

State of the City Statement
1.6.2026

I came here tonight prepared to speak about the accomplishments that my staff and all the city employees have made this past year, and to look forward to another year of repairing vital infrastructure, offering free programming, improving our parks, and building a sustainable future. For 10 years, I have stood before the Council and the people of this City and reported on our hard work, our lofty aims, and the reality of our challenges.

I have that speech here, with a detailed account of that work; but given what has transpired in these chambers for the past several weeks, something else needs to be said.

Today—January 6th, 2026—our City, like our country, stands at a critical crossroads. On this day five years ago, laws and civility in our Country almost fell prey to misinformation and mob violence. Though that happened in DC, our City has not gone unaffected.

We are living in precarious times, with Federal policy based on bluster, half-truths, and cruel indifference to consequences—especially the impact on struggling families. In this moment, our community’s resilience and our commitment to helping our neighbors - lifting each other up when we need it most—these things restore my hope in our collective future. They remind us that, by working together in good faith—we can do better at the local level.

My administration has a responsibility to address the housing crisis—a regional and nationwide problem. There are no silver bullets or easy answers to this crisis. If there were, communities well beyond Kingston would not be struggling with these issues. I have heard advocates’ testimony and impassioned arguments, and I am painfully aware of the challenges that our residents - especially our tenants - are facing. My understanding of the facts and the needs of folks who can’t afford to pay their rent is precisely why I vetoed the Council’s legislation. It is also why I commenced litigation to protect our legally granted power to create Kingston-specific affordable housing solutions that create guaranteed benefits to our renters.

I’ll be honest, vetoing unanimous legislation is a very unpopular political move—but it is the right thing to do when a resolution is so obviously flawed and could have devastating consequences if left uncorrected. I would not be doing my job as steward of this community if I let this go.

As tempting as it might be to approve legislation in an attempt to appease an angry constituent or get a complicated matter off your plate, we as public officials have a duty to find durable and sustainable solutions to problems, because this is not a popularity contest. Our choices have real consequences for Kingston’s residents and taxpayers.

I have been listening to and reading statements made here in this chamber before and after my veto. Not one person can justify overlooking obvious errors in the Council’s findings or failing to address details that make this legislation vulnerable to litigation we know will come. If we want to keep rent stabilization— and let’s be clear, I most certainly do— we have to stick with the facts.

The Council’s findings require clear, objective proof to prevail in the highest courts again.

To those who are advocating that this legislation should have advanced without error-correction, I'm here to tell you, the facts just don't support that conclusion. Passion, volume, and name-calling do not make false things true.

Without my veto, the Council would not have provided the specificity in tonight's memorializing resolution, which attempts to provide clarity missing from their original legislation.

Here's a fact with real evidence: My administration has devoted more resources to expanding and defending rent stabilization than any Upstate community. Rent stabilization was one of my top priorities—one that I personally brought to the Common Council in 2019. Everyone knows that this new legislation will be challenged again—just as the entire rent stabilization system has been increasingly attacked in federal courts for the last five years. Adopting subpar legislation is the surest way to get rent regulation struck down for everyone in the state, and defending an error-ridden resolution will increase costs to taxpayers. Knowing what my city's true needs are, wasting money and losing this fight are the last things I want to do.

I understand that progress can't give way to the fear of litigation. If it did, very little could be accomplished. But at the same time, it would be irresponsible and unfair to tenants and all taxpayers if I approve faulty legislation that will be thrown out by the courts. Given the chaos and uncertainty of these times, I will not raise everyone's hopes only to see them dashed. When all is said and done, a responsible leader does everything within their power to help their constituents win a foreseeable fight.

Affordability is a complex issue with many moving parts that takes a multi-pronged approach. The housing component should not be reduced to slogans or talking points designed by one politician to attack another. There is no magic wand that will fix our housing shortage in Kingston. We have to take a thoughtful and comprehensive approach that carefully examines every aspect, every gap, every need. This is the approach that my administration will continue to take. As I have said many times, I support keeping rent stabilization for buildings larger than 22 units, which is what the facts clearly support.

I understand that some in this Chamber have compared me to of all things "Donald Trump," but the most Trump-like aspects of Kingston's rent regulation dispute are the name-calling and alternative "facts" that, really, aren't facts at all.

Here are facts I can prove: I was the first to bring ETPA legislation to the Council. We were one of the first to pass Good Cause Eviction. We have passed legislation to spur housing development; we have passed legislation to include affordable housing units in all of those new developments. We have capped short-term rentals; we have done everything possible to encourage ADUs. We have proposed using city-owned land to build more housing in creative spaces. We overhauled our entire zoning code to promote equitable residential neighborhoods. We have done all these things and will do more.

I am charged by the city charter with providing an annual message to the great people of the City of Kingston. The charter also says the mayor should share with members of the Common Council what the mayor believes are civic priorities.

We have a lot of work to do and there are practical, meaningful laws that we can work together to put in place - everything from food truck standards, tree preservation laws, updating the

administrative code, strengthening our historic preservation law, archiving the Council's legislative records for public access - these are things that we can work together on that will have long-lasting community benefits.

I urge you to have a meaningful dialogue with me when you're considering impactful legislation - like housing - so that we find fact-based solutions that are supported by law and are able to be implemented by the executive branch.

Working together, I'm sure we can achieve a great deal more than if we went our separate ways. Let's work off a clean slate, work together, and find common ground for the greater good of our entire community.

We all know Kingston is a particularly special place, which is why I have devoted my career and my life to serving its people. I continue to stand ready to serve the people of Kingston, working cooperatively with my partners on the Common Council.

Kingston was and remains the first Capital of the State of New York, which played a pivotal role in launching this new country called the United States of America. The British burned our homes to the ground simply because we wanted to be free of tyranny. We survived that calamity. As we commemorate the 250th anniversary of the birth of our nation this year, I believe we can survive Donald Trump, and we can survive this housing crisis and the other challenges we'll face - with meaningful solutions made possible by putting our heads together.

I truly believe we have more in common with each other than we realize. Let's lean into that strength and work together on solutions that are achievable.

Thank you, Kingston, for the opportunity to serve you, and thank you everyone assembled here for taking the time to hear me.

Thank you.
