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## To Mask or Not to Mask; Cannabis Webinar; 4 More Weeks

*The final four weeks of the 2021 legislative session will kick off with a two-day session week next week and the volume and pace of bills moving through both houses continues to accelerate as members press to move priority measures through the process. This week saw the CDC relax their recommendations related to mask wearing by those fully vaccinated against COVID-19, more movement toward reopening the state, final Assembly passage of election related concurrent resolutions, and yes, daytime outdoor temperatures finally hit mid-May norms.*

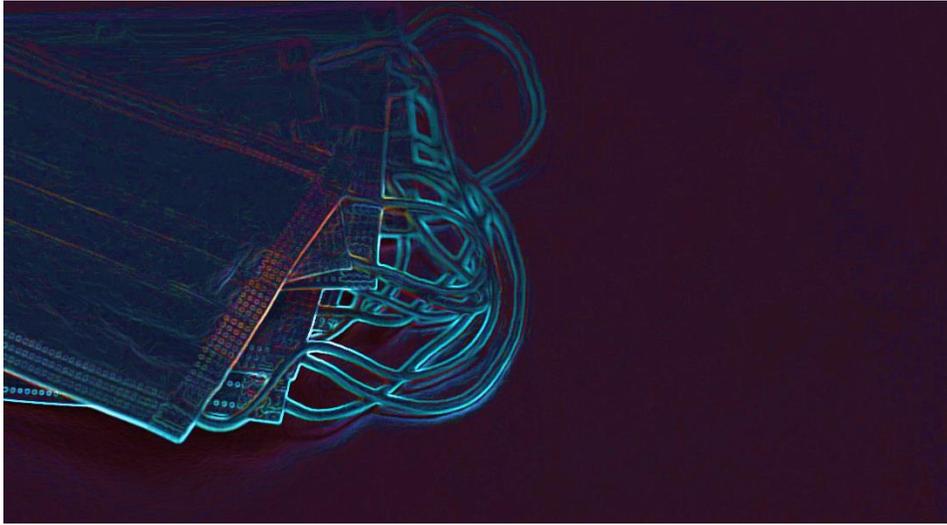
**Pandemic News** - The Governor released numbers Thursday indicating more than 8 million New Yorkers, 40.4 percent of the state's population, have been fully vaccinated. The [announcement](#) preceded a new CDC guidance relaxing mask wearing recommendations for fully vaccinated individuals (updated guidance [here](#), announcement video [here](#)). The Governor [said](#) he and his team will be reviewing the recommendations. See our "From the Governor" section for more pandemic related updates from the administration, including the planned reopening of pools and beaches.

~ [Behavioral Health Report](#) - Anthem, Inc. published a [report](#) earlier this month related to the effects of the COVID pandemic on people's mental health and well-being. A concurrent [release](#) by Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield points to concerns related to a decrease in mental health diagnoses for children and older adults. More data related to the mental health effects of the pandemic has been [published](#) by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

**Concurrent Resolutions** - The Assembly gave [final approval](#) to two bills related to changing the absentee ballot process and "same day" voter registration. The bills, concurrent resolutions that would amend the state constitution, will have to gain voter approval to go into effect. See our "Legislative News" section for more details and links to the bills.

**Assembly Impeachment Investigation** - Elected officials criticized the pace of the Assembly Judiciary Committee's impeachment investigation ([here](#) and [here](#)). The investigation was [launched](#) in March in response to misconduct allegations made against Governor Cuomo.

**Cannabis Webinar** - Park Strategies LLC is sponsoring a business-oriented webinar on May 27<sup>th</sup> on the new Cannabis Law legalizing adult use cannabis. Topics will include compliance, taxes, licensing, how the industry will be regulated, municipal considerations, quality control, and security. Speakers will include Kaelan Castetter, Director of Policy Analysis at Castetter Cannabis Group; Kate Hruby, Policy Analyst at Castetter; Jason Klimek, Cannabis Attorney and member of the New York State Bar Association's Committee on Cannabis Law; and Joe Rossi, Managing Director at Park Strategies, LLC. More information [here](#).



## From the Governor

### Governor Signs Legislation Exempting Stimulus from Debt Collection

Governor Cuomo [signed S.5923A/A6617A](#) which exempts New Yorker's stimulus payments from being garnished by debt collectors.

### Pools and Beaches to Operate with Social Distancing

The Governor announced that beaches and pools [will be permitted](#) to operate with six-foot social distancing and set a goal of operating at 100% capacity by July 4.

### Extending the Moratorium on Disconnecting Utilities

Governor Cuomo signed legislation, [S.1453B/A6255A](#) which extends the moratorium that prevents utility companies from disconnecting utilities for a period of 180 days after the COVID-19 state of emergency is lifted or 180 days after December 31, 2021, whichever is earlier.

### Executive Orders

Governor Cuomo released Executive Order [202.107](#) which increased the capacity for private outdoor residential gatherings, outdoor social gatherings and indoor social gatherings at entertainment venues.

## Legislative news

### 2021 Legislative Session Days

There are 3 scheduled session days next week Wednesday and Thursday. You can find the full 2021 Legislative Session calendar [here](#).

### Legislative Committees

There are 30 committee meeting announced for the Senate and none for the Assembly announced yet. Meetings can be found here: [live stream available on the Senate website](#), with the Assembly [found here once announced](#).

### Legislative Activity

The Legislature passed 106 bills this week while in session. This included the following measures:

- [S5760 \(Breslin\)/A3222](#) Hunter which allows a new insurance product into the NY marketplace to cover excess disability insurance.
- [S6170\(May\)/A5083\(Kelles\)](#) which would require the Inspector General to publish a database of information regarding evictions in the state.
- [S360 \(Comrie\)/A4431 \(Vanel\)](#) a concurrent resolution that passed both houses, and will be on the ballot in November for approval, that will permit no excuse absentee voting in elections.
- [S517 \(Gianaris\)/A502 \(Carroll\)](#) a concurrent resolution that passed both houses, and will be on the ballot in November for approval, that will permit same day registration to be eligible to vote in an election.

### Public Hearings

- ~ May 18<sup>th</sup>, [Senate and Assembly Standing Committees on Mental Health](#). Subject: Mental Health Crisis Services.
- ~ May 20<sup>th</sup>, [Senate Standing Committee on Disabilities](#). Subject: Evaluating the State's response to COVID-19 at certain residential facilities.

The full legislative public hearing calendar can be accessed [here](#).

## State Agencies

### **From the NYS Attorney General**

#### **Texas Court Rejects NRA Bankruptcy Claim**

A federal bankruptcy [court in Texas rejected](#) the National Rifle Association (NRA) claims of bankruptcy after the NRA tried to relocate to Texas in order to avoid the lawsuit the NY AG was bringing against them. NY AG James will now be permitted to pursue her claim against the NRA, which includes allegations that the NRA mismanaged funds, failed to follow state and federal laws, and failed to follow NRA bylaws and policies which leading the loss of \$64 million in three years.

### **From the NYS Comptroller**

#### **Identity Theft on the Rise**

With more than 67,000 [complaints filed statewide](#), identity theft claims are on the rise, according to the New York State Comptroller. The Comptroller's [report](#) indicates that the surge in complaints represents an increase of more than 85 percent over last year.

### **From the NYS Office of Temporary Disability Assistance**

#### **Emergency Rental Assistance Program Website**

The Office of Temporary Disability Assistance has [launched a new website](#) for landlords and tenants to apply for monetary assistance related to rent payments throughout the pandemic. This effort is being administered primarily through the Office of Temporary Disability Assistance, only seven local governments will run their own program. Announcements on the timing for the portal going live will be forthcoming. There will also be various Webex events conducted for Landlords, Tenants, and Local Governments, including an Emergency Rental Assistance Program Informational Session.