QUEENS DAILY EAGLE
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2023

QUEENS TODAY
NOVEMBER 16, 2023

THE LANDLORD ACCUSED OF STABBING three people to death over a tenant dispute in St. Albans has been charged with first and second-degree murder, reports the Daily News. David Daniel, a 54-year-old man, was hit with the murder charges as well as weapons charges in Queens Criminal Court on Wednesday, and told reporters as he was taken out of the 113th Precinct that he was under “a lot of pressure.” Daniel showed up to the precinct on Tuesday morning, telling officers he “did something bad” and gave them his address where they found the two women and one man dead with multiple stab wounds. One of the victims has been identified as 51-year-old Colleen Cesar Field, who may have been dating Daniel and owed him back rent. The Daily News reports that the couple downstairs had not paid rent since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ANOTHER CITY TEEN IS DEAD AFTER possibly subway surfing on a Queens E Train on Tuesday, the Daily News reports. The 19-year-old was found unconscious when the Manhattan-bound E train he was riding on pulled into the Sunnyside Station at about 9 p.m. The teen had a massive head injury and was taken to Jamaica Medical Center where he was pronounced dead. It is unknown if the teen was subway surfing, a dangerous practice which has killed five teenagers in the five boroughs this year, or if he hit his head while walking between cars.

MAYOR ERIC ADAMS HELPED BREAK GROUND on East End Studios, a new film and TV complex in Sunnyside that hopes to bring around 1,000 construction and 750 full-time jobs to the area, Deadline reports. The groundbreaking of the studio, which came days after the SAG-AFTRA strike ended, marks the second major film studio popping up in Queens, the other being the Robert De Niro-family backed Wildflower Studios in Astoria. “Thanks to SAG-AFTRA and the Writers Guild of America securing fair deals for their workers, film and TV production is back in New York City — helping more than 185,000 New Yorkers get back to work,” said Adams. “New York City is back, but our work is not done until every New Yorker has a pathway to success. We’re thrilled to see East End Studios bringing... jobs to the city and joining the ecosystem of successful local production spaces that are continuing to elevate Western Queens as a worthy rival of Hollywood.” The 340,000-square-foot, $275 million campus will include three soundstages and is expected to be completed in 2025.

Court of Appeals hears consequential redistricting case

By Jacob Kaye
Queens Daily Eagle

The Court of Appeals on Wednesday heard oral arguments about whether or not New York’s congressional districts will be redrawn for the third time in the past two years, restarting a redistricting process that has been marred by partisan squabbles, multiple lawsuits and general confusion about where the state’s congressional lines stand.

It was the second time that the state’s top court heard oral arguments about potential constitutional violations that occurred during the state’s messy, once-a-decade redistricting process last year. However, the court and the attorneys arguing before them seemed closer to reaching any type of consensus about when that violation actually occurred.

Since the end of 2021, New Yorkers have been presented with several draft district maps, a map drawn by the state’s legislature and a map drawn by a court-appointed “special master.” Should the state’s Democrats get their way, a new congressional district map from the state’s Independent Redistricting Commission could be presented to voters soon.

The question of whether or not a new map will be drawn and put in place for the congressional races through the remainder of the decade now rests with the state’s highest court.

The decision will likely have serious implications on national politics. Last year, Republicans were able to flip four congressional districts in New York and help give the GOP a majority in the House of Representatives under the map drawn by the special master.

Should the Court of Appeals rule in the state Democrats’ favor, as many as six seats could be flipped into blue districts, aiding Democrats in their efforts to gain a majority in D.C.

For nearly two hours on Wednesday, Court of Appeals Judges Shirley Troutman, Jenny Rivera, Madeline Singas, Anthony Cannataro, Michael Garcia, Chief Judge Rowan Wilson and Appellate Division Justice Dianne Renwick — who was brought up to the court for the case after newly-appointed Court of Appeals Judge

Continued on page 16

Governor signs Diwali school holiday bill into law

Governor Kathy Hochul signed into law a bill put forth by Queens pols that established Diwali as a holiday for city schools.

Eagle photo by Ryan Schwach

By Ryan Schwach
Queens Daily Eagle

After years of advocacy, the governor signed into law a bill that looks to make Diwali a holiday for New York City public school students. On Tuesday night in Flushing, Governor Kathy Hochul signed into law the bill, which was sponsored by Queens electeds, State Assemblymember Jenifer Rajkumar and State Senator Joseph Addabbo. The bill signing, although a historic moment for many Diwali observers in New York City, marks another event in a tenuous and sometimes confusing process to get the holiday on the books.

“For so long, many South Asian New Yorkers have had to celebrate their most important holidays in part, or late at night because parents worked and children were at school,” Hochul said at the Hindu Temple Society of North America in Flushing. “I know that it’s been difficult — this is an important meaningful holiday.”

“We are here today for one reason, to say, ‘No more,’” Hochul added. Diwali, a major holiday celebrated by members...

See story on page 2

Vol. 69, No. 141

Follow us on Twitter @queenseagle
Like us on Facebook facebook.com/queenseagle
Visit us Online queenseagle.com
Bill that makes Diwali a school holiday signed into law

By Robert Abruzzese
Queens Daily Eagle

Chief Judge Janet L. DiFiore announced on Wednesday new members and leadership appointed to the Richard C. Failla LGBTQ Commission. The commission is tasked with advocating for LGBTQ issues within the legal community.

Hon. Grace M. Hanlon, a Supreme Court justice in the Eighth Judicial District, will serve as the new upstate co-chair, succeeding Hon. Joanne M. Winslow, and will join downstate co-chair Hon. Karen Lupuloff, a supervising judge in New York County Family Court in leading the commission.

Newly appointed members include Hon. Seth M. Marlin and Hon. Javier E. Vargas, both recently confirmed as Court of Claims judges.

“I am delighted to announce the appointments of these outstanding jurists to the Failla Commission, whose work is so crucial to the court system’s efforts to ensure equal access to justice for all races and cultures as well as to create a non-discriminatory and inclusive work environment,” Wilson said. “I am confident that Justice Hanlon, together with Judge Lupuloff, will lead the commission further along that critically important path and am deeply grateful to the Commission’s members for their hard work and commitment toward that end.”

The Failla Commission, established in December 2016, has been tasked with addressing LGBTQ concerns in the courts and the legal profession. It strives for equal participation and access for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, according to the Unified Court System.

The commission’s initiatives range from enhancing judicial diversity to ensuring fair treatment of LGBTQ litigants in the courts. Collaboration with LGBTQ advocacy groups, bar associations and community organizations remains a key aspect of its mission to foster a more equitable and supportive environment within the state’s legal system.

Hanlon was the first openly LGBTQ justice elected to the Supreme Court in the Eighth Judicial District.

Marrin, recognized as New York’s first transgender judge and the first transgender man to serve in such a capacity in the U.S., previously held various influential roles in legal education and civil rights.

Vargas, who served in the Family Court in Kings County before his elevation, became the first openly gay and Latino judge on the Court of Claims.

Miller, who joined the Touro Law Center faculty in 2006, has been recognized for her teaching in areas such as Contracts, Business Law and theElimination of Brooklyn-Queens Day, and the other holidays remain intact.

The initial draft of Rajkumar’s bill included the axing of Brooklyn-Queens Day and adding Diwali, but as the most recent legislative session came to a close, that stipulation was stripped from the bill due to some support for the little-known holiday.

There were some people who were passionate about Brooklyn-Queens Day, they didn’t want to give it up,” Addabbo told the Eagle in June, declining to specify which legislators fought for the continuation of the holiday.

The final version of the bill did not include the elimination of Brooklyn-Queens Day, and didn’t identify a day to swap Diwali with, which Adams initially said was necessary.

The final bill left it up to the city’s Department of Education to determine how the holiday would be made into the school’s calendar.

Those questions, exacerbated by celebrations over the bill’s passage from Rajkumar and others, led to confusion as to where the bill stood.

There was even confusion this year, with some locals assuming that the Diwali holiday was already set in stone earlier this month, when the holiday took place.

“I think there was confusion as to whether or not the governor had already signed the bill,” said Aminia Kilawan-Narine Founder of the South Queens Women’s March and a vocal Diwali holiday advocate. “I definitely think they’re people who really did think it was a done deal, and to be fair, we were really close.”

The question that remained, however, is without the stipulation that Brooklyn-Queens Day or some other school holiday would be swapped out for Diwali, how would Diwali be put into the 180-day schedule?

According to the recently released public school calendar for the 2024-2025 school year, Friday, Nov. 1 is currently marked as a day off for school students to observe Diwali - and all the other holidays remain intact.

A spokesperson for the Department of Education told the Eagle that next year the school system worked out in a way that Diwali could be added without infringing on the mandated 180-day schedule.

“When it falls on the weekdays, [Diwali] will be observed,” the spokesperson said.

As for future years, where the schedule may not allow for a Diwali holiday, the spokesperson said the department will “make sure we are compliant with the laws.”

Regardless of any remaining questions or hesitance, with the governor’s signing of the bill and some strong political weight behind it, even once-skeptical advocates were excited that students will have off for Diwali next year.

“I finally do feel comfortable saying affirmatively that Diwali will be a New York City public school holiday next year,” said Kilawan-Narine. “I was one of the people that was like, ‘Well, it’s not a done deal yet.’”

“Now I’m excited to finally say I do believe it’s a done deal,” she added.

New leadership and members appointed to court system’s LGBTQ commission

By Robert Abruzzese
Queens Daily Eagle

Chief Judge Janet M. DiFiore announced on Wednesday new members and leadership appointed to the Richard C. Failla LGBTQ Commission. Eagle file photos by Robert Abruzzese.

There were some people who were passionate about Brooklyn-Queens Day, they didn’t want to give it up,” Addabbo told the Eagle in June, declining to specify which legislators fought for the continuation of the holiday.

The final version of the bill did not include the elimination of Brooklyn-Queens Day, and didn’t identify a day to swap Diwali with, which Adams initially said was necessary.

The final bill left it up to the city’s Department of Education to determine how the holiday would be made into the school’s calendar.

Those questions, exacerbated by celebrations over the bill’s passing from Rajkumar and others, led to confusion as to where the bill stood.

There was even confusion this year, with some locals assuming that the Diwali holiday was already set in stone earlier this month, when the holiday took place.

“I think there was confusion as to whether or not the governor had already signed the bill,” said Aminia Kilawan-Narine Founder of the South Queens Women’s March and a vocal Diwali holiday advocate. “I definitely think they’re people who really did think it was a done deal, and to be fair, we were really close.”

The question that remained, however, is without the stipulation that Brooklyn-Queens Day or some other school holiday would be swapped out for Diwali, how would Diwali be put into the 180-day schedule?

According to the recently released public school calendar for the 2024-2025 school year, Friday, Nov. 1 is currently marked as a day off for school students to observe Diwali - and all the other holidays remain intact.

A spokesperson for the Department of Education told the Eagle that next year the school system worked out in a way that Diwali could be added without infringing on the mandated 180-day schedule.

“When it falls on the weekdays, [Diwali]
Dear Readers,

During Pandemic, with limited opportunities to pick up our newspapers, we offered and sent print editions in a digital format to you.

Now we can mail hard copies to your homes and business if you prefer. Please send your request to receive copies to Jen Hopewell (jdh@brooklyneagle.com); please specify if you would like digital version of print editions sent to you as well.

Our newspapers, collectively and continuously, have been publishing for more than 600 years when you add up all the local news service. The HEIGHTS PRESS, BROOKLYN RECORD, and the SPECTATOR have been publishing since the 1930s; the HOME REPORTER since the 1950s and the PHOENIX, and the GAZETTE since the 1970s. BROOKLYN DAILY EAGLE, of course, goes back to 1841.

We hope you will support our efforts in local journalism.

Jen Hopewell,
Assistant to the Publisher
jdh@brooklyneagle.com
Mayor's Asian affairs liaison raised big money – and big questions about her conduct

By Yoav Gonen, Bianca Pallaro, Katie Honan, Tom Robbins and Haidee Chu

The CITY

In March 2021, a 33-year-old tech worker from Flushing, Queens, joined Eric Adams' mayoral campaign as a volunteer, working regularly with an effusive and understatedly powerful member of Adams' inner circle named Winnie Greco. Shortly after Adams got to City Hall, Greco, by then on the city payroll as the mayor's $100,000-a-year director of Asian affairs, promised the tech worker a job in the administration on the condition that he volunteer once more, he recently told THE CITY — this time on a kitchen renovation in her Brownsville home.

After two months of shuttleing a pair of local contractors to the small, white-shingled house and doing tasks that included buying, unloading, and stacking supplies from Home Depot, he was hired in July 2022 as a $62,215-a-year program coordinator at the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. Then things soured, he said, when he refused some of Greco's requests to do renovation work on city time and he stopped responding to her directives to come to her office to help respond to her emails and translate English-language messages into Chinese.

After 12 months on the job, he was fired. At roughly the same time the tech worker was volunteering on Adams' campaign, a Chinese-American business executive became a supporter as well, making significant in-kind contributions to the effort. In October 2021, the executive asked THE CITY to withhold their names. The executive outed the tech worker as a volunteer on Adams' campaign, a Chinese-American business executive became a supporter as well, making significant in-kind contributions to the effort.

The two accounts, made in detailed interviews over the past two months, raise questions over whether one of Adams' most trusted advisors and biggest fundraisers has potentially violated city ethics rules.

The allegations were shared with THE CITY, which requested a copy of the tech worker's annual performance review after the worker's name was revealed by the business executive. THE CITY was not able to obtain a copy of the tech worker's review.

The worker, who spoke on condition of anonymity to protect their job and personal relationship, said the tech worker’s name was revealed by the business executive.

“He added, “This matter is under review,” but, in response to multiple queries, wouldn’t say what is being reviewed and by which entity.

Greco referred all questions from THE CITY to the mayor’s office.

Lutvak characterized the tech worker as a junior staffer who was terminated for “documented cause,” but wouldn’t provide specific details after multiple queries from THE CITY, which viewed the worker’s annual performance review from May this year and his weekly work-track updates.

“This simply appears to be trumped up accusations by a disgruntled former employee who tried and failed to get his job back,” Lutvak said. Both the tech worker and the business executive supported their accounts with documentary evidence.

The campaign volunteer shared screenshots of his work on the Bronx house — including on weekdays after he started his government position — as well as a text message in which he told his boss he was helping Greco with her emails. The business person shared a copy of a signed check whose date correlates with the purported Greco meeting.

Richard Brillhart, former chair of the New York City Conflicts of Interest Board, said he’s not aware of any rule or decision that specifically deals with the situation described by the business executive, but pointed to a prohibition on improper use of a city position to fundraise for private charities.

“This could violate City Charter section 2604.1(b) — “no public servant shall engage in any business, transaction or private employment . . . which is in conflict with the proper discharge on his or her official duties,” said Brillhart, a law professor at Columbia University.

He said the allegations described by the tech worker appear more clear-cut.

“What’s obvious is that it’s clearly in violation of the city’s ethics rules for a public servant to force a subordinate to do personal errands for them whether it’s on work time or not on work time,” he said.

From Fundraiser to Family

Before Greco joined city government the day after Adams’ Jan. 1, 2022, swearing-in, she was an “Honorary Ambassador to the Brooklyn Borough President” when Adams held the office from 2014 to 2021, per a spokesperson at the time.

She was also a prolific fundraiser, unpaid by either Borough Hall or Adams’ campaigns, with the might to reportedly help raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for Adams’ campaign in a single night.

In her eight-year volunteer role with the borough president, Greco pitched Chinese government officials, business people and others for meetings and public appearances with Adams. Some of the business people would later host fundraisers for Adams’ mayoral campaign.

For years, Greco, who emigrated from Fujian province in China and whose Chinese name is Zheng Qirong, would also shepherd Adams and other New York elected officials and business people on trips to China — dating back to a 1998 excursion with two dozen state lawmakers that lasted 15 days, according to an online posting from a corporation founded by Greco.

Now, ensconced in an administration that runs much like a family, Greco is part of its core.

She was one of only about a dozen associates on stage with Adams at his mayoral swearing-in ceremony at Times Square in the early hours of Jan. 1, 2022.

Earlier this year, she traveled to a work-related gathering in San Francisco, along with Adams’ son, Jordan, to blur the lines between his public and personal affairs.

And while she has often operated behind the scenes, Greco’s influence has become more visible at Gracie Mansion. Greco’s Chinese holiday events — like the one described by the business executive — who told THE CITY of the $10,000 donation request — bring throngs of business and professional association leaders, many of them campaign contributors seeking to gain access to Adams.

At Greco’s celebration of the Chinese Mid-Autumn Harvest Festival at the mayor’s official residence, Adams’ chief confidant and top political advisor at City Hall, Ingrid Lewis-Martin, called Greco her “friend” and “advocate.”

She then introduced Greco’s mother, who was visiting from Hong Kong, to the crowd — and to the mayor.

“I have the pleasure of introducing Winnie’s mom to her son, her son who she’s beautiful — and to everyone in this audience,” Greco then said.

Lewis-Martin then said to Adams, who was standing off stage, “Come out here and meet your mom.”

Money, Money, Money

As Adams positioned himself for a run for mayor in his second term at Borough Hall, the role of Chinese-American donors, with Greco’s help as a volunteer fundraiser, began to emerge in a critical way. This was the moment, early in a campaign, when a mayoral hopeful seeks to establish his gravitas with a display of fundraising might.

Adams’ first large fundraiser was held on April 18, 2018, at the Royal Queen Restaurant in Flushing’s New World Mall, and was organized by Greco in accordance with sources in the Chinese-American community.

The City Campaign Finance Board records show an additional $46,000 in donations that day from largely Chinese-American donors, but the Adams’ campaign didn’t link the donations to the event.

When Adams experienced a major setback that June — committing a political blunder that turned some of his Chinese-American supporters against him — he tapped Greco to bail him out.

Mayor Eric Adams poses with advisor Winnie Greco at the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival at Meadow Lake in Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Aug. 12, 2023.

Credit: Caroline Rubinstein-Weiss/Mayoral Photography

Continued on page 10

Thursday, November 16, 2023 • Queens Daily Eagle • 3
As the US Begins to Build Offshore Wind Farms, Questions Remain About Impact

By Erin Meyer-Gutbrod and David Nowacek

The Conversation

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, which is part of the U.S. Department of the Interior and regulates offshore energy production, asked the National Academies to conduct this study. Regulators wanted to better understand how installing and operating offshore, fixed-bottom wind turbine generators would affect physical oceanographic processes, such as tides, waves and currents, and in turn how those changes could affect the ecosystem.

For example, offshore wind turbines decrease wind speeds behind them, and the presence of their structures makes the water more turbulent. These changes could affect ocean currents, surface wind speeds and other factors that influence hydrodynamics—the structure and movement of the water around the turbines.

The Nantucket Shoals region is a large, shallow area in the Atlantic that extends south of Cape Cod. Our report focused on it because this is the first large-scale offshore wind farm area in the U.S., and the region has been included in several recent hydrodynamic modeling studies.

Why are North Atlantic right whales of special concern?

North Atlantic right whales are critically endangered. Scientists estimate that the population is down to just 356 animals.

This species was almost driven to extinction after centuries of commercial whaling. Even though the whales have been protected from whaling for almost 100 years, they are still accidentally killed when they are struck by vessels or become entangled in fishing gear. These two sources of mortality are responsible for most documented juvenile and adult right whale deaths over the past 25 years.

There are options for protecting them, such as slowing or rerouting boats, shortening the fishing season or even modifying fishing gear to make it more whale-safe. However, regulators need to know where the whales are going to be and when they’ll be there, so they can put those protections in place.

It’s usually hard to figure out where whales are because they have large habitats and spend most of their time below the surface of the water, where observers can’t see them. Recently it’s gotten even harder, because climate change is causing whales to shift where and when they feed.

Currently, right whales are spending more time around the Nantucket Shoals region. This means scientists and managers need to make sure that wind energy development in the area is happening safely and that threats to whales in the area are reduced.

How might offshore wind farms affect right whales in the study area?

Right whales are filter feeders that consume huge quantities of tiny zooplankton. The whales need to find large, dense patches of zooplankton at appropriate water depths in order to feed. Altering waves, tides and currents in ways that affect where their prey are located could affect whale feeding or cause the whales to change foraging habitats.

We concluded that it is critical to consistently monitor right whales and their prey within and outside the region, because we don’t know whether wind development will cause an increase, a decrease or no change to their zooplankton prey. Consistent monitoring will allow managers to mitigate potential negative impacts on the whales.

Researchers will need to collect data during all phases of wind farm construction and operation and develop robust models to determine whether wind farms will affect prey availability for right whales in the study area. Even once they do this research, it will still be difficult to isolate potential impacts from wind farms.

There is a tremendous amount of both natural and human-driven variability and change in this region, including tides, seasonal changes in water temperature and long-term ocean warming driven by climate change. Climate-driven shifts in prey in distant regions, such as the Bay of Fundy or the Gulf of St. Lawrence, may also change how right whales use the Nantucket Shoals region.

Development of the first wind energy farms in the Nantucket Shoals region is a valuable opportunity to better understand hydrodynamic impacts of turbines on marine ecosystems. We expect that it will help guide future development of wind farms along the U.S. East Coast.

What are the most important knowledge gaps?

Few studies have been done to understand hydrodynamics around wind energy turbines, and those that exist focus on European offshore wind farms in the North Sea, where conditions are different from Nantucket Shoals. Large turbines of the size planned for the Nantucket Shoals region have not been built yet in U.S. waters.

Researchers have tried to model the hydrodynamic impacts of turbines, but their results don’t always agree with each other. There’s a need for more work to compare different types of models with each other, and with actual observations in the ocean, to make sure that they represent key processes like tides, stratification, turbulence and drag correctly.

The most accurate outputs will likely come from using a range of models. Oceanographers might start with models that predict what happens as water moves past a single turbine. These results then would inform models that predict the effects of an entire wind farm. Then results from wind farm-scale models would be incorporated into models that predict regional ocean circulation.

There are also a lot of knowledge gaps on the biology side, including questions about what species of zooplankton are in the Nantucket Shoals region, where they come from and what makes them aggregate into patches that are dense enough for right whales to eat. Right whale feeding in the Nantucket Shoals region isn’t well understood, so scientists need more observations to determine which zooplankton types are targeted by right whales and where and when they feed.

Does the report call for slowing offshore wind development until these questions are answered?

No, and we were not asked to provide recommendations for how the wind industry should proceed with construction.

Nantucket Shoals is one of many regions where large-scale wind farms will be built in U.S. waters over the coming decades. Our committee advised federal regulators and other relevant organizations to conduct observational and modeling research to better understand hydrodynamic and ecological processes before, during and after wind farm construction. These studies will be critical for understanding and addressing environmental impacts from offshore wind farm development.

Erin L. Meyer-Gutbrod is assistant professor of earth, ocean and environment at the University of South Carolina. Douglas Nowacek is professor of conservation technology in environment and engineering at Duke University.
LET US TELL YOUR STORY

We can even reach backseat multi-taskers

Effective ad campaigns for Less than you spend on coffee.

Contact us about seasonal promotions online and in print.

Ask for a consultation:

BROOKLYN: jdh@eagleurbanmedia.com

QUEENS: jdh@queenspublicmedia.com
For Legal Advertising in the Queens Daily Eagle and assistance filing notices

Contact Gina Osnovich, Legal Advertising Manager
Legals@queenspublicmedia.com
Nets run past Orlando to improve to 2-1 in NBA Cup play

By John Torenli, Sports Editor
Brooklyn Daily Eagle

Spencer Dinwiddie shot the Nets right back into serious contention for a berth in the NBA Cup’s knockout rounds.

Having split its first two road contests in the league’s newly created In-Season Tournament, Brooklyn was desperate to climb back above .500 and remain in the hunt for the top spot in Eastern Conference Group C Tuesday night at Downtown’s Barclays Center.

Dinwiddie answered the call when it mattered most, scoring 12 of his season-high 29 points in the fourth quarter by nailing every shot he took as the Nets rallied for a 124-104 rout of the Orlando Magic in front of 17,361 satisfied customers on the corner of Atlantic and Flatbush.

Deadlocked at 84-84 with just under a minute left in the third quarter, Brooklyn (6-1, 2-1 NBA Cup) went on a 19-5 burst highlighted by Dinwiddie’s pinpoint accuracy.

The 6-foot-5 guard, always a fan favorite and enjoying his second stint here after arriving back in Brooklyn in the wake of the blockbuster deal that sent Kyrie Irving to Dallas in February, buried a 25-footer to give the Nets a 100-89 cushion with 8:13 left.

Dinwiddie converted a three-point play, drilled another 3-pointer and capped his perfect period with a 24-footer in the fourth quarter.

Spencer Dinwiddie rose to the fourth-quarter challenge Tuesday night in Downtown Brooklyn.

The Nets regained their thanks to Dinwiddie, who filled in at the point for injured starter Ben Simmons (back).

“Obviously (Dinwiddie) had a great quarter,” said Cam Johnson, who scored 21 points on 7-of-11 shooting in the best of his three games since returning from a calf injury that shelved him for two weeks.

“Really gave us a big lift with some timely buckets,” he added. “That kind of hurts the other team’s confidence. Guys played well across the board.”

Mikal Bridges had 21 points and Brooklyn’s “Bench Mob” continued to show off the Nets’ depth with Cam Thomas (ankle) out of action as well.

The Nets are only behind Boston (1-0) in Group C and 2-1 in NBA Cup play Tuesday.

NOTHING BUT NET: Simmons, who missed the previous three games due to an apparent hip injury, had an MRI exam this week that revealed a nerve impingement in the lower left side of his back, according to the Associated Press.

He will miss at least another week before being reevaluated by the Nets training staff. “Ben was day-to-day. He was improving,” Vaughn said. “It got to a point where obviously he wasn’t playing, so we wanted to be extremely thorough, so (he) got an MRI… which showed a left-side impingement.” ... Brooklyn boasts a 16-4 mark against Orlando here at Barclays Center. ... The Nets will be in Miami Thursday night before flying back to host Philadelphia here Sunday afternoon at 3 p.m.
LONDON — Ramifications of a ruckus — it’s about oil: Climate activist Greta Thumberg, center, arrives at the Westminster Magistrates Court, in London, Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2023, where she has to appear, following her charges with a public order offense after she was arrested while taking part in a protest against a conference in London described as “the Oscars of oil.”

Photo: Alberto Pezzali/AP

LONDON — Public and outspoken — critics prod the Supreme Court: A Protester stands outside the Supreme Court in London, Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2023. Britain’s Supreme Court has ruled that the government’s contentious plan to send some migrants on a one-way trip to Rwanda is illegal.

Photo: Kirsty Wigglesworth/AP

LOS ANGELES — Still surreal — the continuing visions of an empty freeway in the middle of LA: Smoke rises from a small fire as motorists exit through a ramp off Interstate 10, where a section of the freeway is closed due to a recent fire in Los Angeles, Tuesday, Nov. 14, 2023. It will take at least three weeks to repair the freeway damaged in an unrelated arson fire, the California governor said Tuesday, leaving the city already accustomed to soul-crushing traffic without part of a vital artery that serves hundreds of thousands of people daily.

Photo: Jae C. Hong/AP

DALLAS — All strong Texas affiliations somehow boil down to horses: Former United States President George W. Bush, left, holds up a shirt with First Lady Laura Bush during an NCAA college basketball game between SMU and Texas A&M in Dallas, Tuesday, Nov. 14, 2023.

Photo: LM Otero/AP

DALLAS — All strong Texas affiliations somehow boil down to horses: Former United States President George W. Bush, left, holds up a shirt with First Lady Laura Bush during an NCAA college basketball game between SMU and Texas A&M in Dallas, Tuesday, Nov. 14, 2023.

Photo: LM Otero/AP

DALLAS — All strong Texas affiliations somehow boil down to horses: Former United States President George W. Bush, left, holds up a shirt with First Lady Laura Bush during an NCAA college basketball game between SMU and Texas A&M in Dallas, Tuesday, Nov. 14, 2023.

Photo: LM Otero/AP

Our World In Pictures
VATICAN — Behind those flowers is the bea-
tific face of a popu-
lar pontiff: Pope Francis
is presented with a bunch
of flowers by the faith-
ful during the weekly gen-
eral audience in St. Pe-
ter’s Square at the Vatican,
Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2023.
Photo: Gregorio Borgia/AP

BUENOS AIRES — An expert warms up — he’s allowed to kiss
the ball but not touch with his arms: Argentina’s Lionel Messi con-
trols the ball during a training session of the national soccer team be-
fore a qualifying soccer match for the FIFA World Cup 2026, against
Uruguay, at the Argentina Soccer Association facilities in Buenos Aires,
Argentina, Tuesday, Nov. 14, 2023.
Photo: Gustavo Garello/AP

ILLINOIS — ‘Gimme the ball, gimme the ball, gimme the ball’: Illinois forward Coleman Hawkins
(33) fouls Marquette forward Oso Ighodaro as he tries to wrestle the ball from Ighodaro during the sec-
ond half of an NCAA college basketball game Tuesday, Nov. 14, 2023, in Champaign, Ill.
Photo: Charles Rex Arbogast/AP

MUMBAI — Airborne celebration of a “century”: India’s Virat Kohli celebrates his century during
the ICC Men’s Cricket World Cup first semifinal match between India and New Zealand in Mumbai, In-
dia, Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2023. Kohli hit his record 50th century in one-day internationals at the Cricket
World Cup on Wednesday, surpassing the mark he shared with countryman Sachin Tendulkar.
Photo: Rafiq Maqbool/AP
Mayor’s Asian affairs liaison raised big money — and big questions about her conduct

Winnie Greco speaks at a Gracie Mansion Lunar New Year celebration, Feb. 8, 2022.
Credit: Michael Applebee/Mayoral Photography Office

Mayor’s Asian affairs liaison raised big money — and big questions about her conduct

Winnie Greco speaks at a Gracie Mansion Lunar New Year celebration, Feb. 8, 2022.
Credit: Michael Applebee/Mayoral Photography Office

Winnie Greco speaks at a Gracie Mansion Lunar New Year celebration, Feb. 8, 2022.
Credit: Michael Applebee/Mayoral Photography Office

Winnie Greco speaks at a Gracie Mansion Lunar New Year celebration, Feb. 8, 2022.
Credit: Michael Applebee/Mayoral Photography Office

Winnie Greco speaks at a Gracie Mansion Lunar New Year celebration, Feb. 8, 2022.
Credit: Michael Applebee/Mayoral Photography Office

Winnie Greco speaks at a Gracie Mansion Lunar New Year celebration, Feb. 8, 2022.
Credit: Michael Applebee/Mayoral Photography Office

Winnie Greco speaks at a Gracie Mansion Lunar New Year celebration, Feb. 8, 2022.
Credit: Michael Applebee/Mayoral Photography Office

Winnie Greco speaks at a Gracie Mansion Lunar New Year celebration, Feb. 8, 2022.
Credit: Michael Applebee/Mayoral Photography Office

Winnie Greco speaks at a Gracie Mansion Lunar New Year celebration, Feb. 8, 2022.
Credit: Michael Applebee/Mayoral Photography Office

Winnie Greco speaks at a Gracie Mansion Lunar New Year celebration, Feb. 8, 2022.
Credit: Michael Applebee/Mayoral Photography Office

Winnie Greco speaks at a Gracie Mansion Lunar New Year celebration, Feb. 8, 2022.
Credit: Michael Applebee/Mayoral Photography Office

Winnie Greco speaks at a Gracie Mansion Lunar New Year celebration, Feb. 8, 2022.
Credit: Michael Applebee/Mayoral Photography Office

Winnie Greco speaks at a Gracie Mansion Lunar New Year celebration, Feb. 8, 2022.
Credit: Michael Applebee/Mayoral Photography Office

Winnie Greco speaks at a Gracie Mansion Lunar New Year celebration, Feb. 8, 2022.
Credit: Michael Applebee/Mayoral Photography Office

Winnie Greco speak...
Some NYC families struggle to use pandemic food benefits, as millions of dollars remain unspent

By Julian Shen-Berro

Chalkbeat

Myrna Mangual, a parent coordinator at P.S. 35 in the Bronx, hears from at least 10 parents a week who are confused about how to access pandemic food benefits. The benefits — known as the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer, or P-EBT — went out to all public school families and others in New York City, with several installments issued since 2020. Intended to cover the cost of meals usually provided for free at school, the funds have been praised by advocates, who have called the program a “game changer” for many of the city’s struggling families.

But for some of the parents Mangual works with, the money hasn’t been easy to use. Those families aren’t among tens of millions of dollars in potential New York City benefits remain unused. In the city, families of at least 90% of eligible children had not redeemed a new allotment of the pandemic food benefits as of last month, according to state data previously shared with Chalkbeat.

Those funds, which total at least $35 million, could begin to expire after December if they continue to go unspent.

Some parents at P.S. 35 never received their state-issued P-EBT cards, while others say they didn’t see certain disbursements added to their accounts. When calling the state’s P-EBT helpline, some parents say they’ve had trouble reaching anyone who can help and often stumbled on the automated responses or experiencing long wait times to speak to an agent, before eventually turning elsewhere for help.

Mangual, however, said she doesn’t know how to help the families at her school — where more than 95% of students come from low-income backgrounds and nearly 60% are English-language learners, according to city data. She said she’s never received training on how to guide families if faced with the benefits.

“This is where my frustration comes from,” she said: “We know nothing.”

In May, New York’s Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, or OTDA, has issued $6.3 billion in P-EBT benefits, with about 60% going directly to SNAP nearly 6 months after their expiration. The remaining benefits are held by those who received the funds on state-issued P-EBT cards.

The state maintains detailed P-EBT information on its website and operates a phone helpline at 1-833-452-0096. OTDA officials said they’ve provided information on each phase of the benefits to the state’s Education Department, which then distributed that information to local school districts.

The city’s Education Department said it has promoted information about the benefits on its website as well as on social media, and referred families with questions to OTDA.

Still, parents, schools, and community organizations say there’s been a disconnect, and many families aren’t receiving the information they need to take advantage of the benefits. Difficulties accessing the funds come as the need for them is especially high.

Nearly 75% of New Yorkers felt it was harder to afford groceries than a year prior, while more than half worried they would be unable to pay their food costs if faced with an unexpected $500 expense, according to a survey conducted by No Kid Hungry New York in April.

Similarly, one parent program manager for No Kid Hungry, stressed the urgent need for the benefits.

“We’re glad these programs are being stood up and recognize it’s no small task to administer them,” she said in a statement. “But there’s a clear opportunity to increase outreach to families and give them direct lines of communication to understand what benefits they’re eligible for and when they’ll be available.”

They get this right, but only if we move quickly.”

Education consultant David Rubel wants to see more resources to reach families, who are often struggling to access food and money during the pandemic.

“They are our neighbors and friends and family members, and they may just be using P-EBT dollars because of minimal publicity,” said Rubel, who obtained the data on unused benefits through a public records request.

Families say it’s hard to get help

Carol Jackson, a Queens parent, said she received a text message in July notifying her that she’d soon receive a P-EBT card in the mail, but it never arrived. As a SNAP recipient at the time, she should have seen her P-EBT benefits added directly to her existing account, but Jackson added she wasn’t sure whether the benefits were ever provided there, either.

She tried calling the helpline, but couldn’t get through to an agent, she said. Meanwhile, Lynn Lu, a Manhattan parent and professor at the CUNY School of Law, said she experienced difficulties accessing the benefits last year on one of her children’s P-EBT cards, after they switched schools. She tried calling for assistance to check the balance on the card or figure out how to get it replaced, but wasn’t able to get a clear answer.

As part of her work at CUNY, she teaches a law school clinic where they represent clients in maintaining public assistance, like SNAP. But even as a member of listserves discussing such benefits, Lu said she was only “dimly aware” that another disbursement of P-EBT funds had rolled out this fall.

“It does raise this question of: How is word getting out to the general public?” she said, adding she couldn’t recall her children’s schools ever saying anything about the pandemic food benefits.

All families with valid phone numbers on file with their school district should receive a text message when new benefits become available, according to state officials. But some families said they never received such messages, even if they got initial notifications about their P-EBT cards.

In a statement, Anthony Farmer, a spokesperson for OTDA, said the agency has “worked tirelessly” to distribute the benefits to millions of residents across the state.

“The agency also conducted extensive public outreach and worked closely with advocacy organizations across the state to ensure eligible families are aware of these benefits and could take steps to redeem them,” he said.

Meanwhile, other disbursements will continue to be sent out to families through the end of December — including at least $391 per child sent out for the summer of 2022 and the 2021-22 school year, as well as the $125 per child distributed for the summer of 2023 — according to OTDA.

One school reports widespread issues

Officials at the Lexington School for the Deaf in Queens say families at the school have not received P-EBT funds since the first disbursement in 2020. The school, which receives free meals through the city’s Education Department, serves students who are deaf from across the five boroughs.

Lori Glick, a social worker at the school, said families desperately need the extra support.

“There’s not enough food at home,” she said. “From the minute the announcement is made, they’re waiting for this money.”

State officials did not comment on the school’s specific situation, but said that not all children were eligible for all phases of P-EBT. For example, some of the allotments were based on COVID-related absences during the school year. Officials urged families with questions to call the P-EBT helpline.

Staff at the school said they remain unsure why families haven’t received more recent allotments of benefits.

“Honestly, it makes it look like we’re not doing something,” said Laura Cruz, the school’s director of pupil personnel services. “The families, they work with us, but then they get a little frustrated like, ‘What is Lexington not doing?’ And I don’t know if there’s something that we’re not doing.”

Community organizations report language barriers, other challenges

Both the P-EBT helpline and OTDA website offer information in languages other than English. Callers to the helpline can receive assistance from either an agent who speaks their native language or through an interpreter, while information posted online can be translated via a function at the bottom of the webpage, officials said.

But for some families with limited proficiency in English, using the benefits remains a constant struggle, said Wei Zhang, a program supervisor at the Chinese-American Planning Council.

Zhang works primarily with Chinese American families in Brooklyn who have children with disabilities and who have faced unemployment or been limited to part-time work since the onset of the pandemic. Many parents that he works with speak little English, making it hard for them to seek out help.

There has been consistent confusion about how to activate P-EBT cards, how to use the benefits, and when more funds will be added, said Zhang, who has had to translate information about the benefits for families.

P-EBT can be particularly essential for those who earn just enough to be ineligible for SNAP benefits, added Mary Soriano and Sindy Rivera, senior case managers at WHEDco, a community development organization in the South Bronx.

“Pretty much all of their income is going towards rent, utilities, or child care,” Soriano said of the families they work with. “The pandemic EBT, as well as regular SNAP benefits, is what helps them feed their family — their children — every single day.”

But the vast majority of families they work with speak limited English, and some do not have consistent access to phones or computers, further complicating their ability to learn about and access their benefits.

Confusion surrounding the benefits has also been exacerbated by scams intended to steal them, like skimming or phishing. Zhang said. He’s seen families in Brooklyn lose their P-EBT benefits to such scams.

State officials have advised all EBT card holders, including P-EBT cardholders, to “remain vigilant” about potential scams. Taking basic precautions — like carefully inspecting point-of-sale devices, changing PINs regularly, and reviewing transaction history often — can help protect the benefits.

While the state received federal approval to replace stolen SNAP benefits in some circumstances earlier this year, P-EBT benefits are not eligible for replacement under federal guidelines, officials said.

Other states face P-EBT distribution issues

New York isn’t the only state to face hurdles in getting families to spend the federal benefits. In Maine, distribution of P-EBT cards this year spurred confusion among families and some school administrators. In California, nearly $1 billion in benefits remained unused as of July. Meanwhile, in Mississippi, more than 14,000 families had their cards deactivated by mistake in 2021. Benefit scams, too, have occurred across the country.

Though some families in New York City have encountered difficulties, most stress the benefits remain important.

Mangual, the parent coordinator, said she wished there were more avenues for parents to seek help. If schools had a point person to turn to for answers within their district, for example, it would be far easier to assist families, she said.

To Lu, the Manhattan parent, one of New York’s strengths during the pandemic was a pre-established “expectation that everyone is going to be able to get nutrition assistance through school, without any stigma.”

“That message is great,” she said. “But even when you do something helpful, there’s still going to be glitches.”
2ND DEPARTMENT/PUBLIC LEGAL NOTICES

New York state sued PepsiCo this week, alleging the food giant is partly responsible for litter that winds up in bodies of water that supply Buffalo with drinking water.

By Maysoon Khan

The Associated Press

New York state sued PepsiCo on Wednesday in an effort to hold the soda-and-snack food giant partly responsible for litter that winds up in bodies of water that supply the city of Buffalo with drinking water.

The lawsuit, filed in state Supreme Court by Attorney General Letitia James, accuses PepsiCo of producing and selling irresponsible packaging and wrappers, some of which inevitably wind up floating or blowing into the Buffalo River or are otherwise discarded by customers,....

Researchers say that some discarded plastic ends up in tiny particles, called microplastics, small enough to be ingested. Microplastics have been found in Lake Erie, which serves as Buffalo’s drinking water supply, as well as in fish species that have been found to contain the lake, according to the lawsuit.

New York sues PepsiCo in effort to hold it responsible for litter that winds up in rivers

New York state sued PepsiCo this week, alleging the food giant is partly responsible for litter that winds up in bodies of water that supply Buffalo with drinking water.
Demonstrators stage outside of the Chinese Consulate to protest the participation in the APEC Summit of Chinese President Xi Jinping, Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2023, in San Francisco.

AP Photo/Tony Avelar

2ND DEPARTMENT / NEW BUSINESS FORMATIONS

11691
MILKY WEIGH LACTATION, LLC
NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR AUTHORITY OF MILKY WEIGH LACTATION, LLC, A FOREIGN LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY (LLC). APPLICATION FOR AUTHORITY FILED WITH SECY. OF STATE OF NEW YORK (SSNY) ON 7/26/2023. LLC ORGANIZED IN OH ON 12/18/2018. NY OFFICE LOCATION: KINGS COUNTY. SSNY DESIGNATED AS AGENT OF LLC UPON WHOM PROCESS AGAINST IT MAY BE SERVED. SSNY SHALL MAIL COPY OF PROCESS TO: THE LLC, 1032 BAY 24TH STREET, FAR ROCKAWAY, NY, 11691. OFFICE ADDRESS IN JURISDICTION OF ORGANIZATION: THE LLC, 1032 BAY 24TH STREET, FAR ROCKAWAY, NY 11691. COPY OF ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION ON FILE WITH SECY. OF OH, 22 NORTH 4TH STREET, 16TH FLOOR COLUMBUS OH 43215. PURPOSE OF LLC ANY LAWFUL PURPOSE.

12207
LOTUS LEO LLC
NOTICE OF FORMATION OF LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY (LLC). NAME: LOTUS LEO LLC. ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION FILED WITH SECRETARY OF STATE OF NEW YORK (SSNY) ON 7/18/2023. NY OFFICE LOCATION: QUEENS COUNTY. SSNY HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS AGENT OF THE LLC UPON WHOM PROCESS AGAINST IT MAY BE SERVED. SSNY SHALL MAIL A COPY OF ANY PROCESS AGAINST THE LLC SERVED UPON HIM/HER TO: REPUBLIC REGISTERED AGENT SERVICES INC. 54 STATE STREET, STE 804 ALBANY, NY, 12207. PURPOSE/CHARACTER OF LLC: ANY LAWFUL PURPOSE.

12260
OPTIM SQUARE LLC
NOTICE OF FORMATION OF LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY (LLC). NAME: OPTIM SQUARE LLC. ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION FILED WITH SECRETARY OF STATE OF NEW YORK (SSNY) ON 10/12/2023. NY OFFICE LOCATION: QUEENS COUNTY. SSNY HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS AGENT OF THE LLC UPON WHOM PROCESS AGAINST IT MAY BE SERVED. SSNY SHALL MAIL A COPY OF ANY PROCESS AGAINST THE LLC SERVED UPON HIM/HER TO: REGISTERED AGENT SOLUTIONS, INC. 99 WASHINGTON AVENUE, STE 804 ALBANY, NY, 12260. PURPOSE/CHARACTER OF LLC: ANY LAWFUL PURPOSE.
Parents are calling for the ouster of the controversial principal of P.S. 398 in Queens, who did not inform them on the day that a student brought a knife to school and told other kids he intended to use it to attack a fellow second-grader he may have considered a romantic rival.

The principal, Erica Ureña-Thus, waited three days before notifying the school community about “an incident of a sharp kitchen object” — while telling them that “nothing untoward was found.” She then took an additional two days to speak with the school’s parents about it, according to multiple sources who spoke with THE CITY.

At least two other students saw the second grader with the knife during the school day on Nov. 1, and a staff member confiscated it from him after one of those students told an adult what they had seen. The staff member in turn referred the matter to Ureña-Thus.

Two days later, the boy who brought it — and who had remained at the school — physically threatened one of the classmates who’d seen him with the weapon, according to that child’s mother.

The day after that, a Saturday, Ureña-Thus finally notified the school community, including the parents of the affected children, with a message posted on P.S. 398’s internal communications board, which was reviewed by THE CITY.

The school’s internal investigation had substantiated that the boy had indeed threatened his daughter.

Two mothers — Sarah Wu, who believes her son is one of the alleged targets of the boy who allegedly brought the knife and made the threats, because he has not been named by the school — and Mary, whose daughter saw the boy with the knife — said that public message was the first time they had heard directly from school administration about the incident at all. (Mary spoke on the condition that THE CITY would withhold her last name.)

“I am trying to be strong for my kids, and also for all the parents’ kids who stood up and saved my son’s life,” said Wu, who told THE CITY she only learned about the knife when a parent approached her during pick-up on Friday. “This is not what a little minor should go through in the public school system.”

She added that her son still doesn’t know about the other boy’s plan to attack him with a knife.

Two sources said that Ureña-Thus — who did not return THE CITY’s requests for comment about the incident that became the main topic of discussion at a meeting of District 30 Community Education Monday night — told teachers not to discuss the incident at all, citing student privacy protocols.

“My daughter is not OK,” Mary, speaking in her native Spanish, told THE CITY. She added that the boy with the weapon told her daughter that he had intended to harm Wu’s son because he saw him as a rival for another student’s affection.

Mary, for example, said she learned of the knife incident not from the school but from her daughter at pick up, who told her mom she’d had a bad day.

In a Nov. class, her daughter explained, a classmate opened his lunchbox and showed her the knife, telling her to use it to hurt another boy during the lunch period. She told her mother that she scolded the boy and said she would tell him, according to Mary’s recollection of their conversation afterward with her daughter.

After she pressed for details, Mary’s daughter told her the student brought a sharp knife that looked like a wooden handle. “I’m not allowed to tell you.” A colored drawing the girl made for school administrators who interviewed her that day, which was obtained by THE CITY, portrays what appears to be a sharp knife with a wooden handle.

But it was another student, who saw the knife during lunch later in the day, who ultimately alerted a school aide, according to sources with knowledge of the situation. The aide then brought the knife to Ureña-Thus, who subsequently returned it to the student’s parent, “who denied packing it,” according to the Nov. 6 email to the principal from Wu.

“I think my son could have died, because if the parent never told me I would have been careful, to be aware of your surroundings,” said Wu, who was not immediately targeted according to the accounts of other kids. “I feel like I’m living in a world that I don’t believe in anymore.”

“The Safety and Well Being of All Children”

In an email addressed to Wu on Nov. 10 after the parent went public with her concerns about her son’s safety, assistant principal Mondal Trisha said the administration “has conducted our investigation and we don’t have anything to say.”

But that doesn’t track with how others in the school community have expressed their concern about the situation.

The school’s investigation into the subsequent threats also substantiated Mary’s daughter’s claims, held in a Nov. 10 letter addressed to Mary. The school also found that the student’s threat constituted a violation of DOE rules against “student-to-student discrimination, harassment, intimidation and/or bullying,” but did not constitute “student-to-student harassment.”

Appropriate disciplinary and restorative measures have been taken to ensure the safety and well being of all children in our school community,” Ureña-Thus said.

Mary received that letter through a teacher at the school, she said, not directly from the principal, telling THE CITY in a Nov. 10 interview that the letter “didn’t say what result that investigation had reached.”

“We have developed a plan of action to support the student who was targeted,” she said. “We are doing everything we can to take measures to ensure he is comfortable in his learning environment.”

The school’s investigation into the subsequent threats also substantiated Mary’s daughter’s claims, held in a Nov. 10 letter addressed to Wu. The principal’s union, did not respond to THE CITY’s questioning.

The United Federation of Teachers, the union representing teachers and other school staff, also criticized the school administration’s response.

“Students are among those concerned that the P.S. 398 administration did not properly address a safety incident or provide staff or parents with timely updates,” said spokesperson Alison Gendar said in a statement. “It is DOE’s responsibility to provide a safe school environment for students and staff alike.”

Since the incidents, Wu said she’s been struggling to explain to her son how he has been put in harm’s way by the mother, who is “still trying to prepare myself to have that conversation with him when it comes to it.”

“I feel like I’m just nobody,” said Wu, who is calling for Ureña-Thus to resign. “This says a lot about our city, our system … I don’t know anyone’s nobody’s business. THE CITY is an independent, nonprofit news outlet dedicated to hard-hitting reporting that serves the people of New York.”
Continued from page 1

Caitlin Halligan recused herself from the case – heard arguments in Hoffmann v. the New York State Independent Redistricting Commission.

The case was brought by state Democrats, including Governor Hochul and State Attorney General Letitia James, and argues that the 2022 congressional map drawn by the court-appointed special master was only meant to be used in the 2022 congressional election, and not in the remaining four congressional elections slated for the rest of the decade.

Issues with the state’s redistricting process began relatively quickly. After beginning to collect public testimony, before their draft maps in 2021, the Independent Redistricting Commission, which was created in 2014 by a constitutional amendment in an effort to take map drawing powers out of the hands of the legislature, reached a standstill.

Required to submit a final map to the legislature for approval at the start of 2022, the IRC said that its members had reached a partisan deadlock, and told lawmakers that they wouldn’t be submitting a map at all.

As per a state law separate from the constitutional amendment, if the commission, state lawmakers took it upon themselves to draw and enact a set of congressional, Assembly and State Senate district maps.

Those maps were challenged in court by a group of Republicans, who alleged that the maps drawn by the lawmakers violated the constitution in two ways – because they were gerrymandered to favor Democratic incumbents and candidates and because they were drawn outside of the constitutionally-mandated process.

The case, known as Harkenrider v. Hochul, made its way to the Court of Appeals, which sided with the Republicans who brought the case. Following the top court’s decision, a lower court appointed a master to draw the maps, which would go on to be enacted and used in last year’s elections.

While the Democrats argued for new maps in the case heard by the court on Wednesday day that they don’t take issue with the current maps, they argued that New Yorkers were denied their right to a map from the IRC, which should be allowed a second shot at drawing the state’s congressional districts.

“We are not challenging the maps, but the remedy that was ordered in Harkenrider did not cure the procedural violation at issue in this case, which was the failure of the IRC to send a [final] map to the legislature,” said Aria Branch, an attorney representing the Democrats in the case.

But several of the Court of Appeals judges who ruled in favor of the Republicans in the previous case, including Cannataro, Garcia and Singas, were skeptical.

During one exchange, Cannataro argued that if New Yorkers deserved a map from the IRC, the petitioners should have brought a case the moment lawmakers began drawing district lines in 2022.

“What you said at the top of your argument is that you’ve come here to vindicate the IRC process,” Cannataro said. “The promulgation of the maps on February 3 completely took the IRC out of the picture, so, it seems as if you want to have it both ways.”

“Do you just want to set up maps that complies or conforms to what you think the maps should be?” he added.

In response, Branch said that the “petitioners want to live in districts that are drawn according to the IRC legislative process.”

“But that didn’t happen last time,” Garcia said. “You didn’t challenge it because you thought, ‘Okay, they can do it, the legislature can do this.’ If the one and all really is the IRC, those maps weren’t drawn by the IRC.”

The Court of Appeals is expected to issue a decision in the case in the coming weeks.

The make-up of the state’s top court is significantly different than it was when a redistricting case last came before the court.

No longer is the court led by former Chief Judge Janet DiFiore, who presided over a conservative majority, which also included Garcia, Singas and Cannataro, over the past several years.

It’s now led by Wilson, who wrote the dissenting opinion in the Harkenrider v. Hochul, and argued that the constitution had not been violated when lawmakers took it upon themselves to draw district lines after the IRC had failed to submit a final map.

Troutman and Rivera also ruled in the majority in the case, making Renwick, who is sitting on the court for the case in place of Halligan, the tie-breaking vote.

Should the court rule in favor of the petitioners, ordering a new map to be drawn by the IRC, the commission would likely begin the process of drawing new maps ahead of the 2024 election immediately.

Appellate Division symposium in Brooklyn explores the impact of AI on law

By Robert Abruzzese, Courthouse Editor

The Appellate Division, Second Department, presented a symposium on artificial intelligence on Tuesday titled “Contemplating the Future of Artificial Intelligence.”

Co-chaired by Justices Angela Iannacci and Deborah Dowling, the event, held at the courthouse in Brooklyn, brought together legal representatives from across the district’s ten counties, including district administrative judges, district attorneys and the president of the New York State Bar Association.

Presiding Justice Hector LaSalle opened the symposium, highlighting the crucial juncture at which the legal community stands regarding AI.

He stressed the importance of providing guardrails against AIs’ harmful effects and the need for active engagement from all stakeholders in the legal community.

“The Ailor movement is already having an impact on court practice and the legal profession in New York, throughout our nation and across the globe,” said LaSalle.

The symposium featured insights from Benjamin Liebman, Matthew Steka, Dorothy Auth and Luca Melchionna.

Liebman, a professor at Columbia Law School and director of the Hong Yen Chang Center for Chinese Legal Studies, provided an international perspective on the role of AI in the Chinese legal system, underlining its global impact.

Steka, a managing partner at Machina Ventures and a lecturer at UC Berkeley, combined his engineering background with legal insights to explore AIs’ transformative potential across industries, including the legal sector.

Auth, a partner at Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft with extensive experience in patent litigation and intellectual property, shared practical applications and limitations of AI in legal practice.

Melchionna, a transactional attorney with a focus on regulatory, compliance, and corporate law, and chair of the Technology and Venture Law Committee of the New York State Bar Association, delved into AIs’ regulatory landscape.

During the nearly four-hour symposium, Steka, an engineer and former art student, de-mystified AI, explaining its data-driven nature and the emergent behaviors it can exhibit. He addressed the implications of AI in legal research and document generation, cautioning against complacency and advocating for a more active review process of AI-generated outputs.

The potential risks he identified included lack of transparency, bias in training data, and unequal access to AI tools.

Steka shed light on AIs’ mathematical foundations and its ability to reflect societal trends, both good and bad.

“It is not magic, it is mathematics on a massive scale,” he said. “Because of the data, it is a mirror to our society which can have some bad outcomes.”

Steka discussed the inherent unpredictability and bias in AI systems, stressing the need for careful consideration in their legal application.

“AI has inputs and outputs and there is a black box in the middle, which is where the unpredictability happens,” he said. “Because it is data driven, it can mirror societal biases, which is a concern for the law.”

Auth discussed the judicial orders emerging in response to AIs’ use in legal filings and the broader implications for privacy and bias.

Auth also addressed the challenges and responsibilities that come with incorporating AI in legal work, underscoring the need for attorneys to verify the accuracy of AI-generated content.

“Our firm has blocked the use of ChatGPT for work assignments, at least for now,” Auth said. “I think that’s a cautious but wise thing to do until we better understand how this technology can be used.”

In response to a question about billing and time efficiency with AI, Steka discussed the potential for AI to streamline legal processes, leading to reduced costs.

“If you do use AI and it takes a lot less time, how do you deal with that?” he said. “The positive is that it will take a lot less time and the costs will go down.”

The symposium delved into AIs’ impact on traditional legal roles, including the potential for AI to increase predictability in law, thereby affecting the roles of mediators and arbitrators.

“This technology isn’t going to replace lawyers,” Melchionna said. “It will help them.”