

INSIDE

Next Week's Calendar

Four Days of Session: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday next week.

Legislative News

Senate to host 10 Committee Meetings, with Assembly set to announce its own slate

Updates from the Governor

Construction Begins on Rensselaer to Dutchess Transmission Line Upgrades

Workforce Development Initiative Money

Additional \$2.5 Billion in Revenue for NYS Budget

Agency News

DEC Grants available

Amid Distractions, Legislative Session Slogs Onward

This week marks one year since COVID-19 was first diagnosed in New York State. Against a backdrop of memories of horrific surges in deaths and hospitalizations and of extraordinary changes in daily living and how business is conducted across the state, this week saw a new single shot vaccine rolled out across the country, the continued [easing of COVID era restrictions](#), continued efforts by the Governor to fend off allegations of misconduct and inappropriate handling of nursing home data, and the unusual cancellation of the Assembly Session on Monday (see "Legislative Activity").

COVID-19 - Monday marked one year since COVID-19 was first diagnosed in New York State. The COVID diagnosis of a health care worker who had traveled to Iran was made at Mount Sinai Hospital on March 1. Since that time, more than 1.6 million New Yorkers have tested positive and according to the State's [COVID tracker website](#), there have been more than 38,000 COVID-related deaths. Updated related news and releases can be found on the state's COVID "latest news" [website](#).

- **J&J Vaccine** - With the FDA and CDC signing off on the use of the Johnson & Johnson COVID vaccine, the Governor announced on Tuesday that more than 160 thousand doses are expected to be shipped to New York this week. He also announced the implementation of a [pilot program](#) to administer the vaccines.
 - In an unusual development, the [federal government announced](#) that Merck will partner with J&J in manufacturing the vaccine.

Emergency Powers - On Tuesday, Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Assemble Speaker Heastie [announced](#) an agreement to pass legislation to repeal the Governor's temporary emergency powers and limit the actions the Governor can take during a state of emergency ([S.5357/A.5967](#)).

Budget - Typically a relatively quiet week as the Senate and Assembly work to finalize one-house proposals in response to the Executive Budget proposal, it was even more so as the focus shifted to sexual harassment allegations against the Governor and the legislature focused on proposals to address nursing home deaths, reporting, and oversight. That being said, the legislature and the Governor did reach consensus regarding projected revenue through the end of the current fiscal year and for FY 2022. Revenue consensus is a required step in the annual budget negotiation process. See "*From the Governor*" for details.

Executive Chamber Departures - Gareth Rhodes has announced he is leaving his role on the Governor's COVID-19 task force and returning to his position at the Department of Financial Services (DFS). Also departing the Governor's office is first deputy press Secretary Will Burns. See media report [here](#).



From NYS Governor Cuomo

Construction Begins on Rensselaer to Dutchess Transmission Line Upgrades

Governor Cuomo [announced](#) construction began on New York Energy Solution, a \$530 million project to upgrade energy transmission from Rensselaer County to Dutchess County.

\$9.5 Million Awarded as Part of Workforce Development Initiative

Governor Cuomo [announced](#) 75 businesses, schools, and community-based organizations across the state have been awarded nearly \$9.5 million as part of the State's historic Workforce Development Initiative. Funding and incentives will support job training and employment opportunities in high-demand industries.

Governor and Legislature Agree on \$2.5 Billion in Additional Revenue for the NYS Budget

[Consensus has been reached](#) with both houses of the Legislature to recognize \$2.5 billion in additional revenue over two years. The agreement was struck through the consensus revenue forecast process, a required step in annual budget-making through which the Executive and the Legislature agree on economic predictions and the projected resultant revenue. Through the agreement, about \$1 billion in additional revenue will be recognized in the current fiscal year that ends March 31, and about \$1.5 billion in next fiscal year.

Executive Orders

Governor Cuomo issued [Executive Order 202.96](#) which extended EO 202 and each subsequent Executive Order through March 28, 2021. Executive Order 202.96 also increases capacity for indoor and outdoor entertainment, movie theatres, and indoor food services in New York City in the coming weeks.

Legislative news

2021 Legislative Session Days

There is session next week on Monday the 8th, Tuesday the 9th, Wednesday the 10th, and Thursday the 11th. You can find the 2021 Legislative Session calendar [here](#).

Legislative Committees

The Senate and Assembly have several committee meetings this week scheduled next week. The Senate will host 10 Committee Meetings ([live stream available on the Senate website](#)), with the Assembly expected to host its own slate of meetings as well ([found here once announced](#)).

Legislative Activity

The legislature passed 63 bills this week focused on primarily on healthcare. The **Senate** passed S.1034A (Gianaris) which relates to preventing occupational exposure to an airborne infectious disease; as well as S484A (Krueger) which relates to requiring a medical facility or related services to obtain express prior written consent before the making and/or broadcasting of visual images of a patient's medical treatment.

Of note in the **Assembly**: Session was cancelled on Monday by Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie apparently in the face of pressure from the Assembly Minority to remove Governor Cuomo's emergency powers. According to [social media](#), the Assembly Minority had apparently attached a hostile amendment, removing the Governor's emergency powers as they relate to issuing emergency directives, to bills that were being considered on the floor. Hostile amendments, which typically do not pass, are largely a procedural move to force a vote on contentious issues.



From the Agencies

From the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

\$750,000 in Grants Available for Hudson River Estuary Communities

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) [announced](#) that \$750,000 in new competitive grant funding is now available to help communities in the Hudson River Estuary watershed increase resiliency to flooding, protect water quality, fish, and wildlife habitat, and improve recreational access and education for all, including people with disabilities and New Yorkers living in environmental justice communities. The grants are administered by DEC's Hudson River Estuary program.

From the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities

Dance for Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

Commissioner Kastner [announced an effort](#) to raise awareness about developmental disabilities during the month of March (2021 disability awareness month). The Office is launching a video community dance project.