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March Madness Underway

The March Madness Basketball tournament descended upon the capitol region over the weekend with the MVP Arena in downtown Albany hosting first round games: VCU vs Saint Mary's; Iona vs UConn; Drake vs Miami; and Kent St. vs Indiana along with the consequent second round games for the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament.

And in the Capitol, the annual "March Madness" sprint to an enacted budget is also in full swing with both the Senate and Assembly releasing their One-House Budget Proposals last week. With the release of the One-House Budgets, the Legislature and the Governor remain substantially at odds on several major policy proposals, with all three sides working towards a compromise for the enacted budget in the coming weeks. The following hot button issues will be hashed out in the coming weeks:

Bail Reform: Both Houses rejected the Governor's proposals on bail reform, which would provide judges with greater discretion in setting bail.

Housing: Both Houses proposed a \$500 million incentive package for communities to build new housing. Each House also rejected many parts of the NY Housing Compact, the Governor's Housing Proposal that would create 800,000 housing units over the next decade. The most controversial proposal from the Governor, would allow the state to supersede local zoning laws for municipalities.

Minimum Wage: Both Houses rejected the Governor's plan to index minimum wage increases to inflation, with the legislature's position being that the indexed proposal does not go far enough as they would be in favor of greater increases now with the possibility of indexing future minimum wage increases later.

Healthcare: The legislature and the Governor lack three-way consensus on issues related to workforce flexibility, distressed hospital funding, and the appropriate size of a Medicaid rate increase for hospitals and nursing homes.

NYS Assemblyman Vanel Makes Crash Landing: Last Friday, Queens Assemblyman Clyde Vanel was piloting a plane with a friend as the pair set out to practice various flight maneuvers near Long Island. Shortly after the plane was out over the water, the engine lost power. Assemblyman Vanel credited his flight training, in a tweet he issued last week. According [to the Assemblyman's statement](#), he was able to utilize his training to land the airplane "at the nearest safe location, while attempting to minimize damage to persons or property. I am thankful to walk away without injury. The FAA's training on emergency procedures works." Caelyn Canace, who according to news coverage was the only person on the beach where the plane landed, captured the incident on [video](#). She says the two plane passengers were in shock to see the incident unfold, but [credited the Assemblyman](#) "landed very nicely."



The Capital Region welcomed the first day of spring today, March 20

Legislative News

Legislative Activity

The Legislature is in session the 20th, 21st, 22nd, and 23rd this week and will return to session everyday next week. The legislature has already introduced approximately 11,474 bills. The Senate and Assembly passed 35 bills last week, of particular note:

~ [S1346 \(Parker\) / A993 \(Fahy\)](#) Directs each state agency to prepare a state fleet decarbonization plan for purchase or lease of state agency vehicles.

Public Hearings

There are no upcoming public hearings scheduled as of publications.

From the Governor

Grant Funding to Help Local Governments Reduce Costs

Governor Kathy Hochul announced that \$2,884,500 in grant funding is being awarded to counties and municipalities across the state to fund seven projects intended to reduce government costs through consolidations, shared services or internal efficiencies. As part of the annual competitive Local Government Efficiency Grant program, five of the awards will offset costs associated with implementation, while the remaining two awards will help with planning projects. More details on the municipalities that have been awarded efficiency grants can be [found here](#).

Executive Orders:

There were no new Executive Orders (EO) issued last week. The EO related to healthcare workforce shortage (EO 4.18) expires on Thursday. It is our understanding that it will likely be extended.

State Agencies

From the Office of the Attorney General

AG Takes Down Ghost Gun and Narcotics Trafficking Ring

New York Attorney General Letitia James, New York City Mayor Eric Adams, and the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force [announced](#) the take down of a firearm and drug trafficking operation that illegally sold guns, including ghost guns and assault weapons, in New York City and Westchester County. The [123-count indictment](#) charges Eduardo Hernandez, Jose Garcia, and Euclides Castillo with trafficking 19 firearms, including 12 ghost guns, six high-capacity magazines, and more than 560 grams of cocaine, with a street value of approximately \$25,000.

From the Office of the Comptroller

School Districts Need to Improve Oversight of Technology Equipment

Audits of 20 school districts across New York State found many could not always locate information technology (IT) assets such as laptop computers, tablets, and monitors; did not always keep records of those assets; and often failed to safeguard them from theft or damage. As a result, nearly \$22 million worth of IT assets purchased or leased during the audit period were subject to potential theft, loss or misuse, according to a [report](#) released last Thursday by State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli.

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