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The Week That Was

02-10-17

1) John Olsen Making The Internet Great Again!

Our Spin

The halls of the Capitol are swirling with gossip that The Internet Association, a national trade group representing such companies doing battle in the state as Airbnb, Uber and Lyft, has hired John Olsen as its first New York executive director. Does that name ring a bell? It should... If not, you need to pay more attention to your emails! Olsen spent more than a decade at one of Albany's "most influential firms," Featherstonhaugh, Wiley & Clyne before leaving for his new role. Olsen's first taste of the big leagues came this week while testifying at a joint legislative budget hearing on taxes when he came across Senator Liz Krueger who demonstrated remarkable affection. Olsen's previous lobbying experience may have influenced that relationship in some way shape or form. Mr. Olsen's stellar testimony was followed by his first appearance on Dizzy Lizzie's Capitol Tonight program with an opening statement that "we have a lot of priorities this year Liz!"

The Story

John Olsen, the newly named head of the Internet Association in New York, testified at a joint legislative budget hearing on Tuesday about a proposal tucked away in Gov. Andrew Cuomo's \$152.3 billion executive budget. Olsen said that the state proposal for large internet marketplaces to start collecting state sales tax is discriminatory and will cost jobs. "New York State has advertised repeatedly that it is a state that is open for

business," Olsen stated. "An entire sector of the internet economy stands to become closed to business with adoption of this proposal. Online marketplaces are an essential segment of the internet economy. Including marketplace providers in New York State tax law would set a new precedent for discriminatory tax collection by attempting to create parity between a marketplace and a vendor that rightly has the responsibility of sales tax collection in New York." Olsen explained that if applied to a brick and mortar marketplace, for example, this proposal would require large shopping centers to collect the sales tax for all purchases made in their tenant stores. Cuomo's proposal estimated that the state could collect an additional \$128 million a year by putting the onus of tax collection on Internet marketplaces like eBay, Etsy and parts of Amazon that handle more than \$100 million in annual sales. Olsen, whose group includes Amazon, Etsy, Airbnb, Facebook and Google testified that some companies would simply not grow. "I think we need to start thinking about the Internet a little differently than how we've already done, especially when it comes to statutory and regulatory regimes," he said. "We need to start looking at the Internet in a more broad sense, rather than this magic place that is exempt from rules. It's not that our companies do not want to collect taxes. We would like a scheme that reflects the global e-commerce economy rather than a patchwork attempt from state to state."

[The Daily News](#)
[Politico](#)

2) Ban the Bag or Bag the Fee

Our Spin

The Assembly and Senate passed legislation this week that would impose a one-year moratorium on the New York City bag fee, much to the chagrin of the New York City Council. The moratorium is set to go into effect February 15. The direct challenge to the authority of the Council and its speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, is intriguing in light of the rush of state legislators interested in leaving their jobs and running for City Council. Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj, Robert Rodriguez, Peter Abbate, Senator Reuben Diaz, Senator Bill Perkins, Assemblymen Dan Quart and Ron Kim, have all stated an interest in running for the council. We are sure it's to correct this kind of hard legislation and has nothing at all to do with \$148,000 salary? Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, insisted he backs the broader goal of a tax on bags in New York City, but remains concerned over the potential impact on consumers. The Governor needs more time to review this "complicated" issue citing environmental and economic impacts. Further complicating the issue is the political tightrope the Governor must walk between two important factions of his loyal democratic base; the environmental groups seeking to reduce waste and the band of legislators representing low income areas who feel the fee will hurt the poor. To quote James Carville "It's the economy, stupid"...or wait, is it the environment...

The Story

The fate of New York City Council's five-cent plastic-bag fee now rests in Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's hands. Earlier this week lawmakers overwhelmingly passed legislation that would impose a one-year moratorium on the city bag fee law that is due to go into effect Feb. 15. Calling it a "complicated" issue, Cuomo said Wednesday he hasn't decided whether to sign the bill. "There are real environmental concerns, but there are also economic concerns," Cuomo told reporters. "You charge people 5 cents for every plastic bag — doesn't sound like much (but) it adds up," he said. Supporters of the moratorium criticized the bag fee as nothing more than a tax that would hurt lower income people. Opponents of the delay said the fee would benefit the environment by reducing the number of plastic bags sent to landfills. They also ripped the Legislature for overruling a separately elected body — the City Council. Assembly Speaker Carl stated, "We share in the City Council's goal. We would like to eliminate or lessen the use of plastics and things not good for the environment," Heastie said. "But we were concerned with how the legislation was crafted. We believe there's flaws in the legislation."

[State of Politics](#) [Grub Street](#)

3) Do You ❤️ NY?

Our Spin

How much do you ❤️ New York? Can you name the state flower; animal; beverage; gem; amphibian; bush; snack; tree; fossil; muffin; reptile; dog; alcohol; insect; bird; fresh water fish; shell; fruit; salt water fish; and sport?

The Story:

Since 1955 New York has adopted many state symbols. This week Senator James Seward introduced a bill proposed by fourth graders at Cooperstown Elementary School that would designate baseball as the official sport of New York State. The adoption of state symbols has been quite contentious in the past. Some of the symbols listed above have not been officially adopted, can you guess which ones? The answers are below. We hope Senator Seward is successful as New York has the cathedral of baseball, Yankee Stadium and the history of baseball, with the Hall of Fame. FWC supports baseball as the official state sport.

[Capitol Confidential](#)

Answers: Rose, Beaver, Milk, Garnet, Still holly
contested, Liliac, Yogurt, Sugar Maple, Eurypterus
remipes, Apple Muffin, Snapping Turtle, Working
Canine, None, Nine spotted Ladybug, Eastern Bluebird,
Brook Trout, Scallop, Apple, Striped Bass, Baseball