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## The Week That Was

06-23-17

### 1. The Longest Day

#### *Our Spin:*

The Legislature adjourned on June 21st, the longest day of the year, but as Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, looking out at the English Channel shortly before D-Day said: “Just look at it gentlemen. How calm... how peaceful it is. A strip of water between England and the Continent... Between the allies and us. But beyond that peaceful horizon...?” The Legislature has gone home for now and Albany is peaceful for sure, but with mayoral control and local sales tax extenders hanging in the balance, the longest day may still be ahead.

#### *The Story:*

State lawmakers left the Capitol just before midnight on Wednesday without coming to agreement on mayoral control of New York City schools, casting a feeling of uncertainty over the leadership of the nation’s largest public school system and its 1.1 million students. That leaves the door open for lawmakers to return at some point later this year, as mayoral control lapses June 30 and the sales taxes lapse later this year. Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie closed out the session with a final remark, “Sometimes in politics you don’t always get what you want.” “But we worked hard, and we won some important victories, like ‘Raise the Age,’ affordable housing and college affordability,” he said.

The idea that lawmakers could return, but no idea when, has some members of the Legislature frustrated. “The 2017 legislative session provided clear reminders of how dysfunctional state government is, and how much work will

be required to fix it,” said Assembly Minority Leader Brian Kolb, a Rochester-area Republican. “This year, the political games continued until the clock ran out, and the Legislature will be forced to return to address tax bills for localities and an extension of mayoral control in New York City,” Kolb said.

On Thursday, Governor Cuomo said he would consider calling a special session of the state Legislature to address the unresolved issues but that he wouldn’t do it unless there is an agreement on contentious policies. “If they go home and they’re not assaulted by the residents of their district and chased back to Albany, then, yes, I would call a special session,” he told reporters at a press conference in the state Capitol’s Red Room on Thursday afternoon. But, Cuomo added, “I don’t want to make them come here just to sit around and run up an expense bill. They have to have an agreement.”

[NY Post](#)  
[Times Union](#)

### 2. Welcome Back, Welcome Back, Welcome Back!

#### *Our Spin:*

As New Yorkers continue to grow impatient with constant subway delays as the summer approaches, Governor Cuomo proposed legislation on Tuesday to add two new members to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s board, whom he would select. However, at the MTA monthly board meeting in Lower Manhattan on Wednesday, several members pushed back against Cuomo’s power grab, urging him to focus on more pressing

issues including releasing a comprehensive plan to fix the creaky subway system and securing funding for the improvements. Instead, just hours after the meeting, Cuomo nominated a new (well... kind of) Chairman of the MTA, Joe Lhota.

*The Story:*

Joe Lhota, who led the Metropolitan Transportation Authority under Governor Andrew Cuomo before leaving for a failed mayoral run in 2013 against Mayor de Blasio, has been chosen by the Governor to return as chairman. The announcement was approved late on Wednesday by the State Senate after its Finance Committee voiced its support at an impromptu meeting in the Capitol, during which Mr. Lhota, over a video conference, expressed his concerns with the city's subways. "I am as frustrated as everyone else is, and more frustrated because I know the MTA can do so much better," he said.

Lhota, who has worked on and off in government since the Giuliani administration, is bound to be a pretty popular choice to head up the troubled transit agency. He is widely credited for quickly getting the subways back online after Hurricane Sandy, maybe one of the last times the MTA got generally positive reviews.

On Thursday in an interview with Newsday, Lhota went into more detail. He made it clear that he has no plans of backing down from the MTA's desire to go after Amtrak for the costs the LIRR will incur this summer, mitigating the construction-related service disruptions at Penn Station, even if it means withholding tens of millions of dollars in funding to Amtrak. The emergency repairs at Penn this summer "are nothing more than the accumulation" of 40 years of neglect by Amtrak. And, despite Amtrak and MTA Board members warning against a prolonged legal battle between the two rail providers, Lhota said. "They're like a bully in a schoolyard," he said of Amtrak. "And I'm a big enough guy to look at some bullies and say, "It's not going to happen anymore."

[New York Times](#)  
[Newsday](#)

### 3. Bee Week

*Our Spin:*

Did you know that New York has a Pollinator Awareness Week? Here at FWC it certainly caught some of us by surprise but then again... you really do learn something new every day. Throughout the week, events were being held statewide to celebrate and educate the public on the importance of pollinators.

*The Story:*

The week of June 20-26 has been proclaimed Pollinator Awareness Week in New York State with several events highlighting the importance of key species such as bees, butterflies and hummingbirds to the state's environment and agricultural economy, state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos announced.. Earlier in the week, Governor Cuomo signed a proclamation commemorating the week and affirming that New York is committed to the promotion of the health and recovery of the pollinator population, which is the focus of a state agency task force. The task force is expected to shortly release its recommendations for actions to protect New York's pollinator populations. Cuomo also spoke about how the state is taking steps to protect bees, like cutting back its use of some pesticides, planting more wildflowers near the Thruway, and delaying mowing along state roads to protect butterfly habitat. The state also has earmarked \$500,000 for pollinator protection programs. "Pollinator Week is a great reminder of the importance of pollinators to our food supply and the agriculture industry, as well as the need to address their declining population," said State Commissioner of Agriculture, Richard A. Ball. "These birds and insects provide a critical service to all of us as they make it possible for New York farmers to offer an amazing array of flowers and food. I applaud Governor Cuomo for making this designation to raise awareness about this issue, and for establishing an interagency task force to help identify ways to prevent the loss of more pollinators."

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