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Tish James becomes New York Attorney General -- First Black Woman Elected to Statewide Office



Letitia James celebrated her historic election as New York State Attorney General at a club with a standing-room-only crowd of jubilant supporters.

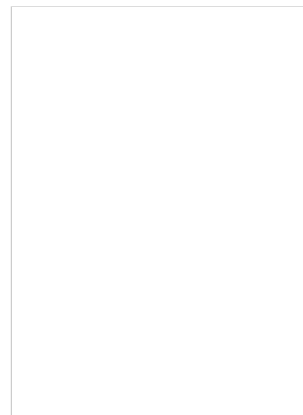
As she gets to work, Tish will have a lot on her plate as she spoke about it in her *Our Time Press*.

On the issue of corruption:

"It's a sad commentary when 30 elected officials, state elected officials, have been in office for a decade. What we need to do is root out corruption and restore public confidence in government, period. Be it in Washington, Albany or City Hall ... where the evidence lead me, we will not hesitate, working with the comptroller's office, working with attorneys, to prosecute either civilly and/or criminally individuals who betray the public trust."

On the state's greatest challenges:

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“We will continue the investigations (of President Trump), now under the leader Underwood, the current attorney general. We will continue to investigate his business holdings. We will also focus on corruption wherever we find it, whether on the federal level. I’ve been to Buffalo, where we’ve got lead poisoning and high asthma rates, as well as in Newburgh, where individuals are dealing with water and soil that the federal EPA is unfortunately closed for business. They are not enforcing the Clean Water Act... ..we need to again take on the NRA, which holds itself out as a charity in fact, they are not. They are nothing more than a criminal enterprise. We are the banks that finance them, their investors.

“Consumer fraud is a major issue all over the State of New York. We have to stand up to those who are afraid of ICE. Who are afraid of going into courthouses because they are afraid of ICE. Immigrants who are seeking justice and cooperating with the district attorney’s “orders of protection.” We need to stand up for reproductive rights and women’s rights. Women who are discriminated against and paid less than men for doing the same job. Women who are discriminated against and want to have children. We need to defend “Net neutrality” for many tech companies in Brooklyn and all the start-up companies and freelancers. We need to make sure we have a strong and last but not least, foreclosures and zombie houses. We need to go after the banks, outrageous interest rates and who saddle homeowners and young people with debt that are stagnant and individuals are having a hard time making ends meet.

Advocacy Role:

It’s important that individuals understand the role of the attorney general. Through the office of attorney general and we will use our activism and the ability to introduce legislation to the state legislature to address the disparities that exist in terms of public education in New York.

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CITY POLITICS

Adams Gives Himself ‘Solid B’ First Year How’s He Done?



Mayor Eric Adams speaks at City Hall, Aug. 29

The mayor spoke to THE CITY about his freshman season weigh in on his performance on some of the biggest issues in City.

"This story was originally published on December 27, 2022, by THE CITY.

By Katie Honan

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Reuven Blau

Mayor Eric Adams was sworn in as the 110th mayor of New York City minutes into the annual ball drop in Times Square, promising to usher in a safer and more prosperous city. As a Democrat, he made public safety the cornerstone of his campaign, saying it was a city still feeling the effects of the pandemic. As officers assaulted him said he was in force after officers assaulted him in his local Queens precinct as a teen, Adams' experiences resonate with New Yorkers.

Within weeks of taking the job, he dealt with one of the deadliest fires in New York City, the killing of two rookie police officers, the first of many line-of-duty deaths this year. He also had to unexpectedly shepherd the city through a migrant housing crisis as thousands arrived on planes and buses sent directly from the southern border, with thousands more arriving. And of course there is the continued COVID crisis, lagging unemployment, and the economy crawling back to pre-pandemic levels. Not to mention the monkeypox outbreak. As the leader of the nation's largest (and, let's be real, most important) city, Adams has led the business community — a major shift from former Mayor Bill de Blasio and more moderate Republican mayors — and released plans to streamline the creation of more housing.

He's also ushered in a policy of "involuntary removal" of people exhibiting mental health issues, the return of a controversial "street-crimes" unit in the NYPD.

"It's difficult to move forward while you're climbing up ground with all of these challenges," Adams told THE CITY last week in a wide-ranging interview about his first year in office.

Asked to grade his first 12 months, he'd give himself and his team "a solid B+."

"I'm so excited about 2023," he said. "We got some good stuff in the pipeline."

"I love doing my job," he added.



Mayor Eric Adams being sworn into office on New Year's day at Times Square, December 31, 2021 Hiram Alejandro Durán/ THE CITY



Mayor Eric Adams joined NYPD of on untraceable guns, May 11, 2022



Mayor Eric Adams releases his housing plan in Brooklyn, June 14, 2022.



Family and supporters of people with mental health issues at City Hall, May 17, 2022. Hiram

The mayor, known for showing up at crime scenes and nightlife hotspots, believes New York are behind him.

"Anyone who's out in the street with me and sees that people know I care for the city, you can't miss it."

THE CITY took a look at some of the biggest issues this year in New York — and how the city has not addressed them.

Crime and Public Safety

Murders are down more than 12% compared to this time last year, and shooting is down more than 17%, according to NYPD crime statistics. But overall, major crimes — including robberies and rapes — are up more than 23% compared to last year, according to that same data. “I wanted to go after violent crime in general, but specifically, homicides, shootings, and other crimes were terrorizing our city,” he told THE CITY.

“People just felt that every time [they] heard a gunshot or heard about another person being shot, it was traumatic.”

He released a plan to reduce gun violence earlier this year and established a task force in June.

He also launched the NYPD “neighborhood safety teams,” a rebranding of the community policing unit that de Blasio disbanded in 2020 amid racial justice and anti-police-brutality protests.

Adams also has added more police officers to the subway and redirected other of his resources to targeted policing,

“He certainly has taken steps to not only reduce crime but also to make New York City feel more secure,” longtime political consultant Basil Smikle Jr. told THE CITY.

“You see that with the changes where police are, in terms of the subways.”

But others say his approach doesn’t address many of the root causes of crime, including poverty, lack of education, and mental health — and points to budget cuts across city government.

“Every deep cut to an agency that provides critical services — every gap creates a vulnerability,” said Cougle Cabán, a far-left Democrat who represents parts of Queens.

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Regressing on Rikers

In recent weeks, the Adams administration has also changed course on the de Blasio plan to close Rikers Island and replace them with borough-based jails.

To close the facilities, the population has to be down by 3,300, according to the plan. Earlier this month, Department of Correction Commissioner Louis Molina said to the City Council that he expects the population on Rikers Island to grow from just under 10,000 in December to 7,000 next year — which could prevent the closure of the troubled jail. “Kudos to Molina for being honest and candid — that we need to look at this plan seriously,” Adams told THE CITY. “And, because this is costing us close to \$10 billion, we can’t ignore tax dollars, and I stand with him, and I agree with him. And I think the City Council has a plan.”

Adams has little wiggle room, however: The City Council in 2021 passed a law pr

being used as a jail after Aug. 31, 2027.

The city's budget office estimates that the borough-based jail plan needed to close more than \$8 billion.

"You have to work really hard to go to Rikers; for the most part, being placed in front of a bad person that you did something probably extremely violent," he told THE CITY.

"No one is going to Rikers because they stole an iPhone in a store somewhere; you're a violent offender. And that is why you're there."

But many advocates for people behind bars contend that most of the population suffering from addiction, or battling severe poverty. They note that 50% of the population has a mental health diagnosis, with 16% labeled "serious," according to the latest Mayor's March 2022 report. This year, 19 incarcerated people have died in the city's jail system, the highest rate in the country, said Lawyer Dean Vigliano — whose client Edgardo Mejias, 39, died from an apparent heart attack at the Anna M. Kross Center on Rikers on Dec. 11 while being held on \$15,000 bail from the city. Adams slammed Adams' assertion that only violent criminals are being held in city jails. "He should know better," Vigliano told THE CITY. "There are bad people in Riker's who, as I could tell, had a drug problem. He wasn't violent."

Housing and Development

Earlier this month, Adams and City Hall officials announced a plan to streamline the city's housing more housing — saying the changes would result in up to 50,000 new units.

The mayor also unveiled last month an updated plan for Willets Point in Queens to build more income-restricted "affordable" housing units alongside a new soccer stadium for the New York City Football Club.

Adams said those housing plans and other related projects approved by the City Council were his biggest wins of his first year in office. He was also proud that his team "convinced" City Council members to approve large-scale development plans, like Innovation Queens.

He said that his housing team continues to look at new ways to build more.

"We've never really leaned into the benefits of modular housing," he told THE CITY. "The new modernized version of an SRO, single room occupancy, you know, young people living in shared spaces is something that's common."

Alicia Glen, a deputy mayor for housing and economic development under de Blasio, said the city is looking at ways to constructing new housing that are out of the city's control. "We are in a very competitive market — interest rates, inflation," she told THE CITY.

But she said the mayor's team seems committed to at least smoothing the path to building new apartments. Both she and Adams said the expiration of 421-a — a widely used real-estate tax exemption for the building of new apartments — is another challenge.

"It was a big mistake what we did in Albany about not renewing some form of 421-a policy. "People keep stating, 'This is a tax benefit for the rich developers,' and it is a barrier to building housing."

Clea Weaver, campaign coordinator for the nonprofit organization Housing Justice, said the city's housing plans are "basically insignificant compared to the number of street sweeper jobs or police officers policing the homeless."

And Oksana Mironova, a housing policy analyst at the Community Service Society of New York, said Adams' appointments to the Rent Guidelines Board, which sets rents on regulated apartments, is a step in the right direction.

lowest-income New Yorkers. The board voted to approve a 3.25% rent hike on ab earlier this year – the largest increase in nearly a decade.

“We saw rent freezes under de Blasio, and there’s been a complete shift in the RC low-income NYers are still struggling,” she told THE CITY.

Mironova also pointed to the staff shortages at crucial city agencies that facilitat major roadblock.

“In order for anything to happen, there have to be enough people in city governr vacancy rates at HPD and DHS ... are just astounding,” she said.

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Education

Appointing buddies, relatives, and political allies has become somewhat of a the year., Among the first was his longtime friend David Banks, the former head of th The Eagle Academy for Young Men, to lead the Department of Education. He’s also drawn criticism for a massive education budget cut – which the City Co renege on, unsuccessfully.

The cuts “affected almost every school and really led to a level of anger among p many years,” said Leonie Hamson, a city education advocate who founded the no two decades ago.

“The anger was even further accentuated when the mayor kept going around tow cuts,” she said. “Clearly, the parents experienced this firsthand.”

Adams, though, told THE CITY that his cuts were just “right-sizing” as federal pa running dry – and it would have been “irresponsible” for the city to “keep propp “It was just really fiscally irresponsible. And I just refuse to just pretend as thoug when it’s not,” he said.

His administration also nixed a \$202 million plan to create a universal curriculum schooling for 3-year-olds.

Heather Dailey, who has become an advocate through dealing with her 10-year-c for special-needs students in Queens, noted that classrooms “are feeling the pre: especially for special education.”

“Somebody who is praising themselves as an equity champion doesn’t cut fundir Adams. “Don’t say you’re supporting equity and then cut school funding.”

The Adams Family (and Friends)

Since the start of the year, the mayor has been criticized for multiple controversi NYPD Chief of Department Phil Banks (David’s brother) as deputy mayor for pub

and former roommate Lisa White as deputy commissioner for employee relations. He even hired his brother Bernie Adams to lead his security team. The sibling even offered a salary of just \$1 to alleviate controversy.

But Adams told THE CITY he believes these criticisms mainly exist in the “echo chamber” of media.

“Not one person has stopped me on the street,” he said. “Not one person has questioned me in a hall, not one person at the countless events are going to stop me to talk about this or that one.”

He argued, “I build a team based on the qualifications and abilities of people to do the job as well as their professional accomplishments, to help me.”

The mayor has also dodged criticism of his inner circle, from the finance-felon turned restaurateur Osteria La Baia, a favorite restaurant for Adams, to Bishop Lamor Whitehead, a local pastor who was arrested last week on fraud charges.

Former Gov. David Paterson said he felt the reporting on Adams’ connections and controversies overshadowed his accomplishments.

“Sometimes it feels like an attempt to make Mayor Adams look not serious, like I’m not serious as mayor because he goes to swank restaurants,” Paterson, a fellow Democrat who served time in the state Senate, told THE CITY.

“Everybody eats dinner, and everybody eats dinner at one place or another, but when he wakes up in the morning, he works harder than any mayor I’ve seen before here.”

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