climate smart
3 community. We are setting ambitious goals for
4 carbon dioxide reduction and transitioning to
5 green technology and infrastructure. My
6 administration is prioritizing initiatives
7 that protect the environment and save
8 taxpayers money, like decreasing energy usage,
9 implementing LEED standards for new
10 facilities, new county facilities, and
11 incorporating green technologies, like
12 electric buses. We will shift to clean,
13 renewable energy and reduce solid waste while
14 protecting open space and water quality.

15 And the county is enhancing
16 community resilience to climate change by
17 better protecting against sea level rise and
18 storm surges. The county has partnered with
19 the state to start construction this year of
20 over \$35 million of road and drainage
21 infrastructure improvements focused on
22 resiliency, mostly funded by state and federal
23 sources.

24 And the biggest infrastructure
25 project of our lifetime is the Western Bays

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 initiative, which gets started this month with
3 the Bay Park conveyance project. In
4 partnership with New York State and the
5 federal government, we are moving forward with
6 more than \$600 million in funding to remove
7 harmful discharges and improve water quality
8 on the south shore. This will translate into
9 a tremendous economic boost for the region and
10 2,400 new jobs.

11 In addition to cleaning our
12 waterways, this project will restore
13 marshland, improve storm resiliency, boost
14 shell fishing and create a better ecosystem.
15 The improved water quality we'll see means a
16 better quality of life for our residents.

17 We should do all we can now to
18 harness the economic potential of the green
19 energy industry for our local businesses and
20 for our workforce. I believe offshore wind is
21 an area of real opportunity. With two
22 offshore wind farms already being built off
23 the coast of Long Island, we will be
24 generating 1700 megawatts of clean energy.
25 That's is enough to power one million homes.

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21

2 Let's build more.

3 I know we can count on our partners
4 in labor, like John Durso at the Long Island
5 Federation of Labor and Matthew Aracich at the
6 Building and Construction Trades Counsel,
7 joining with BOCES, the Workforce Development
8 Institute and our colleges, to begin the
9 important work of establishing training and
10 apprentice programs to get our residents ready
11 for these new industry jobs.

12 In the era of social distancing,
13 our parks are more important than ever. We've
14 stepped up investment in county park
15 maintenance and enhancement, which is key to
16 making Nassau a great place to live, work and
17 play. The county is restoring and
18 transforming three major parks, including
19 Centennial Park in Roosevelt, Christopher
20 Morley Park in Roslyn and Inwood Park. We're
21 upgrading amenities at Grant Park in Hewlett,
22 Reverend McKay Preserve in Roosevelt, Bay Park
23 in East Rockaway, Nickerson Beach and
24 Eisenhower Park, the home to our veterans
25 memorial.

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21

2 Last year marked 75 years since the
3 end of World War II. Like COVID, the war
4 changed everything about our lives, including
5 right here on Long Island. Throughout that
6 era, it was men and women in Nassau County,
7 whether at Grumman or Republic, who built the
8 tools of a history-defining victory. We
9 remember what we built and the values our
10 country stood up for. In the face of a new
11 historic crisis, we must continue to build and
12 remain true to these values.

13 Today, Nassau County is home to one
14 of the largest veterans populations in the
15 state. Our commitment to them will always
16 remain sacred and under Executive Director
17 Ralph Esposito, of Elmont, our Nassau County
18 Veterans Services Agency we're helping more
19 veterans than ever find employment, secure
20 benefits, get vaccinated for COVID-19 and
21 sometimes just find a warm coat and a hot
22 meal.

23 One of the greatest challenges
24 veterans face nationwide is housing
25 insecurity. I recently announced the county

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 has secured land at Mitchell Field to create
3 affordable housing for vets who need it. I
4 want to thank the legislature for again coming
5 together to ensure dignity for our heroes.

6 Whether at home or abroad, we can
7 never forget those who risked their lives and
8 those who gave their lives so that we could
9 live free. That's why this week I was proud
10 to announce a public-private partnership to
11 install a new memorial at Eisenhower Park
12 Veterans Memorial to honor the veterans of the
13 Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

14 When it comes to the values we hold
15 dear, we stand firm. I'm proud of county
16 employees like John O'Dougherty of the Nassau
17 County Department of Public Works and Nassau
18 County police officers Bonilla, Rambharose,
19 Moore, Meyer, Krulder, Delarosa, Castellano
20 and Shank who answered the call to safeguard
21 those values as reservists protecting the
22 presidential inauguration, helping ensure the
23 peaceful transition of power.

24 Hatred has no home in Nassau and
25 this year we will continue to fight hate with

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 bold action to deter violence, protect our
3 citizens and educate our people about the
4 causes and terrible consequences of hate.
5 Through Unified Long Island, a multifaith
6 multiracial community effort to respond to
7 hate crimes, and however else necessary, we
8 will continue to confront all forms of bigotry
9 so they never know comfort in our
10 communities.

11 Local governments like Nassau
12 County have been on the front line this past
13 year and the pandemic only underscored just
14 how important a functioning government is. I
15 believe government can work for the people,
16 but only when it's honest, transparent and
17 responsive. And for too long that was the
18 opposite of what we had here in Nassau.

19 Six years ago, Nassau County
20 District Attorney Madeline Singas issued a
21 report outlining recommendations to address
22 waste, fraud and abuse that Nassau County had
23 become infamous for. Tonight, I'm proud to
24 announce that my administration has followed
25 through on every action item from that

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 report. We've taken the politics out of
3 governing and struck blow after blow at the
4 culture of corruption using oversight,
5 transparency and audit trails as our weapons
6 and we're just getting started.

7 As tough as this year has been, I
8 know that Nassau residents are tougher. And
9 when we come together we get the job done. I
10 know we're eager to get vaccinated and turn
11 the corner and wider distribution is
12 imminent. But as we move towards finally
13 winning this war, I have two requests for my
14 fellow Nassau residents. First, let's not
15 forget those friends and neighbors who are
16 still struggling. Let's keep reaching out and
17 volunteering and donating to food banks.
18 Together we'll show it doesn't take a
19 once-in-a-century crisis to make a difference
20 in the lives of others.

21 Second, let's not return to
22 normal. Let's be better. Let's think bigger
23 and bolder. If anything, this past year has
24 shown us what we can achieve. Like Baldwin's
25 own NASA astronaut Jasmin Mogbeli, who could

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 soon be the first woman to walk on the moon.

3 Let's hold on to that unique
4 American spirit of ingenuity and
5 collaboration. Like Abigail Rivera and
6 Gilberto Lopez, who despite the pandemic,
7 pushed ahead to open up their dream
8 restaurant, Rivers Cafe in Floral Park. Of
9 working for the greater good and not just for
10 ourselves.

11 Like detective Louis Alvarez of
12 Oceanside, who stood up and fought for his
13 fellow 911 first responders until his dying
14 breath.

15 As your county executive, I've been
16 so proud to witness up close the extraordinary
17 things you are doing every day. And I've been
18 proud to witness your intelligence and
19 resilience. And that's how I know that the
20 state of our county is strong. Because you
21 are strong. Stronger than you ever imagined.

22 Thank you for listening and may God
23 bless Nassau County and the United States of
24 America. Thank you.

25 LEGISLATOR KOPEL: Motion to

1 State of the County Address - 3-24-21
2 adjourn by Legislator Walker. Seconded by
3 Legislator Rhoads. All in favor of
4 adjourning? Any opposed? We're adjourned.
5 (Meeting adjourned at 7:11 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATION

I, FRANK GRAY, a Notary
Public in and for the State of New
York, do hereby certify:

THAT the foregoing is a true and
accurate transcript of my stenographic
notes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have
hereunto set my hand this 31st day of
March 2021.

FRANK GRAY