

NEW YORK NEWS

“an extraordinary and drastic remedy” — Judge Richard Holwell, on rolling back toll hikes

Wallenberg Commission Rings NASDAQ Opening Bell



The Board of Governors of the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission visited the NASDAQ MarketSite in Times Square yesterday morning to officially ring the NASDAQ Stock Market Opening Bell. The Commission was established by Ezra Friedlander, CEO of The Friedlander Group, to recognize the heroism and accomplishments of Raoul Wallenberg and honor the centennial of his birth. David Wicks, Vice President of the NASDAQ OMX Group said, “Few individuals in history saved as many Jewish lives as did Raoul Wallenberg, credited with the rescuing of more than 100,000 Jews.” (L-R) Board of Governors: Herbert Block, JOINT; Jonathan Zalisky, Health Plus; Peter Rebenwurz; Councilmember Brad Lander; Ezra Friedlander, The Friedlander Group; David Moskovits, Endowment for Democracy in Eastern Europe; Steven Grauer.

Senate Passes School Bus Bills

ALBANY, N.Y. — The New York State Senate yesterday passed a series of bills to promote child safety and enhanced communication.

A bill was passed, sponsored by Senator John Bonacic, that would increase the penalty for passing a stopped school bus to a 60-day suspension of a driver's license if the driver is convicted two or more times of that infraction.

Said Senator Bonacic, “Unfortunately, there are individuals who are careless, putting their priorities above the safety

of children, making this legislation necessary. This amendment to current law is...an obvious and necessary precaution we need to take.”

The legislation would make the penalties for passing a stopped school bus multiple times the same as those for drivers convicted of speeding in a construction zone two or more times.

Another bill was passed concerning school bus signs. Currently, the signs are required to be illuminated, but this legislation would allow the signs to be

made of reflective materials.

Technology exists for photo-reflectorized coatings and graphics similar to those used on traffic signs, and would allow for signs to be made more economically, using industry-standard materials.

New York is one of only two states — Maine is the other — that require illuminated signs. However, these lights accumulate snow and ice and are often the source of water leaks and structural corrosion.

The bills have been sent to the Assembly.

IG Has Ability to See Tax Returns of State Workers

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — A recent deal gives the staff of the state Inspector General's Office the ability to look at tax returns of state employees, if the documents are considered relevant to an investigation.

The Albany Times-Union reports that the new power was

granted two weeks ago as part of an agreement between the inspector general, the state's ethics commission executive director, and New York's tax commissioner. The deal makes all inspector general employees deputy tax commissioners.

The newspaper reports that

the probes must entail the conduct of state tax department workers or “tax crimes potentially committed by employees” of state agencies.

A spokesman says the move was triggered by the inspector general absorbing the tax department's investigation operations.

Judge Gives Green Light to Toll Hikes, for Now

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal judge in New York has declined to order the elimination of toll increases imposed last summer at bridge and tunnel crossings in New York and New Jersey.

Judge Richard Holwell said in a written decision yesterday that it was unlikely that a lawsuit challenging the increases imposed in September will succeed.

AAA of New York and New Jersey challenged the increases

with a lawsuit against the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

The judge says it would be “an extraordinary and drastic remedy” to roll back the toll increases before both sides can study the evidence. And he says AAA so far has failed to demonstrate a likelihood that it will succeed in its lawsuit.

Lawyers did not immediately respond to messages for comment.

Poll: Most Voters Oppose Albany Pay Hike

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — A new poll finds more than two-thirds of New Yorkers oppose a pay hike for state lawmakers and the governor.

A Siena College poll of registered voters released yesterday found 67 percent of respondents oppose a raise for members of the state Legislature and 74 percent oppose a pay raise for the gover-

nor.

New York lawmakers haven't had a raise in over 10 years. Their base pay is \$79,500 a year for what is considered a part-time job. The governor's base salary is \$179,000.

Siena pollsters called 807 registered voters statewide last week. The poll has a margin of error of 3.4 percentage points.

‘Occupy’ Protesters Disrupt Budget Hearings

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Occupy Albany has disrupted a legislative budget hearing with calls for tax fairness and claims Wall Street pays too little.

About 20 protesters in the audience broke into the hearing with a “mic check,” shouting in unison that millionaires should be taxed more.

They unfurled a couple of banners decrying corporate tax loopholes and breaks for “the 1 percent.”

The protesters also criticized

increased state university tuitions and said corporations and the rich have too much influence in government.

The interruption in yesterday's joint Senate and Assembly budget hearing on taxes lasted less than 10 minutes before the protesters filed out on their own. There were no arrests.

Occupy Albany camped and demonstrated in a park across from the Capitol for two months until they were evicted on Dec. 22.



New York State Department of Taxation and Finance Commissioner Thomas Mattox sits by as Occupy Albany protesters hold banners during a budget hearing on taxes in Albany, N.Y., yesterday.