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RMS End of Week Update 10/16/2026



(Photo by Anna Connors - Pool/Getty Images)

Hochul vs. Blakeman Debate

Incumbent Governor Kathy Hochul and Republican challenger Bruce Blakeman debated in the Spectrum News NY1 newsroom in the debate for Governor on Tuesday. During the debate they clashed over immigration enforcement, crime, utility costs, and other issues facing New Yorkers during their only debate of the gubernatorial campaign.

The Democratic governor and Nassau County executive repeatedly traded accusations over their records and policies, with Hochul frequently criticizing President Donald Trump's influence on New York and Blakeman seeking to hold the governor responsible for the state's challenges.

Immigration enforcement was a major point of contention, with Hochul criticizing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement operations in Nassau County and Blakeman defending local cooperation with federal authorities. “ICE is out of control, it's out of control in Nassau County,” Hochul said.

Blakeman blamed the governor’s sanctuary policies for the enforcement actions. “Kathy, it never would have happened but for your sanctuary policy,” he said.

Hochul also recounted the case of an 11-year-old boy whose father was detained by Nassau County police while going to a Home Depot. “Tell that to 11-year-old Norman who sobbed in my arms when local police, Nassau police, took his father when he was just going to a Home Depot, for God's sakes, and his father was sitting for months and months in a detention center,” Hochul said.

Blakeman countered by citing two women murdered in his county by people he described as undocumented immigrants. “How about two 30-year-old women murdered by illegal migrants in my county? What do you say to their families?” he asked.

The candidates also clashed over utility costs, with Blakeman blaming Hochul for rising rates and bills. “Donald Trump didn't raise utility rates 48 times, you did,” Blakeman said. “Donald Trump didn't increase our utility bills by 50% since you've become governor.” Hochul said Trump was standing in the way of New York’s energy projects. “I've got Donald Trump standing in the way of my energy projects,” she said.

On crime, Blakeman criticized the state’s cashless bail policies and other criminal justice reforms, pointing to retailers that keep products behind locked glass cases. “In Kathy Hochul's world, you got to ring a buzzer, a store clerk has to come out, unlock a glass door for you to buy a bottle of shampoo in New York state,” Blakeman said. “It's because we have a revolving door of criminality, cashless bail, raise the age, the whole deck.”

Hochul defended her administration’s approach, saying her government had taken action to address gun violence and retail theft. “When I became governor, it was gun crime that was skyrocketing, we tackled that. Retail theft— I gave millions of dollars to our district attorneys to change the laws and give them what they need to be able to reduce those crimes,” she said.

The candidates also disagreed over the financial health of New York’s farms, with Hochul blaming Trump’s tariffs for increasing the cost of supplies, including fertilizer, aluminum and wood shavings used in animal stalls. Blakeman argued

that farmers had been criticizing Hochul's policies even before Trump imposed the tariffs. Hochul rejected that criticism, saying farmers were doing well.

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani also came up during a question about a New York Times report that Blakeman had told Hasidic Jewish leaders that Hochul and Mamdani would fail to stop riots in their community. Blakeman criticized the mayor's views and values. "If you wanna campaign with him, that's fine, but I will tell you right now, I think Zohran Mamdani is an antisemite, I believe he's anti-Christian and I don't think he has American values," Blakeman said.

Hochul did not defend Mamdani directly. Instead, she defended the NYPD and Commissioner Jessica Tisch. "I support the leadership of Jessica Tisch, but for you to say they would stand down is just insulting to all those men and women," Hochul said.

The debate was the only scheduled face-to-face meeting between the candidates before Election Day. Early voting for the general election starts Saturday, Oct. 24, and Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 3.

To view the full debate please click [here](#).

To read the full article recapping the debate please click [here](#).

NYS Budget Director Issues Call Letter

Governor Hochul's top budget adviser warned in a letter to her cabinet that unforeseen federal actions and a deceleration in artificial intelligence investments may complicate the state's financial picture next year.

State Budget Director Blake Washington issued [his annual letter](#) to state agency and department heads this week, a missive that largely touted Hochul's record on school spending, taxpayer rebates and expanding child care.

New York's economy has been growing at a fast clip thanks in large part to a robust stock market, which has helped generate more revenue for the state. Yet there is a concern the growth of the AI sector won't last.

"The extent to which this continues is uncertain: as states and local governments continue to examine the environmental, social and economic concerns around the buildout of AI infrastructure, a slowdown of the investment may lead to a cooling of the equities market with an outsized impact on New York State's receipts," Washington wrote.

At the same time, he raised concerns that unspecified federal government actions, as well as ongoing inflation, offer another dose of uncertainty. "The road ahead will be

influenced heavily by Federal actions that have placed additional financial pressures on New York State and local governments, especially in the areas of health and human services," Washington wrote. "Stressors already facing the Federal budget, combined with persistent and elevated inflation will likely have a material effect on the value and duration of federal support well into the future."

The "call letter" is an annual message by the budget director that lays out the broad strokes of the state's fiscal climate and marks the unofficial start of the budget process. Washington called on department leaders to be mindful of spending and hiring "to otherwise ensure every taxpayer dollar spent results in the most cost-efficient outcome possible."

Governor Hochul is running for a second full term this year as polls have shown affordability to be a top concern among voters. Her Republican opponent, Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman, has hammered the governor over costs like utility bills, which he has pledged to cut in half. Washington's letter is silent on whether taxes need to be raised to help shore up New York City's finances as well as close a state budget gap. The governor is expected to come under pressure next year to boost income tax rates on wealthy people and corporations — an issue New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani campaigned on last year.

Governor Hochul continues to be lukewarm on pursuing tax hikes next year, even as pressure mounts from fellow Democrats. City Council Speaker Julie Menin said at a POLITICO economic forum that she'll support a state-level tax hike during next year's budget process in Albany. Menin said she's specifically interested in a "progressive" tax increase — likely meaning one that would target high-income earners — to create a new funding stream for an expansion of free child care programs in New York City.

Asked to respond to Menin's remarks on 1010 WINS, Governor Hochul signaled she has little appetite for broad-based income tax hikes and noted she used state funds to prop up the city's shaky finances in the last budget cycle. "I've gotten through all of my budgets without raising income taxes on New Yorkers," she said.

The governor, though, didn't fully rule out revisiting the tax issue next year while also noting cash continues to flow into the state's coffers. "So I will look at options, but right now, because of the way we've been handling our finances, that has not been necessary," said Hochul "We've been able to deliver what we need to do within the confines of the existing revenues that are coming in."

To view the full article please click [here](#).

To view the FY28 DOB call letter please click [here](#).

New York State Proposes Changes to Mandatory Ethics Training for Lobbyists and Clients

In the FY 2027 Final Budget passed this year Part U made some changes to the current Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government (COELIG) training and deadlines. This proposed rulemaking is to implement the statutory amendments included in Part U relating to ethics training for lobbyists and clients and the imposition of late fees for failing to complete such training within the required time.

The New York State Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government (COELIG) proposed rulemaking to its regulations governing mandatory ethics training for lobbyists and clients was published in the October 14, 2026, New York State Register to view the full proposed rulemaking please click [here](#) and go to Page 9. Written comments may be submitted during the 60-day public comment period for this proposed rule making which ends on December 14, 2026. Comments may be directed to: Megan Mutolo, Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government, 540 Broadway, Albany, NY 1220. Telephone: (518) 486-7593

Of particular importance to note the most significant changes are a reduction in the required training interval from three years to two years, new certification and recordkeeping responsibilities, and the schedule of late fees for noncompliance.

Clients Should Take The Following Actions To Ensure Compliance:

- **Confirm your organization's Responsible Party** and establish clear responsibility for training certifications and electronic filings. The Responsible Party for an organization is an employee, partner, owner, or officer employed by the organization who has legal authority to bind the lobbyist or client. The Responsible Party does not include an individual whose sole responsibility or authority is to prepare such Statements or Reports for a Lobbyist or Client.
- **Confirm which officers, employees, or other individuals are subject to training** and ensure that the organization has a process to document and certify compliance. All Lobbyists (Principal Lobbyists and Individual Lobbyists) and all Clients (Contractual Clients and Beneficial Clients) listed on a Statement of Registration must complete the online ethics training course for Lobbyists and Clients, as provided by the Commission.
- **Update your compliance calendars** to reflect the two-year training cycle and applicable 2027 deadlines.
- **Maintain supporting documentation** of training completion for at least the required three-year retention period.
- **Be aware of the new late-fee structure** which creates a financial penalty for failure to complete training promptly and maintain accurate records. Clients should not assume that completing training after a deadline automatically eliminates potential penalties.

Full Summary of the proposed changes include the following:

1. Ethics Training Required Every Two Years

Beginning with the 2027–2028 biennial registration period, covered lobbyists and clients must satisfy ethics training requirements at least once during each biennial period and no less frequently than every two years. Currently it is a three-year training cycle.

2. Initial Training and Compliance Deadlines

Individuals newly subject to the training requirements generally must complete training within 60 days of their first applicable active lobbying registration. The proposal also establishes rules for individuals returning to lobbying after a lapse in registration.

Individuals whose training would otherwise become overdue on January 1, 2027, or during January 2027, would have until February 1, 2027, to comply.

3. Responsibilities for Lobbying Organizations and Clients

The proposed regulations require:

- All individual lobbyists must complete the required ethics training.
- The designated Responsible Party must report training compliance information through COELIG's electronic filing system.
- Organizations must maintain individual lobbyist training certifications for three years.
- Responsible Parties must ensure that required training information is accurately reported.

For clients that maintain in-house lobbying operations, these requirements make internal tracking and documentation particularly important.

4. New Late Fees for Noncompliance

The proposal also establishes a graduated late-fee schedule for lobbyists and clients that fail to satisfy applicable training requirements.

Period of Noncompliance Proposed Late Fees

Days Late	Fee
1–7 days	No fee
8–14 days	\$200
15–30 days	\$375
31–90 day	\$775
91–180 days	\$2,275
181 days or more	\$4,525

Under the proposed regulations, completion of the required training alone does not resolve noncompliance if an assessed late fee remains unpaid.

5. Waivers and Reductions of Late Fees

COELIG may waive or reduce late fees under specified circumstances, including serious illness, death, events beyond the individual's control, or other mitigating factors. A request must be supported by appropriate documentation, including an affidavit.

COELIG may consider prior compliance history and other relevant circumstances. Outstanding late fees of \$500 or more may be referred to the New York State Attorney General for collection.

We will continue to keep you updated as the rulemaking process continues.

Helpful Links and Resources

2026 RMS HMM End of Session Update

RMS Revenue and Tax Final Budget Table

RMS Health/Mental Hygiene Final Budget Table

FY 2027 Enacted Budget Financial Plan

Empire State Development Tariff Resource Guide

NYS COVID-19 Monitoring Dashboard

NYS COVID-19 Fatalities Tracker

Eliminating Distractions In Schools Resource

Center for Disease Control and Prevention

Department of Financial Services information and resources

New York COVID-19 Vaccine Information Page

Department of Health

<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>

COVID-19 Guidance for Medicaid Providers

Office of Mental Health

<https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/covid-19-resources.html>

OPWDD

<https://opwdd.ny.gov/coronavirus-guidance>

State Education Department

<http://www.op.nysed.gov/COVID-19.html>

NYS Department of Labor

<https://dol.ny.gov/>