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The Week That Was

01-12-18

1. Another One Bites The Dust

Our Spin:

292 days. Before I write anymore does anyone think they know where I'm going with this? For the folks who have been around Albany for a while, you probably do. But for you newbies out there just getting your feet wet, this is something people pay close attention to in New York State politics. The Arrest/Indictment Tracker. It had been 292 days since a NYS lawmaker had been arrested/indicted on corruption charges. Serious question, does anyone know if the tracker has ever exceeded a year? Unfortunately, 2018 started with the streak coming to an end when earlier this week Assemblywoman Pamela Harris was hit with an 11-count indictment. Ouch. One can only assume Ms. Harris wanted to begin 2018 on a much different note...

The Story:

On Tuesday, federal prosecutors in Brooklyn announced an 11-count indictment against Assemblywoman Pamela Harris, alleging fraud, witness tampering and other charges. Ms. Harris, 57, a retired New York City correction officer who was elected in a special election in 2015, represents Bay Ridge, Coney Island and several other south Brooklyn neighborhoods. Harris is accused of four counts of making false statements, two counts of wire fraud, two counts of bankruptcy fraud, and a single count each of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, witness tampering and conspiracy to obstruct justice, according to Richard P. Donoghue, the United States attorney for the Eastern District of New York.

According to authorities, Harris spent \$10,000 on vacations, including a cruise ship getaway, and shopped at Victoria's Secret with her dirty money. She also allegedly

urged witnesses to lie to the FBI in a failed cover-up of her crimes.

"Harris was busy brewing a storm of her own — one that resulted in her receiving significant payouts by the very federal agency charged with helping those truly in need," said FBI New York field office head William Sweeney Jr. In one scheme, authorities accused Ms. Harris of trying to capitalize on a natural disaster, improperly receiving nearly \$25,000 in federal funds by falsely claiming that she had been displaced from her Coney Island home by Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

The charges suggest a degree of sophisticated planning and elaborate attempts to cover up illegal actions. For example, authorities said that Ms. Harris used a forged lease to draw down discretionary funds from the City Council, money that was supposed to be used to rent a studio space for the nonprofit, which seeks to involve children and young adults in the arts. Instead, Ms. Harris diverted the money to her personal checking account.

Lawmakers in the Capitol seemed surprised by the news, which broke just as the Legislature was starting its business on Tuesday morning. "They are very serious charges and it's important to let the justice system take its course," said Michael Whyland, a spokesman for Carl E. Heastie, the Bronx assemblyman who serves as the chamber's speaker. Assemblywoman Harris entered a plea of not guilty to all counts of the indictment.

[NY Daily News](#)
[The New York Times](#)

2. I Am Woman Hear Me Roar

Our Spin:

The dynamic duo of the two most powerful women in New York State government announced a comprehensive 2018 Women's Agenda this week. No doubt in preparing for a potential 2020 run for President, the Cuomo political operation has recognized women voters have numbers too big to ignore.

The Story:

At an event in New York City Thursday, Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul and Secretary to the Governor Melissa DeRosa, two of the most influential women in New York state government, unveiled Governor Cuomo's 2018 Women's Agenda for New York: Equal Rights, Equal Opportunity. The 30-point plan addresses issues ranging from child care and equal pay to contraception coverage and maternal depression. Several proposals were already announced by Cuomo during his State of the State address last week such as codifying Roe v. Wade into the state law and constitution, banning domestic abusers from possessing firearms and reauthorizing the state's Minority and Women-Owned Business program. DeRosa, who as secretary to the governor is Cuomo's top aide, highlighted the progress that was made in 2017, but emphasized more needs to be done. "Yes, 2017 was the year when women spoke up," DeRosa said. "But 2018 needs to be the year when society responds."

The agenda seeks to improve women's health issues with the passage of the Comprehensive Contraceptive Coverage Act and codifying abortion rights into state law. Governor Cuomo will advocate for improving access to in vitro fertilization, launch a state effort to help women experiencing maternal depression, form a review board to examine maternal mortality and add women's health experts to the State Board of Medicine.

The safety plank of the women's agenda includes passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, which would add sex as a protected class in the state constitution, extend human rights protections to all New York public school students and lengthen the timeline required to store rape kits at hospitals from 30 days to at least five years.

There also is a large section of the plan focused on workplace issues, including previously announced proposals to combat sexual harassment in the workplace and urging the state pension fund to prioritize investments in companies that have "adequate" women and minority leadership. Some of the new workforce-focused proposals announced Thursday include the formation of the Women's Economic Empowerment Initiative to assist women who are either returning to work or advancing in their fields.

Another initiative mentioned on Thursday, the Women Lead Fellowship for Women in Government, will aim to recruit women to work alongside senior female officials in state government. And Cuomo wants the state's venture capital fund to invest at least \$20 million to support women-owned businesses.

NY.GOV
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3. What, No Mistletoe?

Our Spin:

The #metoo movement and/or some political shenanigans hit Albany this week when a young staffer with ties to the regular state Senate Democrats accused IDC Leader, Jeff Klein, of stealing a kiss, against her will outside an Albany bar after wrapping up a budget. Klein and Senator Diane Savino say it "never happened." Then Klein surprised everyone by calling on JCOPE to investigate and promising full-cooperation. Good for you Senator, let's find out the truth.

The Story:

State Senator Jeff Klein, the leader of the IDC, has asked an independent ethics commission to investigate an accusation that he forcibly kissed a staffer. "Your immediate attention and assistance with this investigation is requested and I am prepared to fully cooperate with your inquiry in an effort to resolve this allegation made against me," Klein wrote in a letter to the Joint Commission on Public Ethics on Thursday.

The accusation came earlier in the week in an exclusive interview with the Huffington Post, where 30-year-old Erica Vladimer, a former staffer, said Klein "shoved his tongue" down her throat outside of a bar in 2015. Vladimer claims that just after the passage of the state budget she and other colleagues working in the capital went to a local Albany bar, Justin's, a few blocks away. Vladimer said she and Klein didn't normally socialize.

The two went outside to smoke a cigarette, and that's when she says Klein forced a kiss on her. After briefly looking over her shoulder, Vladimer said Klein grabbed her head as she turned back around. "All of a sudden there was a hand on the back of my head and he shoved his tongue down my throat," she said. "In my head it lasted forever, I don't think it lasted even three seconds."

Huffington Post

