



## 2020 Year In Review



Office of the New York State  
Attorney General

***Letitia James***

# Table of Contents

<b><i>Message from Attorney General James .....</i></b>	<b><i>04</i></b>
<b><i>Funds Recovered for New York State .....</i></b>	<b><i>05</i></b>
<b><i>Responding to COVID-19 .....</i></b>	<b><i>07</i></b>
Protecting Consumers from COVID-19-Related Fraud.....	8
Containing the Economic Fallout of COVID-19 .....	10
Protecting the Health and Safety of New Yorkers from COVID-19 .....	11
Housing Support During COVID-19 .....	12
<b><i>Fighting Back Against the Federal Government .....</i></b>	<b><i>14</i></b>
<b><i>Highlights from 2020 .....</i></b>	<b><i>16</i></b>
Holding Powerful Organizations Accountable .....	17
Taking on Big Tech .....	21
Restoring Faith in Law Enforcement .....	24
Standing up for New Yorkers .....	27
Safeguarding the Integrity of Our Elections .....	30
Preserving Reproductive Rights .....	33
Leading the Fight to Protect Our Environment.....	38
Supporting Immigrant Communities .....	42
Fighting for the LGBTQ+ Community.....	45
Defending Workers.....	48
Protecting Consumers.....	52
Expanding Access to Safe and Affordable Housing.....	56
Combating Gun Violence .....	62
Tackling Financial Crimes and Fraudulent Schemes .....	65
Protecting New Yorkers from Prescription Drug and Health Care Fraud.....	68
Shutting Down Drug Trafficking Operations .....	71
Rooting Out Public Corruption.....	73
Protecting Our Students .....	76
Supporting Small Businesses.....	80
<b><i>About the Attorney General's Office .....</i></b>	<b><i>82</i></b>



# Letitia James

New York State Attorney General

## **Dear Friends,**

As we close out 2020 and embark upon 2021, I want to express my deepest gratitude for the extraordinary sacrifices you have made and the remarkable resilience you have shown. 2020 was a year of great challenge, struggle, and pain. But it was also a year marked by hope and progress.

In the midst of the worst public health crisis of our lifetimes, during a year of racial unrest, economic distress, and political duress, one thing is clear: When New Yorkers come together in a spirit of equal opportunity, shared responsibility, and community, there is no obstacle or challenge we can't overcome.

As we reflect on 2020, I wanted to share some of the work my office accomplished.

We took countless legal actions to protect the health and safety of New Yorkers and to ensure that no one used the pandemic to take advantage of our communities. We are now working to ensure that every New Yorker will have access to lifesaving vaccines, and that all our communities have the resources they need during this challenging time.

In 2020 we also saw the resurgence of another awful pandemic — the pandemic of systemic racism. I am so proud of how New Yorkers rose up in the thousands to confront this problem head-on. People of all races took to the streets and spoke with one voice to demand change. Our criminal justice system must be fixed and we are committed to doing the hard work to reform it. This includes an ongoing investigation we launched into the NYPD for its actions at protests this summer.

2020 was also a landmark year in our efforts to hold powerful companies and organizations accountable. We are leading historic and bipartisan lawsuits against Facebook and Google, two tech giants whose unchecked power represents an unprecedented threat to our privacy, our economy, and even our democracy. We filed a lawsuit to dissolve the National Rifle Association, a charitable organization that diverted millions of dollars away from its mission for personal use by senior leadership. We sued the Catholic Church for failing to protect children from sexual abuse by clergy. We took legal action to force the Trump Organization to comply with our investigation into its financial dealings. In short, we are making good on our commitment to enforce one set of rules for everyone. No matter how rich or powerful; no one is above the law.

We achieved major victories in our efforts to uphold the rule of law, and to protect New Yorkers from the Trump administration's harmful and unlawful attacks. We successfully protected the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program in the United States Supreme Court. We won significant victories against the Trump administration to protect our environment, preserve access to reproductive care, support workers' rights, and protect the right to vote.

I traveled in person and then virtually to every corner of the state to hear from New Yorkers about the issues impacting them. It is an honor to represent every resident of this great state, and I look forward to the time when we can come together again in person.

Despite all of the obstacles, we accomplished so much this year. New challenges and opportunities await us in 2021, and with them, a renewed hope for a better future.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Letitia James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.





***Funds Recovered***  
for New York State

In 2020, Attorney General James collected over **\$994 million** on behalf of New York state, including:

Over **\$61 million**  
*recovered for Medicaid*

Over **\$55 million**  
*in unpaid debts to the state*

Over **\$99 million**  
*from negotiated settlements and judgments*

Over **\$20 million**  
*in restitution for New Yorkers*

Over **\$45 million**  
*for nonprofit organizations*

Additionally, Attorney General James distributed:

Over **\$9.3 million**  
*to the New York State General Fund*

Over **\$39 million**  
*to affordable housing programs*



***Responding***  
to COVID-19

For much of this year, our state, our country, and our world have been devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic. When New York became one of the first hotspots, we were forced to shut down and adapt to a new normal. We have experienced tremendous devastation — more than 37,000 New Yorkers have lost their lives — and countless more families have been upended. New Yorkers have stepped up and contributed in myriad ways to support one another. Our frontline and essential workers heroically sprang into action to treat victims and support those in need. They have worked around the clock and without rest to save lives, stock grocery shelves, provide medication, deliver mail, packages, and food, and keep our public transportation running. Many of those heroes sacrificed their lives to protect the lives of people they didn't even know.

The level of loss and devastation has been unfathomable and unprecedented. Whether it is the loss of a loved one, personal illness, the loss of a job, a small business, or financial instability, no New Yorker has been immune from the reaches of the virus.

Attorney General James acted immediately to protect and support New Yorkers across the board. From shutting down fraudulent sales of fake and dangerous COVID-19 cures, to stopping retailers from price gouging consumers for essential goods, to going after companies that forced employees to work in dangerous and unsafe conditions, to providing guidance on tenants' rights and COVID-19 scams, the Attorney General's Office mobilized and responded to protect New Yorkers on every front.

As COVID-19 swept through the country, predatory actors pushed a range of fraudulent products and services to take advantage of the crisis and cheat New Yorkers. The Attorney General's Office received thousands of complaints about retailers illegally price gouging essential goods, and issued more than 1,900 cease and desist letters to businesses to immediately stop this predatory and illegal behavior. Attorney General James also stepped in to ensure that those struggling financially because of the pandemic were not further victimized.

## Protecting Consumers from COVID-19 Related Fraud

2 WGRZ  
ON YOUR SIDE

**NY Attorney General stops three Amazon sellers from price gouging hand sanitizer**

syracuse.com

**New York AG calls on pay-TV providers to cut fees while live sports halted**

### **Other actions to protect consumers:**

- » Attorney General James filed a lawsuit against Quality King Distributors, a wholesale grocery distributor, for price gouging Lysol disinfectant products during the pandemic.
- » Attorney General James stopped three Amazon sellers from price gouging hand sanitizer during the pandemic and delivered tens of thousands of dollars back into the pockets of New Yorkers who were defrauded.
- » Attorney General James called on seven major cable and satellite television providers in New York to provide financial relief for consumers by reducing or eliminating fees for live sports programming, most of which was initially canceled due to the pandemic. A number of these companies have already committed to refunding their customers for these fees, and all are reviewing their policies.
- » Attorney General James stopped a broker of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other medical supplies from perpetrating repeated and widespread fraud during the pandemic. The company fraudulently propositioned the state of New York, hospitals, and health care systems with fake offers of PPE, which it did not possess and could not deliver.

### **TAKING ON COMPANIES THAT PRICE GOUGE CONSUMERS**

Attorney General James filed a lawsuit against Hillandale Farms, one of the country's largest producers and wholesale distributors of eggs, for illegally gouging the prices of eggs during the pandemic. In March and April 2020, Hillandale raised prices on more than four million cartons of eggs sold to major grocery store chains, U.S. military facilities, and wholesale food distributors throughout the state, charging New York customers up to four times pre-pandemic prices. During those two months — the height of the pandemic in New York — Hillandale made an estimated \$4 million by increasing the price of these eggs, which were often sold in grocery stores located in low-income communities. The lawsuit seeks restitution from Hillandale for those consumers who were forced to pay astronomically high prices for this essential food item.

*The New York Times*

***New York Accuses Egg Producer of Price Gouging in Pandemic***

**4**  **NEW YORK**

**AG: Top Egg Producer Gouged NY Grocery Stores, Military Bases During Pandemic**


**DAILY NEWS**

**There's no egg-scuse: N.Y. Attorney General James sues egg company over price gouging**

# Containing the Economic Fallout of COVID-19

Countless New Yorkers have suffered from the economic consequences of the pandemic — hundreds of thousands lost their jobs, their businesses, or experienced drastic cuts to their income. Attorney General James worked to ease the financial burden on individuals who were most impacted during this time.

- » Attorney General James took action to ensure that emergency stimulus payments could not be taken away from families by debt collectors and other financial institutions.
- » On ten separate occasions, Attorney General James and Governor Andrew Cuomo halted the collection of medical and student debt owed to New York to protect hard working New Yorkers and not add undue stress during the pandemic.
- » Attorney General James issued guidance to help small businesses obtain loans through the federal government’s Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and also provided warnings and tips to protect small businesses from lenders and agents fraudulently and deceptively marketing these loans.
- » Attorney General James cracked down on companies that engaged in deceptive marketing and business practices related to the issuance of PPP loans.

 <p><b>Price Gouging in New York Will Not Be Tolerated</b></p>	<p><b>NYS General Business Law</b> Section 396-r</p> <p><i>New York State law prohibits charging a grossly excessive price on consumer goods or services that are vital to the health, safety, or welfare of consumers during an emergency event without justification.</i></p>	 <p><i>i.e. Businesses cannot charge \$79.99 for a 1200 mL bottle of hand sanitizer.</i></p>
 <p><i>Manufacturers, suppliers, wholesalers, and distributors are also prohibited from significantly increasing prices.</i></p>	 <p><b>We've already taken action against multiple New York City businesses to stop price gouging</b></p>	 <p><i>If you see price gouging, my office wants to know.</i></p>



# Protecting the Health and Safety of New Yorkers from COVID-19

Attorney General James issued cease and desist letters to individuals and companies that purported to sell cures and treatments for COVID-19. These nefarious actors used the pandemic as an opportunity to profit off of people's fears and concerns about contracting the virus and made fraudulent claims about their products, despite clear warnings from the World Health Organization that there was no specific medicine available at that time to prevent or treat the virus. Attorney

General James held media personality Alex Jones accountable for marketing and selling toothpaste, dietary supplements, creams, and several other products as treatments to prevent and cure the virus. She also ordered televangelist Jim Bakker and radio show host Wayne Allyn Root to stop falsely marketing colloidal silver products as effective against COVID-19.

## **Other entities held accountable:**

- » Attorney General James ordered Finest Herbalist, a company that sells cannabidiol (also known as CBD), to stop marketing their product, "Pure Herbal Total Defense Immunity Blend" as a cure or treatment for COVID-19.
- » Attorney General James went after The Silver Edge company for making claims that their Micro-Particle Colloidal Silver Generator product could "beat coronavirus" despite no clinical documentation regarding its effectiveness.
- » Attorney General James called on Craigslist to immediately remove posts that attempted to sell fake items that claimed to provide immunity to COVID-19 or allow individuals to test for the disease.
- » Attorney General James issued cease and desist letters to 78 companies that continued to provide group rides to Medicaid recipients during the pandemic in violation of the law. A statewide investigation revealed that dozens of transportation providers failed to follow the state's requirements explicitly prohibiting these providers from having more than one occupant per vehicle as COVID-19 ravaged communities across New York.

6 NEWS  
NEW YORK

**NY Attorney General orders Alex Jones to stop selling fake coronavirus treatments**

**Bloomberg**

**Alex Jones Probed by New York AG Over Silver-Based Covid-19 'Cure'**

**CNBC**

**NY attorney general orders InfoWars' Alex Jones to stop selling coronavirus 'treatment' products**

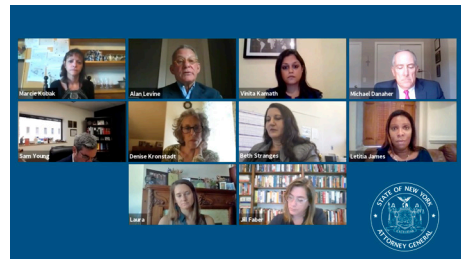
The pandemic has exacerbated New York's housing crisis as people struggle to pay mortgages or rents in the wake of widespread unemployment and increased financial stress. Attorney General James has taken action to help New Yorkers stay in their homes during these unprecedented times by disseminating guidance to law enforcement agencies on how to respond to and prevent evictions during the statewide eviction moratoriums, creating a dedicated eviction complaint form, and investigating these complaints across the state. Attorney General James also established the Tenant Legal Assistance Program to financially support legal service providers that represent tenants facing eviction.

### ***Providing Funds for Homeowner Protection***

Attorney General James delivered \$20 million in grants to support New York homeowners struggling with foreclosure, as part of the Homeowner Protection Program (HOPP). HOPP connects homeowners to free, qualified mortgage-assistance relief services across New York. These grants will help countless families avoid foreclosure and remain in their homes during these extremely uncertain and dangerous times.

Attorney General James also supported tenants with the creation of a new Tenant Legal Assistance Program and provided \$742,000 to organizations to offer free legal assistance to tenants in Upstate New York and on Long Island facing eviction during the pandemic. Six organizations from across the state received funding to ensure New Yorkers have access to the legal representation they need to stay in their homes.

## Housing Support During COVID-19



### **NAVIGATING TENANTS' RIGHTS DURING COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic threatened the financial security of tenants across New York state. Attorney General James convened a panel of leading housing experts, legal service providers, and government officials to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on tenants facing eviction outside of New York City. With more than 250 housing experts participating from around the state, the Attorney General and other panelists discussed new legislation related to evictions, COVID-19-related discrimination, housing access issues, and resources and support options for tenants facing eviction.

### **Keeping New Yorkers in Their Homes**

Attorney General James and Governor Cuomo took action to stop New York City's tax and water lien sale from occurring during the pandemic, which would have placed significant and unnecessary financial burdens on homeowners, especially in communities of color. Every year, the New York City Department of Finance holds a tax lien sale, in which the liens on properties for unpaid property taxes and water bills are sold off in an auction. The terms imposed by the tax lien sale on homeowners are dramatic and can quickly turn a relatively small tax lien into an overwhelming financial burden, eventually pushing homeowners into foreclosure. The buildings included in the sale every year are disproportionately located in communities of color.

### **Other actions to protect homeowners and tenants:**

- » Attorney General James called on 35 of New York's major mortgage servicers to provide immediate and long-term relief to all New York homeowners experiencing hardship, and reminded them of their responsibility to ensure that the pandemic does not cause unnecessary foreclosures or lead to homelessness in New York.
- » Attorney General James called on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to take immediate action to protect senior citizens from homelessness and recommended specific actions to ensure senior citizens with reverse mortgages do not lose their homes to foreclosure as a result of the pandemic.

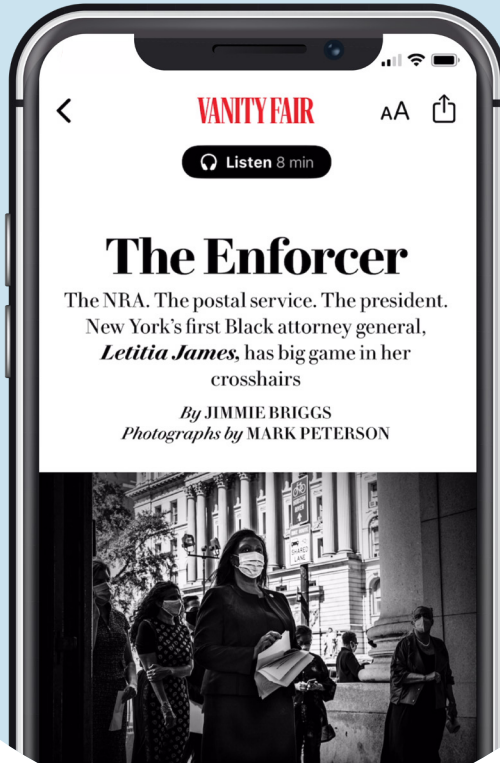


“

*“While we battle this public health crisis, the last thing my office will do is add undue stress or saddle our neighbors with unnecessary financial burden.*

*I will continue to do everything in my power to help pick up our fellow New Yorkers and support our state's economy.”*

**— ATTORNEY GENERAL LETITIA JAMES**



ON HER GUARD  
James—the daughter of former share-

# ***Fighting Back*** Against the Federal Government

## Defending New Yorkers from the Trump Administration's Harmful Attacks

For the past two years, Attorney General James has led the fight to stop the Trump administration from enacting harmful and unlawful policies that endanger all our communities. In 2020, Attorney General James **filed 37 lawsuits** against the federal government to challenge its attempts to harm the environment, deny access to health care, roll back reproductive rights, discriminate against immigrants and the LGBTQ+ community, put workers in harm's way, and unfairly attack New Yorkers.

Because of her efforts, many of the unlawful actions taken by the federal government have been stopped in their tracks. This year, Attorney General James successfully protected and reinstated the DACA program, stopped the dismantling of the U.S. Postal Service, fought back against efforts to politicize the census, defeated attacks on the Trusted Traveler Program, safeguarded key environmental policies, defended workers' right to sick leave during the pandemic, and protected access to reproductive care.

Attorney General James has also continued her work to defend the Affordable Care Act (ACA) against efforts by the Trump administration and the state of Texas to repeal the law, which would put the health care of hundreds of millions of Americans at risk. During the worst public health crisis of our time, she is defending the many provisions of the ACA — including coverage of preexisting conditions, public health investments, and Medicaid expansion — that are so critical to the health and safety of Americans. Attorney General James will continue to fight back against this assault on our health care and ensure that every American has access to the affordable coverage they need and deserve.





February 2020

# ***Highlights*** from 2020



# Holding Powerful Organizations Accountable



Attorney General James has a wide range of regulatory and enforcement powers over organizations that are based in or do business in New York. Charitable organizations that are chartered in New York are required by law to register and file annual financial reports with the Attorney General's Office and the assets of such an organization are legally required to be used in ways that serve the interests of its membership and advance the organization's charitable mission. After years-long investigations, Attorney General James found that two major charitable organizations in New York failed to fulfill their missions. The National Rifle Association (NRA) and its senior leaders used their status and power for self-enrichment and the Catholic Diocese of Buffalo covered up credible claims about the sexual abuse of minors by priests.

Attorney General James also has the ability to investigate and, if warranted, bring action against companies that are found to be engaging in persistent fraudulent and deceptive activities. Following testimony from Donald Trump's former lawyer that alleged financial impropriety, Attorney General James opened an investigation into the financial dealings of the Trump Organization. That investigation is still ongoing.

In New York, there is one set of laws that every individual and entity must be held accountable to, regardless of its size, influence, or wealth. Attorney General James will continue to use the full force of her office to ensure that no entity can evade these laws.

# Stopping Self-Dealing and Fraud at the NRA

The National Rifle Association (NRA) is not only the largest and most influential pro-gun group in America, but one of the most powerful not-for-profits as well. The NRA raises millions of dollars each year from members and donors that are supposed to go toward charitable purposes. An investigation by Attorney General James found that the NRA's influence grew so powerful that the group went unchecked for decades — giving top executives the ability to funnel millions out of the charity and into their own pockets. For years, Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre and his lieutenants skirted the law and raided NRA coffers to fund lavish lifestyles that included private jets, pricey vacations, expensive meals, and no-show contracts.



The NRA has been fraught with fraud and abuse from the top down, which is why Attorney General filed a lawsuit seeking to dissolve the organization in its entirety, while simultaneously seeking to recoup millions of dollars plundered from NRA bank accounts, and stopping those at the top from ever serving on the board of a New York charity again.

# Investigating the Financial Dealings of the Trump Organization

In Attorney General James' ongoing investigation into the Trump Organization's financial dealings, she went to court and successfully forced the Trump Organization to comply with her office's lawful subpoenas for documents and testimony. Attorney General James launched the investigation in 2019, after Trump's former personal lawyer, Michael Cohen, testified before Congress that Trump's annual financial statements inflated the values of Trump's assets to obtain favorable terms for loans and insurance coverage, while also deflating the value of other assets to reduce real estate taxes. President Trump leaving office has no bearing on this investigation, and Attorney General James will continue to follow the facts and evidence wherever they may lead.



**Judge rules Trump Org must turn over documents to NY AG as part of probe**

**The Washington Post**

**Judge orders Trump Organization to give more records to N.Y. attorney general**



**Trump Organization must turn over documents to NY attorney general, judge rules**



**NY AG probes if Trump pumped up value of estate, assets**



**Judge rejects Trump Organization's claim of privilege to shield documents from New York attorney general**

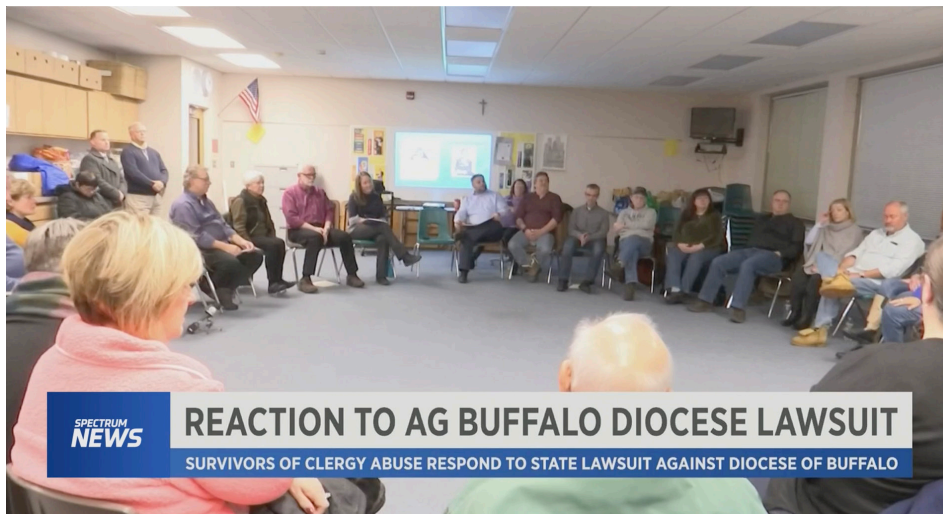
**THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.**

**Trump Organization Ordered to Turn Over Documents to New York Attorney General**



# Holding the Catholic Church Accountable for Failing to Stop Sexual Abuse

When trust is broken with spiritual leaders, it can lead to a crisis in faith. Following a two-year investigation, Attorney General James sued the Catholic Diocese of Buffalo and its former leadership for failing to follow mandated policies and procedures that would have helped to prevent the rampant sexual abuse of minors by priests within the church. The lawsuit asserts that allegations of improper sexual conduct against diocesan priests in Buffalo were inadequately investigated, if at all, and were covered up for years. Even though the leadership of the diocese found sexual abuse complaints to be credible, they sheltered the accused priests from public disclosure by deeming them as “unassignable,” and permitted them to retire or go on purported medical leave, rather than face referral to the Vatican for possible removal from the priesthood. Individuals who are victims of abuse deserve to have their claims justly and timely investigated and determined, but in this case, they never got that opportunity. The wrongs of the past can never be undone, but Attorney General James will do everything in her power to ensure trust, transparency, and accountability moving forward.



# Taking on Big Tech

*“the most potent  
government action”*

— Kara Swisher *The New York Times*

*“The face of monopoly?”*

*Two strong cases  
against Facebook”*

— Editorial Board *DAILY NEWS*

*“The lawsuits...represent the most  
meaningful attempts to check Big Tech’s  
power in two decades.”*

— Editorial Board *The New York Times*

For too long, a few Big Tech companies in America have been able to amass incredible and unchecked power, influence, and wealth to the great detriment of everyday consumers. Using predatory tactics and vast troves of data and money, Facebook and Google have shut down competition, reduced choices for consumers, stifled innovation, and hampered privacy protections for millions of Americans. Our antitrust laws were created specifically to prevent such monopolies from using their power to harm competition and consumers. These types of efforts to dominate the market are as illegal as they are harmful. Attorney General James has taken unprecedented legal action to challenge Facebook and Google and stand up for the millions of consumers and small businesses that have been harmed by their illegal behavior.

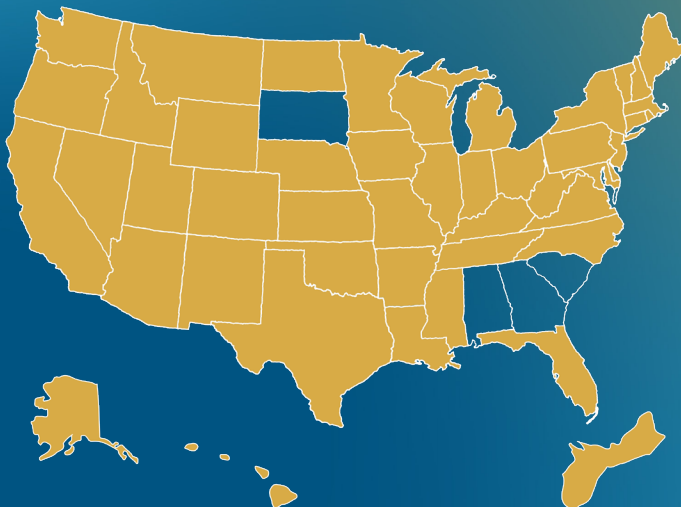
# Holding the World's Largest Social Networking Company Accountable

Attorney General James is leading a bipartisan coalition of 48 attorneys general, including almost every attorney general in the nation, in a lawsuit to halt Facebook's predatory and illegal efforts to stifle competition and maintain control of its monopoly in the social networking market. The lawsuit — that one news outlet called, "the most potent government action" in an antitrust case in over two decades — seeks to stop Facebook's 'buy or bury' strategy, which the company utilized to boost its bottom line and earn billions.

For nearly a decade, the social networking behemoth has neutralized competition by buying companies — like Instagram and WhatsApp — before they could threaten Facebook's dominance, offering vast amounts of money that greatly inflated the value of these companies. Simultaneously, Facebook has cut services to smaller companies it deemed threatening, in an effort to impede their growth. This dual strategy has allowed Facebook to use its monopoly power to crush smaller rivals and snuff out competition. As a result, everyday consumers have been deprived of the benefits of competition and have experienced reduced privacy protections and services along the way.

Attorney General James' lawsuit seeks not only to stop Facebook's illegal behavior now and in the future, but to send a message to every company that efforts to stifle competition, reduce innovation, or cut privacy protections will be met with the full force of the office.

## 48 attorneys general, led by New York, sued Facebook



**The New York Times**  
***U.S. and States Say Facebook  
Illegally Crushed Competition***

**AP**

US gov't, states bring antitrust  
action against Facebook

**USA  
TODAY**

FTC, 48 attorneys general file antitrust  
lawsuits against Facebook over  
Instagram, WhatsApp acquisitions

**n p r**

48 AGs, FTC Sue Facebook Alleging  
Illegal Power Grabs  
To 'Neutralize'  
Rivals

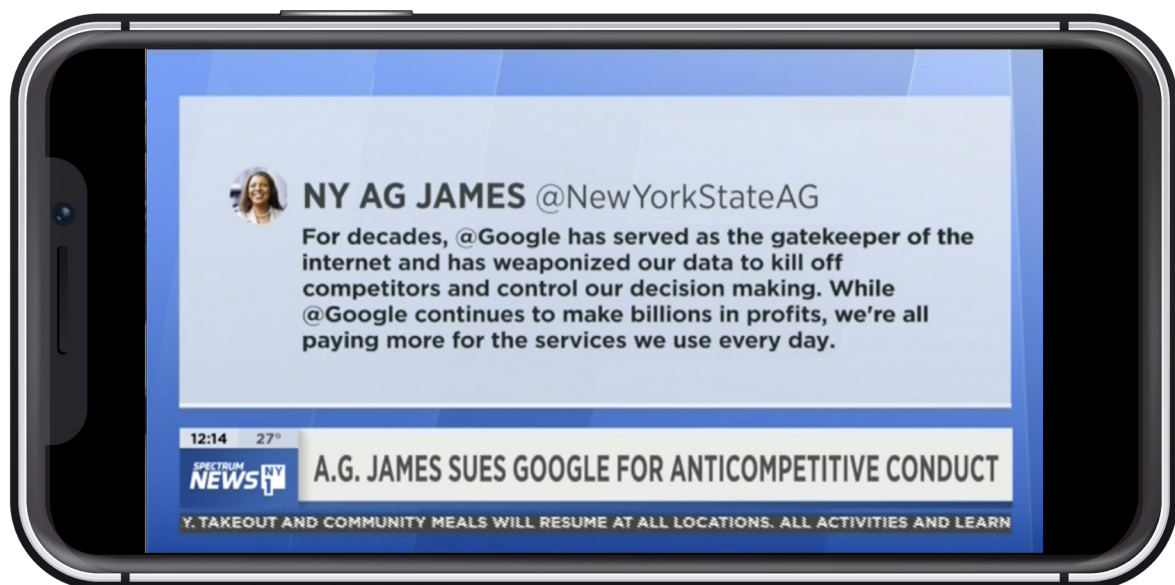


# Stopping One of the World's Most Powerful Companies from Abusing its Power

Attorney General James is co-leading a bipartisan coalition suing tech giant Google for the illegal, anticompetitive conduct the company has employed for years as it seeks to maintain control over its monopoly in the general search and search advertising markets. As Google sprawls across numerous sectors of America's digital economy, the company has used its dominance to illegally squash competitors, monitor significant segments of Americans' lives, and profit to the tune of billions of dollars.

The lawsuit seeks to stop Google from multiple practices it has employed over the last two decades, including forcing companies into exclusionary contracts, discriminating against specialized search sites, and disadvantaging competitors using its search engine marketing tool. These three strategies have allowed Google to accumulate and leverage vast amounts of data to the detriment of consumers and the market.

Through its illegal conduct, the company has ensured that hundreds of millions of people turn to Google first when looking for an answer, and, as a result, Google has served as the gatekeeper of the internet, while it weaponizes data to kill off competitors and control consumers' decision making. Attorney General James is co-leading the coalition of 38 attorneys general as they seek to halt this illegal conduct and restore competition to the marketplace.



# Restoring Faith in Law Enforcement



This year, we were challenged by twin pandemics — COVID-19 and the long-standing inequalities that continue to divide us as a nation. At the same time, our police and our justice system have reached a tipping point of distrust. The deaths of Daniel Prude, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many other unarmed men and women of color at the hands of the police have rekindled a flame of outrage that has been smoldering for too long. With more cellphone, police camera, and video recordings, more people are awakening to a truth that many of us have known for a very long time: our laws are unequally enforced, often with tragic consequences. As a result, more and more New Yorkers have lost faith and trust in law enforcement.

Attorney General James has long been committed to bridging the divide between the police and the public and fighting for reforms to a broken system. This summer, she launched an investigation into the behavior of the New York City Police Department (NYPD) at racial justice protests. As part of this ongoing investigation, she held hours of public hearings about encounters between the NYPD and protesters, released preliminary findings, and recommended changes for substantive reform. The Attorney General's Office has also launched numerous investigations into police involved civilian deaths to provide thorough and independent examinations of these events and to ensure transparency and accountability.

# Investigating the NYPD's Response to Protests

In the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd, thousands of people gathered across New York City to protest police brutality and systemic racism in law enforcement. Following reports of violent clashes between the NYPD and protesters, Attorney General James launched an investigation into the NYPD's response to the protests. As part of her office's civil investigation, Attorney General James held a three-day public hearing where she heard directly from those impacted and involved. The hearing included more than 17 hours of testimony from more than 100 protesters, community-based organizations, elected officials, and NYPD Commissioner Dermot Shea. The Attorney General's Office also received more than 1,300 complaints and pieces of evidence, more than 300 submissions of written testimony, and conducted dozens of interviews with witnesses.

Following the hearings, Attorney General James released some of the investigation's initial findings, including in-depth accounts of interactions between the NYPD and protesters. The report also made recommendations for systemic police reforms, including:

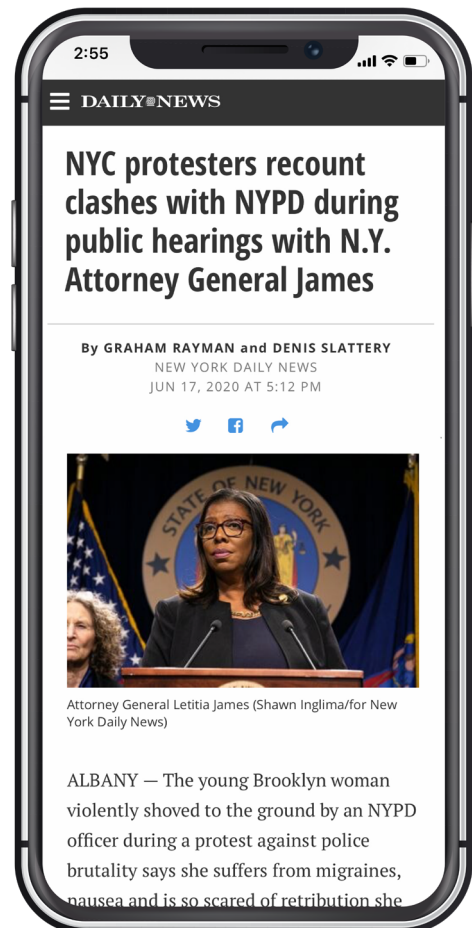
- 1) Removing unilateral power from the NYPD Commissioner in favor of a commission;
- 2) Redesigning public safety and the role of police in society;
- 3) Ensuring real, independent oversight, accountability, and transparency of individual officer misconduct;
- 4) Creating an independent agency that investigates systemic problems at the NYPD; and,
- 5) Establishing a codified use of force standard with real legal consequences for violations.

**AP**

**Stark accounts, scorn for NYPD at protest brutality hearing**

**amNY**

**New Yorkers recount police brutality against protesters during first AG James hearing**





**3 Days**

*of virtual hearings*

**17 Hours**

*of testimony*

**100 People**

*gave testimony*

**OVER**

**300 Submissions**

*of written testimony*



## *Standing up for New Yorkers*



*December 2020*

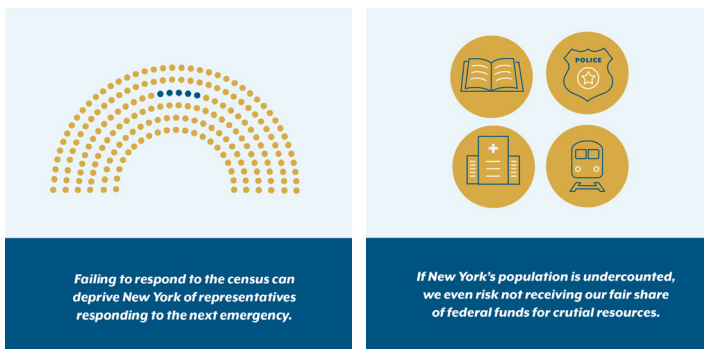
As the federal government neglected or directly attacked the fundamental legal rights of New Yorkers, Attorney General James has stood as the bulwark that families can count on to protect them. New Yorkers can trust that their right to be counted in a census, an essential tool for democracy and equal representation, or to take part in federal programs available to all American citizens will be safe under her watch.

# Ensuring a Fair and Accurate Census

In 2019, Attorney General James brought a lawsuit that halted the Trump administration's efforts to add a citizenship question to the 2020 Decennial Census. Attorney General James continued the fight this year to stop the president's repeated attempts to politicize the census and to ensure that every person is accurately counted.

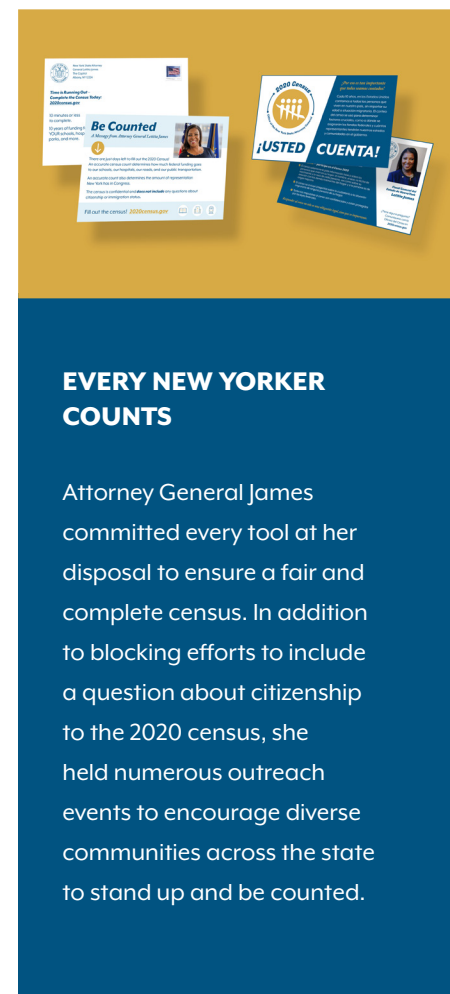
In July, Attorney General James led a large coalition in filing a lawsuit to stop President Trump and his administration from illegally leaving millions of undocumented immigrants out of the apportionment base that follows the census count. Never before in U.S. history have undocumented immigrants been left out of this base, which is why Attorney General James led the coalition to stop this attempt to undermine the census. After a loss in the district court, the Trump administration appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled in December that the uncertainty of whether the Trump administration would get this information while President Trump is still in office meant that it was premature for the courts to rule on the legality of the policy.

Additionally, in a separate attempt to impair the count, the Trump administration, in August, announced a last-minute plan to reduce the time in which self-response questionnaires would be accepted and door-to-door follow-ups by census enumerators would take place. Attorney General James led a coalition supporting legal action to stop the Trump administration's efforts to undermine the count. After multiple court battles, the coalition was able to help extend the time to respond to the census by more than two weeks.



*Failing to respond to the census can deprive New York of representatives responding to the next emergency.*

*If New York's population is undercounted, we even risk not receiving our fair share of federal funds for crucial resources.*



**EVERY NEW YORKER COUNTS**

Attorney General James committed every tool at her disposal to ensure a fair and complete census. In addition to blocking efforts to include a question about citizenship to the 2020 census, she held numerous outreach events to encourage diverse communities across the state to stand up and be counted.



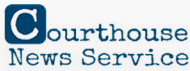
# Stopping the Trump Administration's Political Attacks on New York's Economy and Travelers

In February, the Trump administration issued a directive stating that the federal government would no longer enroll or re-enroll New York residents in a number of the federal government's Trusted Traveler Programs, including Global Entry, SENTRI, NEXUS, and FAST (Free and Secure Trade).

The directive immediately affected tens of thousands of New Yorkers and would have impacted hundreds of thousands of state residents within a year — significantly slowing down travel across the state. Further, economists estimated that border delays on the U.S./Canada border had already cost American businesses billions of dollars each year and resulted in tens of thousands of jobs lost, making the directive even more harmful to New Yorkers — especially those in Western New York.

The Trump administration claimed the decision had to do with the passage of New York's Green Light law in 2019, which gave undocumented immigrants the ability to apply for driver licenses, but 13 other states and the District of Columbia had already passed laws similar to the one that New York passed, yet none were singled out or targeted like New York.

Attorney General James immediately filed a lawsuit on the grounds that the policy illegally and unfairly targeted New Yorkers and jeopardized public safety. In July, the Trump administration finally admitted it had wrongly targeted New Yorkers and rescinded its directive, giving New Yorkers the ability to enroll and re-enroll in the federal government's Trusted Traveler Programs.



**Judge Slams Trump Officials for Blatant Misconduct in Global Entry Ban**

**The New York Times**

**New York to Sue Trump Administration Over Global Entry Freeze**



**New York sues Trump administration over Global Entry ban: It's 'political retribution'**

## Trump Administration's Attack on New Yorkers

### NEW YORK STATE

**50K**  
NEW YORKERS

would have been cut off from completing Global Entry applications<sup>1</sup>

**30K**  
NEW YORKERS

would have had their pending Global Entry applications frozen<sup>1</sup>

**175K**  
NEW YORKERS

would not have been able to re-enroll after their Global Entry memberships expired<sup>2</sup>

## *Safeguarding the Integrity of Our Elections*



Voting is a fundamental right in our democracy, and our democracy is strongest when every voice is heard. With a historic number of voters turning out for the 2020 elections during an unprecedented public health crisis, Attorney General James worked tirelessly to protect this most basic right. From bolstering the Attorney General's Office's Election Day Hotline to help with voter concerns and poll site problems, to issuing guidance about voter intimidation, to challenging the federal government's attempts to slow down the delivery of mail-in ballots, to investigating potential instances of voter suppression, Attorney General James used every tool at her disposal to protect New Yorkers' right to vote.

## Fighting Against Efforts to Dismantle the U.S. Postal Service

When the Trump administration attempted to slow down service and disturb operations at the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) to discourage and disrupt mail-in voting, Attorney General James took action. Attorney General James led a coalition of states and cities across the country in a lawsuit to stop efforts to dismantle the USPS. In September, Attorney General James won a preliminary injunction in the case, keeping the USPS intact and halting the Trump administration's baseless actions. The USPS is a critical part of the American infrastructure and provides a vital service to millions of Americans every day – from delivering medication, to paychecks, and even mail-in ballots. As the November presidential election approached, it was clear that the USPS would be expected to handle a record number of mail-in ballots due to the pandemic. The slowdown of USPS services would have jeopardized our democracy and the fundamental right to vote.

## Supporting New Yorkers' Right to Vote

Voting is our most basic democratic right and we must do everything to ensure New Yorkers can exercise it. As in years past, the Attorney General's Office operated an Election Day Hotline for New Yorkers to report problems or seek guidance for issues that they experienced at the polls. This year, the Attorney General's Office addressed more than 1,300 complaints from special elections, primary elections, during the early voting period, and on the day of the general election. With the potential for greater confusion this year due to the pandemic, members of the Attorney General's Office monitored problematic poll sites in-person to support voters and mitigate barriers to voting. Voter protection and access to the polls are of paramount importance to Attorney General James and she will continue to protect these rights.



*AG James and elected officials encourage New Yorkers to vote early, October 2020*

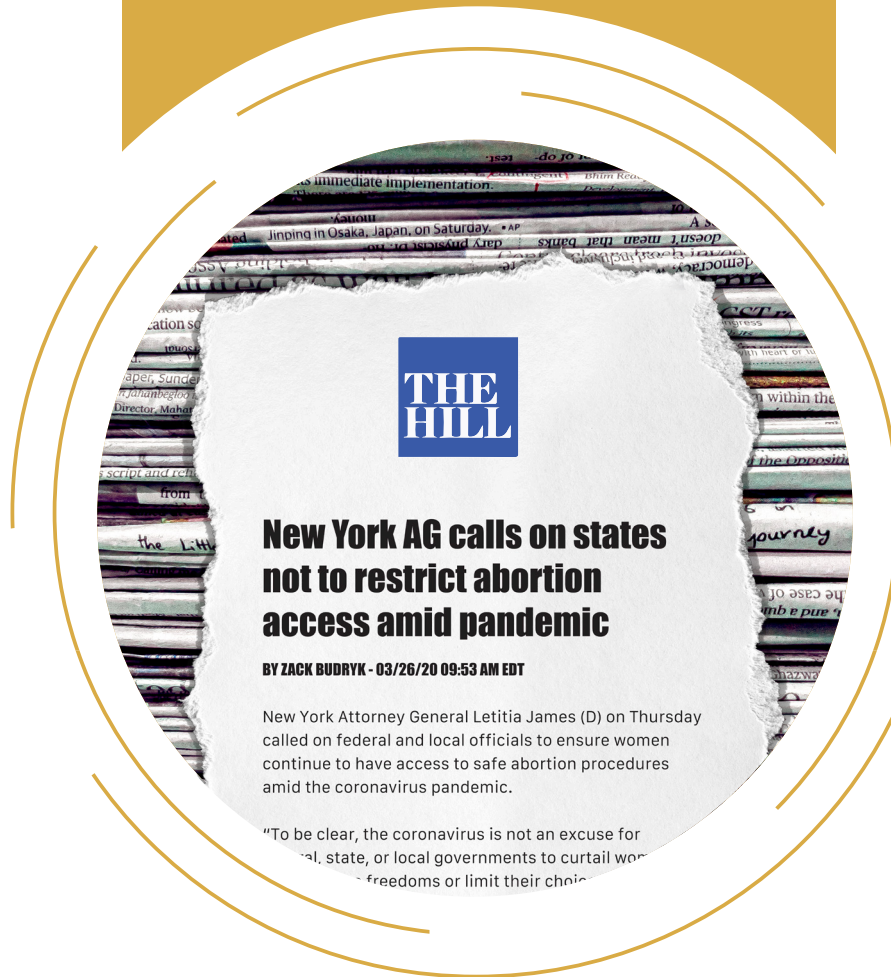
The 2020 presidential election presented unique challenges for voters across New York. Ahead of the election, Attorney General James issued guidance to Boards of Elections and law enforcement entities across the state about how to handle potential voter intimidation or voter interference. The Attorney General's Office also engaged in a voter education campaign in multiple languages to ensure that communities across the state knew their rights at the polls, how to report instances of harassment or intimidation, and the key dates for voting.

# Protecting New Yorkers from Voter Intimidation or Harassment





# Preserving Reproductive Rights



Attorney General James has long been a fierce defender of the right to reproductive care. As the federal government and states across the nation have sought to limit access to reproductive health care and coverage, Attorney General James has fought back every step of the way to protect these critical rights. From blocking attempts to deny abortion procedures during the pandemic, to fighting back against increased costs of reproductive care, to challenging regressive and restrictive laws that deny access to abortion, to ensuring New Yorkers have access to the birth control and other contraceptive care they are entitled to, Attorney General James will continue to defend and preserve our most basic rights.

# Protecting Abortion Access During COVID-19

Several states and even the federal government used the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting shutdowns as an opportunity to limit or deny women's constitutional right to abortion. Several states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas, tried to ban abortions during this time, claiming they were not necessary and essential health procedures. Attorney General James successfully challenged these baseless and harmful bans to preserve women's ability to access abortion, a critical and time-sensitive procedure that, if delayed, can significantly impact their health and well-being.

At the federal level, Attorney General James took legal action against the federal government to allow women to access Mifepristone, the medication abortion prescription drug, via telehealth during the early months of the pandemic. The Trump administration refused to waive requirements that the drug be administered in an in-person setting, even though many people were unable or afraid to seek in-person care during the pandemic. Attorney General James led a coalition of 23 attorneys general in legal action to remove these barriers so that individuals can access the abortion pill in a safe and timely manner.



The graphic features the Seal of the State of New York and the Attorney General's Office on the left. In the center, the NPR logo is displayed above the date "April 4, 2020" and the headline "New York AG Calls for Nationwide Abortion Access During The Coronavirus". Below this, the name "Letitia James" and her title "New York Attorney General" are listed. A dotted line separates this section from a dark blue bar at the bottom containing the text "oppose this ban on abortions."

**NEW YORK POST**

**FDA urged to let women get abortion drugs by mail during coronavirus crisis**

**Newsday**

**State demands health insurers comply with birth control law**

**MSNBC**

**New York AG leads coalition to stop Texas abortion ban during COVID-19 pandemic**

**SPECTRUM NEWS**

**New York AG, Advocates: Abortion Rights Being Stifled Amidst Pandemic**

**12 WBNG.COM**  
NEWS YOUR WEATHER AUTHORITY

**Attorney General James demands health insurance providers obey the law, protect women's access to birth control**



## Safeguarding Roe v. Wade

More than 47 years after Roe v. Wade ensured a woman's right to choose, states across the country continue to look for ways to chip away at that right and deny women the basic freedom to control their own bodies. In Missouri, lawmakers enacted several anti-abortion laws meant to deny access to abortion care, including a gestational age ban on abortions and a prohibition on abortions for patients seeking them solely due to a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome. Attorney General James led a multistate coalition to challenge the constitutionality of these laws, which undermine women's fundamental rights in Missouri and threaten the reproductive rights of women across the country.

Similarly, Louisiana tried to institute a law requiring abortion providers to maintain admitting privileges at local hospitals, an onerous and unnecessary rule designed to make it harder for clinics in the state to operate. Attorney General James took legal action that helped to strike down this law at the U.S. Supreme Court. This critical victory means greater access to safe, legal abortions for women in Louisiana and sends a clear message to other states that these kinds of laws will not hold up in court. Attorney General James will continue to fight spurious rules and restrictions whose only objective is to control women's bodies and choices rather than promote women's health and safety.

*It's simple:*

**In this nation,  
women have  
a constitutional  
right to  
an abortion.**



## Maintaining Affordable Abortion Care

Attorney General James took action to ensure that abortion services are not only accessible, but also affordable. She filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration after it issued a rule that would have required separate and complicated billing practices for abortion services. Abortion coverage is required in New York state, and this move would have punished insurance companies that operate in the state and pressured other companies to remove abortion coverage from their plans. Attorney General James successfully stopped this rule, which would have caused confusion, led to higher premiums for consumers, and could have caused people to lose health insurance coverage if they accidentally missed the separate payments.

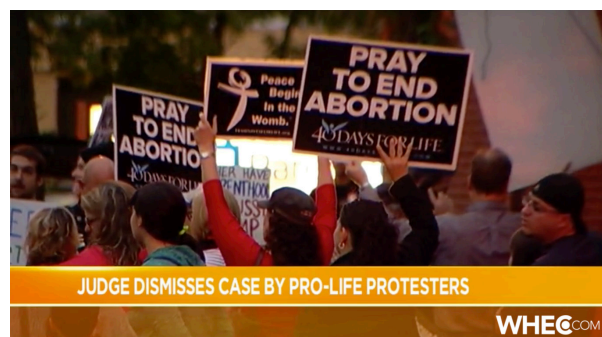
## Ensuring Access to Contraception

Birth control medications are critical to people's health and well-being, and are used for a variety of medical reasons. That's why Attorney General James fought back when the Trump administration attempted to gut the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) birth control coverage requirement by allowing employers to deny birth control coverage to their employees based on religious or moral objections. If this rule had gone into effect, tens of thousands of people would have lost access to free contraceptive coverage. Attorney General James took this fight to the U.S. Supreme Court, and won, because employers should never have a role in making reproductive health care decisions for their employees.

Attorney General James also enforced New York's law ensuring that individuals can receive 12-month supplies of contraceptives at one time. After learning that several health insurance companies were rejecting these prescription requests, Attorney General James demanded these companies immediately begin to comply with the law and reminded other insurance companies in the state of their legal obligations. Not only was this in violation of the law, but it put New Yorkers in greater danger at a time when many were trying to limit unnecessary trips to pharmacies and were losing their jobs along with their health insurance.

All patients should be able to access health care centers without being harassed, threatened, or blocked. Yet in many places, anti-abortion activists target patients who enter facilities that provide abortions to try and intimidate them and interfere with their personal reproductive choices. For years, patients seeking health care at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Rochester were harassed when they tried to enter the facility. Attorney General James defended these patients in court, securing a decision that establishes a 15-foot buffer zone around abortion clinics in Western New York. This decision prohibits protesting, picketing, or inhibiting patients from moving within that zone, and ensures that they can access the care they want without fear of harassment or intimidation.

## Protecting Health Care Clinics



# Fighting for Funding for Reproductive Health Care

For decades, the federal Title X grant program has provided funds for family planning, preventive health services like breast and cervical cancer screenings, and STI testing and treatment. These funds benefit millions of patients, many of whom are low-income or people of color. The Trump administration decimated this critical program by placing unlawful and unethical restrictions on what health care providers are allowed to say to their patients regarding pregnancy terminations. The consequences have been devastating, with many providers withdrawing from the program and leaving significant gaps in services. Attorney General James has been fighting against this so-called gag rule for over a year and continues to lead the effort. Most recently, she has asked the U.S. Supreme Court to review its constitutionality in order to protect millions of women and families that have relied on this program for their health care for generations.



## REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ROUNDTABLE

More than 47 years ago, *Roe v. Wade* made it clear that women hold the right to have safe, legal abortions.

Yet the Trump administration has continued to roll back the clock on women's rights. In August, Attorney General James hosted a roundtable with U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand; Robin Chappelle Golston, CEO of Planned Parenthood Empire State Acts; Nancy Northup, President and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights; and Andrea Miller, President of the National Institute for Reproductive Health. The discussion focused on protecting access to contraception and abortion and ways to ensure racial justice in the fight for reproductive freedom.

# *Leading the Fight to Protect Our Environment*



The impacts of climate change have never been more severe or destructive than they were in 2020. Wildfires ravaged multiple states in the western part of the country, razing homes and destroying millions of acres of wildlife, creating dangerous air quality conditions for countless Americans, and claiming too many lives. The U.S. also experienced a record number of hurricanes, which forced families to evacuate their homes and destroyed communities. Despite these record-breaking natural disasters and the devastation they wrought across the country, the Trump administration continued to recklessly roll back key environmental protections. Attorney General James took **more than 70 legal actions** this year alone to stop these disastrous and relentless attacks on the environment to ensure that the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the communities that we live in are protected and remain safe for generations to come.

More than two-thirds of New Yorkers regularly breathe unhealthy air, yet the Trump administration continued to ignore the harmful impacts of air pollution on communities throughout the state and across the country. Attorney General James brought and won a lawsuit against the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for continuing to ignore its legal responsibility under the Clean Air Act to control upwind sources of pollution that create dangerous smog in New York.

## Defending the Right to Breathe Clean Air



***AG James has taken over 70 legal actions to fight dangerous rollbacks that threaten the health of our planet.***

The Clean Water Act was designed to help states protect the nation's waters against various physical, chemical, and biological pollutants that can harm public health and our environment. Yet the EPA has done everything in its power to strip key protections from the Clean Water Act, leaving our waters vulnerable in the process. That is why Attorney General James brought two lawsuits against the federal government for its attempts to undermine the Clean Water Act. First, she co-led a coalition of states in suing the EPA over its so-called "Dirty Water Rule," which seeks to eliminate legal protections for countless streams and wetlands across the country, putting our communities and wildlife at risk.

Second, Attorney General James filed a lawsuit against the EPA over its illegal rule to restrict states' ability to protect their own waters. The rule jeopardizes the safety of New York's natural resources.

## Protecting Access to Clean Water

Clean Car Standards save consumers money and help protect our planet from the devastating effects of climate change, yet, the EPA is attempting to roll back federal vehicle fuel efficiency and pollution emission standards. Attorney General James filed a lawsuit with a coalition of states to challenge the EPA's significant weakening of these standards, which would result in significant costs for consumers and cause irreparable harm to the planet.

## Preserving National Clean Car Standards

Continuing its efforts to roll back key environmental protections, the Trump administration took unprecedented action to limit the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which requires federal agencies to evaluate the environmental impact of major infrastructure projects. Attorney General James sued the federal government over this rule, which also limits public participation in the review process, robbing vulnerable communities of the opportunity to make their voices heard on actions that are likely to have adverse environmental and health impacts. Restricting the types of projects that undergo environmental review prior to their construction puts communities and the environment in significant danger.

## Defending Critical Environmental Review Standards

*I know,*  
the  world  
can seem like a  
terrifying place these days.

***We're all  
in this  
together.***

*Thank you*  
for your passion,  
your commitment,

and your willingness to  
charge into the battlefield  
***to fight for  
this planet.***



The pandemic has impacted every area of American life, and the environment is no different. The EPA used the pandemic as cover to stop enforcing critical environmental laws and regulations, giving companies the green light to violate laws like the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Safe Drinking Water Acts during a public health crisis. Attorney General James led a coalition of attorneys general in suing the EPA over this rollback because this pandemic is not an excuse to allow corporations to freely pollute and endanger our communities and our planet. Now more than ever, it is essential to prioritize the health of our communities, and Attorney General James will not stop fighting for the health and safety of all Americans.

## Blocking Deregulation Efforts During a Public Health Crisis

Methane is one of the most potent greenhouse gases because it has the ability to trap heat at a far greater rate than carbon dioxide and other gases, accelerating the impacts of climate change. When the EPA attempted to eliminate controls on methane emissions from oil and gas facilities, Attorney General James filed a lawsuit with a coalition of states to stop this dangerous rollback. The lawsuit also challenged the EPA's rollbacks of controls on other pollutants emitted from oil and gas operations, that threaten public health, particularly the health of children, older adults, and those suffering from chronic lung disease and asthma.

## Pushing Back on Weakening of Critical Climate Change Protections



# Supporting Immigrant Communities



America is a country of immigrants, our culture has been made richer by their contributions, and our economy made more prosperous by their hard work. Yet the Trump administration has continued its cruel crusade to deny immigrants the opportunity to seek a better life here - attempting to exclude immigrant populations from the census, denying immigrants basic access to health care, and even incarcerating children. Attorney General James has relentlessly challenged every discriminatory, inhumane, and unlawful attempt to endanger immigrant communities.

# Defending DACA

Attorney General James secured a major victory for immigrants and the rule of law when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Trump administration's attempts to cancel the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program were unlawful and ordered the program to be resumed. DACA has allowed more than 700,000 undocumented young people who came to this country as children to live, study, and work in the U.S. without fear of arrest or deportation.

The Trump administration and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) refused to comply with the U.S. Supreme Court's order to resume the program, and instead, continued to make interim changes to DACA. Attorney General James co-led a coalition of states in two subsequent lawsuits to challenge the Trump administration and DHS's refusal to restore DACA, and in December, a judge ordered the DHS to fully restore DACA, including opening up the program to new applicants for the first time since 2017. In addition, DHS was ordered to restore protections to a two-year period instead of one year, and make Advanced Parole available to DACA recipients again without restrictions.

These collective decisions made clear that fairness, inclusion, and compassion matter and Attorney General James will never waver in her fight to protect our immigrant communities.



Supreme Court blocks Trump from ending DACA

**DAILY NEWS**

'Today is an exciting day': Supreme Court blocks Trump's bid to end DACA immigrant protections



Supreme Court Rules For DREAMers, Against Trump



Attorney General Letitia James won a major lawsuit that prevents the Trump administration's practice of making civil immigration arrests in and around state courthouses in a manner that interferes with the state's administration of justice and endangers our immigrant communities. The presence of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers in and around our courthouses has disrupted and had a chilling effect on our ability to ensure that justice is served. By allowing federal agents to interfere with state and local cases, the Trump administration endangered the safety of every New Yorker, while targeting immigrants. The administration of justice and public safety are among the most important functions of the state, and Attorney General James will be relentless in their defense.

Attorney General James also led two coalitions in legal action to support the states of Washington and Massachusetts in their efforts to similarly halt arrests by ICE and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers in and around state courthouses.

## Preventing Unlawful Arrests by ICE at Our Courthouses

SPECTRUM  
NOTICIAS NY

Es ilegal que ICE haga arrestos de inmigrantes en tribunales: juez federal

EL DIARIO  
Desde 1913, El Correo de los Hispanos

"Ganamos demanda contra Trump": fiscal celebra en español que ICE ya no podrá arrestar inmigrantes en tribunales de Nueva York

CNN

Federal judge in New York rules ICE courthouse arrests are illegal

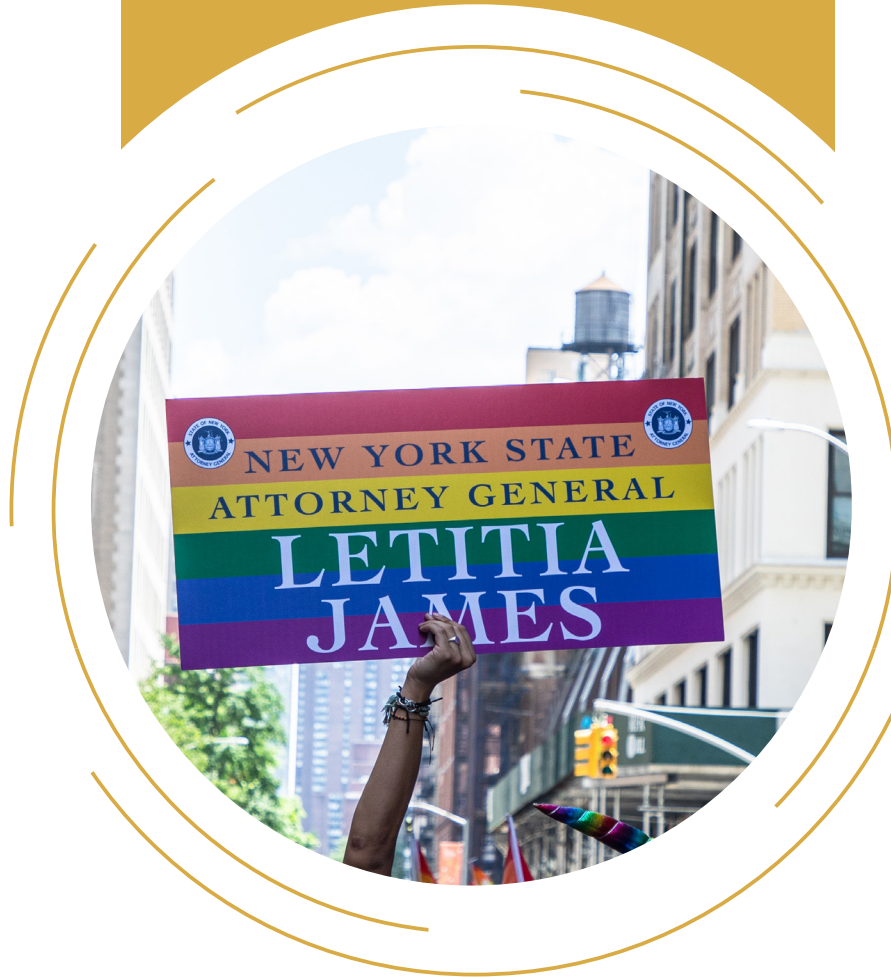
abc NEWS

Federal judge rules ICE can no longer operate in and around New York courthouses

Attorney General James took legal action to block the Trump administration from restricting the approval of visas and green cards to immigrants who would be likely to use government assistance programs in the future. These restrictions included onerous criteria such as requirements that immigrants provide proof of health insurance coverage within 30 days of arrival in the United States. Immigrants of all financial backgrounds are valuable to this country and Attorney General James has and will continue to fight for them.

## Challenging Unlawful Visa Restrictions

## *Fighting for the LGBTQ+ Community*



Attorney General James is a staunch ally of the LGBTQ+ community and has worked to safeguard the rights of people to express their gender identity and sexual orientation without fear of discrimination. From changing government policy regarding sex designation to challenging discrimination and intolerance at school, in the workplace, and at the doctor's office, Attorney General James is committed to protecting the rights of LGBTQ+ people to live with equal dignity and respect.

## Ensuring Inclusive State Policies

The official documents of transgender New Yorkers will now reflect their gender identity. Attorney General James helped to change an outdated New York state policy that forced transgender individuals to wait until the age of 18 to change the sex designation on their birth certificate if they were born in the state. Minors will no longer have to wait until they are 18 to correct the sex listed on their New York birth certificate, and instead, can be recognized by the state for who they really are.

## Fighting Against Health Care Discrimination

Unbiased health care is a basic right, yet the Trump administration has taken steps to enable discrimination in health care by weakening certain provisions of the ACA. These provisions prohibit discrimination from health care providers and insurance companies based on characteristics like gender identity, pregnancy status, race, disability, and age. If these provisions are weakened, insurers will be allowed to vary benefits in ways that could specifically target people with HIV and members of the LGBTQ+ community. Attorney General James sued the Trump administration over this blatant attempt to chip away at the ACA and will continue to fight in this ongoing lawsuit to ensure health care remains a right for every American.

*The*  
**TRUMP**  
Administration  
*is trying to remove protections*  
*in the Affordable Care Act*  
**to make it easier to discriminate**  
*when it comes to health care.*

**LGBTQ+ Individuals:**  
**Could be denied health care based on sex stereotyping and their gender identity.**

**Health care is a basic right**  
*and this administration*  
**cannot**  
*pick & choose*  
**who gets access to health care.**

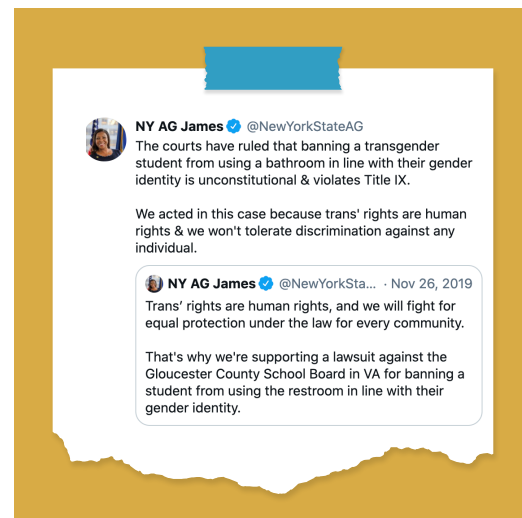


Every employee deserves fair treatment at work, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Unfortunately, LGBTQ+ employees continue to face workplace discrimination or risk losing their jobs because of who they are or who they love. Attorney General James took legal action to protect workers from discrimination, and earlier this year, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that employers cannot fire LGBTQ+ employees based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, a major victory and step forward for equal rights for all.

## Protecting Workers from Discrimination

In 2015, a transgender student in Virginia named Gavin Grimm took legal action against his high school for not allowing him to use the bathroom that aligned with his gender identity. These kinds of discriminatory bathroom rules have proliferated across the country, denying transgender students and individuals the ability to use the bathroom of their choice. Attorney General James led a coalition of states in filing a brief to support Gavin's case, arguing that discrimination against transgender individuals has no legal basis. This year, the U.S. Court of Appeals that was hearing the case determined that Gavin's school board violated his constitutional rights. This decision is momentous and has enormous implications for the nearly 1.5 million people in the United States – including nearly 150,000 teenagers – who identify as transgender.

## Defending the Rights of Transgender Students



## *Defending Workers*



No worker should work full-time and still not make enough to feed their family. Unfortunately, many workers are barely getting by. Too many hard-working New Yorkers face harassment, wage theft, misclassification, and other forms of workplace exploitation. Attorney General James believes that everyone should get a fair shot. That is why she has worked tirelessly to defend workplace protections and hold businesses accountable that have stolen wages, cheated workers out of benefits, or maintained abusive work environments.

## Zero Tolerance for Harassment in the Workplace

Everyone deserves to work in an environment that is free of fear, abuse, intimidation and retaliation. Yet for years, Ken Friedman, the owner of The Spotted Pig, a high profile restaurant in New York City, sexually harassed, pressured, and retaliated against female staff members. When these employees reported this behavior, they were either dismissed or terminated. Following an investigation, Attorney General James secured \$240,000 for 11 former employees who were victims of the harassment. Survivors of workplace harassment and discrimination are standing up and speaking out against injustices that have long been ignored, and Attorney General James will use every power of her office to support them and hold perpetrators accountable.



*AG James and former employees of The Spotted Pig announce sexual harassment settlement, January 2020*

# Zero Tolerance for Harassment in the Workplace

After an investigation into a Long Island-based construction company, known as Trade Off, Attorney General James discovered a pattern of severe sexual harassment and retaliation against workers who were primarily women of color. Female employees reported quid pro quo harassment by managers demanding sexual acts for pay and overtime opportunities, physical and verbal harassment by male employees, and instances of managers and other workers sending explicit photos and videos. When these same employees reported this behavior, Trade Off managers not only failed to take adequate action, but fired at least 12 workers in retaliation. Attorney General James secured \$1.5 million in restitution for 18 former employees who experienced this workplace harassment and retaliation. In addition to the monetary compensation, Trade Off is now required to employ an outside monitor for three years, create a more complete sexual harassment policy, and report regularly to the Attorney General's Office regarding its implementation of these policies. Attorney General James will not tolerate sexual harassment in any industry. She remains committed to seeking justice on behalf of workers.



*“It’s important for me to be able to speak out and shine a light on the harassment that women in the construction industry encounter on a daily basis.*

*No one should be harassed and mistreated for trying to do their jobs. I thank Attorney General Letitia James and her team for understanding that, and for fighting hard to make a difference.”*

— JALEESA MCCRIMMON, A FORMER EMPLOYEE OF TRADE OFF

Online food delivery platforms typically classify delivery workers as “gig workers,” meaning they are independent contractors and not entitled to the same unemployment benefits as regular employees. Luis Vega, a former driver for Postmates, sought unemployment insurance benefits after he was terminated. When New York’s Unemployment Insurance Appeal Board sided with Vega, Postmates challenged the Board’s decision in court. After taking up the case, Attorney General James secured a huge victory for thousands of gig workers across New York when the courts ruled that Postmates delivery drivers are not independent contractors, and are eligible for the same unemployment benefits as other employees. Attorney General James is committed to fighting for the rights of all workers, and ensuring that every New Yorker receives the benefits they are entitled to.

## Standing up for Gig Workers

Every New Yorker is entitled to a fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work. After a two-year investigation, Attorney General James secured back wages for employees at Brooklyn-based Cathay Express Transportation. Cathay failed to pay overtime to drivers and failed to pay workers the minimum wage in some instances. In addition to paying employees back their earned wages, Cathay Express Transportation’s payment practices will be monitored for a two-year period. Attorney General James will always fight to prevent workers from being exploited by unscrupulous employers, and make sure they receive the compensation they are owed.

## Ensuring Workers are Paid Their Fair Share



剋扣司機薪資 救護車公司  
被追討25萬元



휠체어 환자이송업체 25  
만달러 지불 합의



AG James Delivers Restitution  
for Wage Theft  
Victims



## *Protecting Consumers*



*January 2020*

Attorney General James has zero tolerance for illegal and unscrupulous tactics designed to steal data or cheat New Yorkers out of their hard-earned money. From requiring new security measures from one of the largest online video conferencing services, to cracking down on gyms that refused to suspend monthly fees even when their doors were closed, Attorney General James has fought to protect the safety and financial wellbeing of New Yorkers every step of the way.

After the outbreak of COVID-19, cities and states across the nation began social distancing procedures that required businesses, schools, families, and friends to connect with one another online. As one of the leading video conferencing platforms in the country, Zoom saw an exponential increase in usage. Zoom's users entrusted the company to facilitate some of their most personal and confidential communications with family, friends, and colleagues. As usage of the platform increased, security flaws and vulnerabilities in Zoom's software became increasingly clear. Attorney General James opened an investigation that culminated in an agreement with Zoom to implement more robust security protections and user controls. This agreement protects the data of users in New York and around the country.

## Ensuring Security Protections

In 2015, a series of cyberattacks compromised the accounts of nearly 20,000 customers of Dunkin' Donuts. The company failed to inform impacted customers, did not conduct an investigation into the scope of the cyberattacks, and took no meaningful steps to prevent future data breaches. As a result of this negligence, Attorney General James filed suit against Dunkin' Donuts, and this year, she delivered results. Dunkin' was required to notify customers impacted in the attacks and provide refunds for unauthorized use of customers' stored value cards. The company is also required to maintain safeguards to protect against similar attacks in the future, follow incident response procedures when an attack occurs, and pay \$650,000 in penalties and costs to the state of New York. As the threat and scale of online cyberattacks grow, Attorney General James is committed to protecting consumer data and holding all businesses accountable for implementing safe security practices.

## Holding Companies Accountable for Cyberattacks

After a massive data breach of The Home Depot's network, the payment card information of approximately 40 million consumers was compromised. This year, as a result of a multistate investigation, Attorney General James and other states secured \$17.5 million for customers who were impacted, and required The Home Depot to take significant measures to strengthen its security protocols.

As the COVID-19 pandemic took a financial toll on New Yorkers, the New York Sports Club (NYSC) and Lucille Roberts gyms continued to charge monthly dues to members, despite the fact that all health clubs and gyms in the state were ordered to close. Attorney General James stepped in and sued to block NYSC and Lucille Roberts from continuing to take advantage of New Yorkers. She swiftly obtained a court order, barring both gyms from charging member dues for closed and inaccessible gyms, and prohibiting them from charging fees or penalties to members who had submitted cancellation requests.

## Stopping Gyms from Unfairly Charging Consumers

## Delivering Refunds to Western New Yorkers

In February, Western New York theme park Fantasy Island closed its doors without warning and without a plan to refund thousands of consumers who had already purchased season passes and other goods. Just two days after the announcement, Attorney General James took action, demanding that Fantasy Island's owner provide refunds to consumers or face legal action. Attorney General James successfully delivered full refunds for all consumers who purchased season passes, meal plans, and associated goods and services for the 2020 season, totaling nearly \$425,000.



Attorney General James finalized a years-long investigation into the subprime auto lending practices of Santander Consumer USA Inc, securing over \$27 million for New Yorkers and \$550 million in relief for consumers nationwide. Leading a multistate coalition, Attorney General James found that Santander had knowingly placed its customers into exploitative auto loans that had a high probability of default. The settlement puts an end to Santander's subprime lending practices and sends a strong message to lenders that these types of unscrupulous tactics will not be tolerated in New York State.

## Providing Financial Relief to Consumers

## Shutting Down Illegal Debt Collectors

In February, Attorney General James shut down a Buffalo-based debt collector, banned him from the industry, and returned \$1.7 million to consumers. Working in partnership with the Federal Trade Commission, Attorney General James found that Robert Heidenriech had collected money that consumers didn't owe, and done so using false threats of arrest and other illegal tactics.

In a more recent case involving another Buffalo-based debt collector, Attorney General James put an end to another illegal scheme led by Kenneth Thomas and his associates. The debt collectors used a call spoofing service to impersonate government officials, threatening consumers with legal repercussions to collect money. By shutting down these predatory operations, Attorney General James sent a clear message that deceiving consumers is unacceptable in New York state.



*“A Buffalo debt collector has been barred from the industry to settle allegations from the state and federal officials that he misled consumers about how much money they owed and then used illegal tactics to collect it.”*

THE BUFFALO NEWS

## Protecting Consumers from Predatory Interest Rates

Usury laws protect New Yorkers from being charged excessive interest rates on loans, by setting caps on the maximum amount of interest that can be charged. Instead of putting everyday New Yorkers first, the Trump administration has time and time again put the interests of big banks over those of consumers. In 2020, the administration issued rules that would allow predatory lenders to bypass existing state interest rate caps, and charge consumers sky-high interest rates on their loans. These rule changes would have had a devastating financial impact on New Yorkers, as our state and nation continue to suffer the effects of COVID-19. That's why Attorney General James sued to oppose the rules and prevent banks and other financial institutions from taking advantage of consumers.

# Expanding Access to Safe and Affordable Housing



January 2020

Every New Yorker deserves access to a safe and decent home, yet too many are denied this basic right. From standing up to landlords that violate our laws and put children in harm's way, to providing millions of dollars to organizations to support and expand affordable housing, to cracking down on developers and unscrupulous actors that try to cheat the system and prey on tenants and homeowners, Attorney General James has worked across the board to protect and provide housing for all New Yorkers.



## Protecting Children from the Dangers of Lead Paint Poisoning

Every child deserves to live in a home free from the dangers of lead paint. Attorney General James filed a lawsuit against a property management corporation that manages over 6,000 apartments in the Bronx for failing to comply with provisions of New York City's lead poisoning prevention law. The corporation, Chestnut Holdings, put the health of its tenants at risk by repeatedly violating the New York City Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Act, which requires property owners to take several critical measures to prevent children under six from being exposed to paint with dangerously high levels of lead.

Attorney General James also filed a lawsuit against a group of individuals and companies in the Buffalo region for repeatedly and persistently violating county, city, state, and federal laws by illegally allowing lead paint-related hazards to proliferate in their rental properties. The group, which is controlled by Angel Elliot Dalfin, has owned and managed more than 150 single and two-family homes in predominantly low-income communities of color. These violations led to dozens of reported instances of childhood lead poisoning. Attorney General James will not stop until those responsible have been brought to justice.



*AG James, elected officials, and tenants announce a lawsuit against Chestnut Holdings in the Bronx, February 2020*

Attorney General James delivered more than \$1 million in rent credits for harassed tenants and housing placements for 10 homeless families, after an investigation into Madison Realty Capital found that the company aided and abetted tenant harassment and other fraud by notorious landlord Raphael (Rafi) Toledano. With the financial backing of Madison Realty Capital, Toledano harassed tenants through coercive buyouts, executed illegal construction practices, and failed to provide tenants with utilities, repairs, and other necessary services. The investigation found that Madison Realty Capital knew or should have known about Toledano's predatory history and that his proposed plans for aggressive buyouts and conversions of buildings were likely to result in tenant harassment. Attorney General James will continue to stand up for tenants by taking on predatory landlords and their unscrupulous financiers.

## Providing Relief to Victims of Tenant Harassment

**Patch**

**Tenants Of Notorious Village Landlord Get \$1M In Rent Credits**

**星島日報**  
SINGTAO NEWS

為東村惡房東提供貸款 助長逼遷 私募公司被罰100萬元 租金抵免

**Caribbean Life**

**James wins over \$1M in rent credits for harassed tenants**

**New York County Politics**

**James Wins More Than \$1 Million in Rent Credits for Harassed Tenants**

**THE REAL DEAL**  
NEW YORK REAL ESTATE NEWS

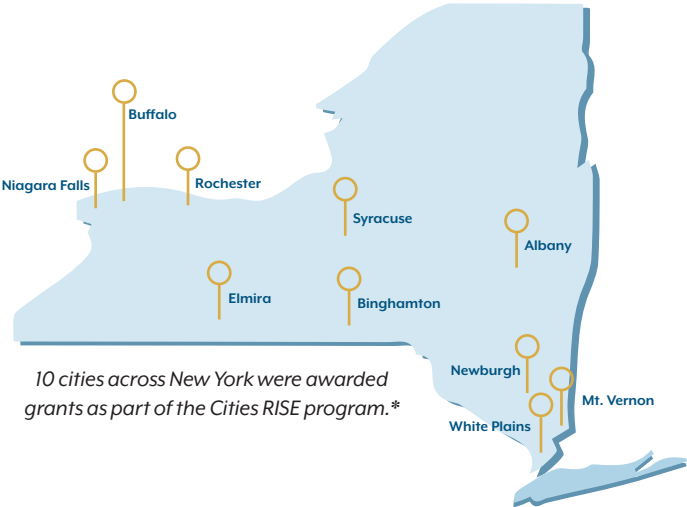
**Madison Realty Capital to give Toledano tenants \$1M in rent credits**

**CRAIN'S NEW YORK BUSINESS**

**Madison Realty Capital reaches \$1M agreement for victims of fraud and tenant harassment**

# Funding Affordable Housing Initiatives

Attorney General James provided more than \$8 million in grants as part of the Cities for Responsible Investment and Strategic Enforcement (Cities RISE) program, which supports affordable housing efforts throughout the state. The cities of Albany, Binghamton, Buffalo, White Plains, Elmira, Mount Vernon, Newburgh, Niagara Falls, Rochester, and Syracuse received grants of up to \$1 million each to develop new strategic housing programs to revitalize their communities. The programs are specifically related to making housing code enforcement more effective and efficient in order to transform blighted, vacant, or poorly maintained properties and increase affordable housing stock.



\*Additional municipalities received funds for affordable housing as part of other AG programs.



AG James awards the city of Albany with funds for affordable housing, January 2020



# Stopping Deed Theft

Deed theft has become a common tool of career criminals and unscrupulous real estate developers to illegally obtain real estate so they can sell it at a huge profit in high-demand housing markets. This illegal scheme often targets people of color, the elderly, and other vulnerable homeowners and scams them into signing over the deeds to their homes to crooks and con artists. In an effort to combat this growing crime and protect homeowners, Attorney General James launched the “Protect Our Homes” initiative, a campaign of coordinated prevention and enforcement actions to combat growing rates of deed theft in New York City and educate homeowners. As part of the program, Attorney General James created an interagency task force with local district attorneys, the New York City Sheriff’s Office, legal service providers, and housing protection organizations to focus on deed theft, review complaints, and connect victims with legal representation.

Attorney General James also hosted a day of action in Brooklyn to educate homeowners about deed theft and other predatory housing scams. Deed theft is a heartless crime foisted on people who have worked all their lives to achieve a vital piece of the American Dream, only to have that dream become a nightmare. Attorney General James will continue to go after anyone who attempts to engage in these these predatory crimes.



*AG James and community leaders participate in a deed theft day of action in Brooklyn, January 2020*

The 421-a tax exemption provides a partial property tax exemption to real estate developers for building rent-stabilized housing. Under the law, developers that apply for and receive these tax benefits must register apartments as rent-stabilized and provide tenants with rent-stabilized leases, rights, and protections. Attorney General James took action against four real estate developers in Brooklyn and Queens for flouting the law, reaping enormous tax benefits, and still charging tenants market-rate rents. As a result of her action, Attorney General James secured refunds for the tenants who were illegally charged, and funds to support affordable housing efforts in New York City.

## Holding Developers Accountable for Cheating New Yorkers

South Carolina-based real estate company Vision Property Management operated an illegal, deceptive, and unlicensed mortgage-lending business that targeted people with disabilities, the elderly, single parents, and other vulnerable residents in Central and Upstate New York. The company preyed on consumers who were eager to share in the American dream of homeownership, but could not qualify for conventional financing. Vision placed the burden of repairing and maintaining its homes on customers, while not disclosing the many dangerous, unhealthy, and unsafe conditions in those homes. While the company claimed its “unique” business model was a path to homeownership, in reality, consumers were trapped in high cost mortgages and often uninhabitable homes.

## Shutting Down Deceptive Mortgage Companies

Attorney General James forced Vision to cease business in New York state, and as part of an agreement, Vision will pay over \$3.75 million in consumer restitution, including cash payments of \$600,000 that will be distributed to numerous New Yorkers who were victims of the company’s conduct. Many of these consumers have already received full title to the homes they worked so hard to purchase.



## ***Combating Gun Violence***



Gun violence is a public health emergency in New York and across the nation. Every loss of life and injury from gun violence is a devastating reminder of our shared responsibility to face this crisis head on and to support the communities that have suffered from its effects. Attorney General James is committed to catching criminals who traffic illegal weapons onto our streets, and to holding them accountable. She has taken legal action to prevent the spread and sale of incomplete weaponry pieces that could be easily assembled into illegal assault weapons and has intervened to prevent fraudulent certifications of firearm safety courses. She will continue to pursue every avenue available to reduce gun violence in New York.

# Taking Down Illegal Gun Rings

Attorney General James' Organized Crime Task Force (OCTF) took down two major gun trafficking rings that flooded Long Island and the Bronx with firearms and assault weapons. As part of "Operation Silence of the Lamm," Attorney General James charged four individuals in a 125-count indictment for their alleged roles in a gun trafficking operation on Long Island that illegally sold 32 firearms, including assault weapons, 18 high-capacity ammunition feeding devices, and more than one thousand rounds of ammunition.

Attorney General James also charged five individuals as part of a 107-count indictment for their alleged roles in "Operation Iron Empire," a gun trafficking operation that illegally sold firearms and heroin in the Bronx. As part of the investigation, Attorney General James recovered 16 firearms, including assault weapons, semi-automatic pistols, revolvers, 11 high-capacity ammunition feeding devices, and hundreds of rounds of ammunition.



*AG James and members of law enforcement announce takedowns of illegal gun trafficking rings in New York City and on Long Island, February 2020*

Attorney General James and a coalition of states secured a preliminary injunction to block the Trump administration from allowing 3D-printed gun files to be released on the internet, as part of their ongoing lawsuit. These files would have allowed anyone to go online and use easily downloadable files with specifications for particular guns, including AR-15s, to manufacture 3D-printed firearms. These guns would be unregistered, untraceable, and extremely difficult to detect, even with a metal detector. Untraceable firearms are sometimes called “ghost guns” because they lack serial numbers or other identifying features.

Attorney General James also successfully stopped 17 websites that manufacture and/or sell firearms or firearm components from selling nearly complete assault weapons into New York state. Attorney General James issued cease and desist letters to these companies, each of which was selling incomplete weaponry pieces that could be easily assembled into illegal assault weapons. The possession, manufacture, and sale of assault weapons is illegal in New York, but these companies had been providing the means to violate the state’s assault weapons ban, and even marketed their products as a means to evade detection by law enforcement. Ghost guns endanger all our communities, and Attorney General James will continue to crack down on the illegal distribution of these dangerous weapons.

## Putting a Stop to Ghost Guns



Attorney General James secured a guilty plea from Dennis Brennan, after she prosecuted him for falsifying firearms training course completions at the Peace Officer Training Academy of Buffalo, which he owned and directed. Brennan failed to provide proper security guard and peace officer training courses required by New York state law and submitted fraudulent documents to the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services falsely stating that proper training requirements had been met. The scheme involved fraudulently reporting that individuals completed necessary and required courses on firearms training and use of deadly physical force, putting the lives of officers and the public at risk.

## Ensuring Proper Firearm Safety Training for Security Officers

## *Tackling Financial Crimes and Fraudulent Schemes*



Attorney General James has used the powers of her office to take on corporate greed and deliver justice to victims of financial fraud. From taking on sham investment funds, to tax evaders, to fraudulent brokers, she has taken countless actions against predatory actors who cheat our system. From Wall Street to Main Street, Attorney General James remains committed to finding and prosecuting the bad actors who rob New Yorkers and destabilize markets.



## Protecting the Hard-Earned Savings of Seniors

In October, Attorney General James announced the conviction of former investment advisor Dean S. Mustaphalli of Mustaphalli Capital Partners Fund, LP. Mustaphalli operated a multi-million dollar securities fraud scheme that ripped off over 50 investors – many of whom were elderly and at or near retirement. His victims had little investment experience and leaned on him for advice. As Mustaphalli knew, many of them were planning for retirement and had conservative investment objectives. Without their knowledge, he diverted safe investments into high-risk investments in his hedge fund that lost millions of dollars. Over the course of a few years, Mustaphalli defrauded his elderly clients of over \$11 million. As part of his conviction Mustaphalli was sentenced to 3 to 9 years in prison, criminal restitution, and was permanently barred from engaging in any business related to the issuance or sale of securities in New York. Attorney General James will continue to use every resource at her disposal to seek justice for the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

## Securing Refunds for New Yorkers from Sham Investments

Attorney General James delivered a victory for 435 environmentally-conscious investors by stopping Kean Wind Turbines, Inc. and its owner from illegally profiting off of the sales of unregistered securities. Kean Stimm, the founder of the company, used the sale of unregistered securities to subsidize his lavish lifestyle. His illicit purchases included a penthouse apartment, a personal aide, an opulent vacation, and even a piano. Since 2013, Stimm had assured investors that the production of “the Newtonian Wind Turbine” was planned for “later this year” – and had made the same assurance year after year. The turbine was never produced, and investors have not received returns on their investments. After Attorney General James sued Stimm, a court ruled in her favor and ordered that Stimm stop serving as an officer or director of the company, suspended his voting control of the company, and ordered him to repay \$300,000 in restitution and damages to those investors who were cheated.

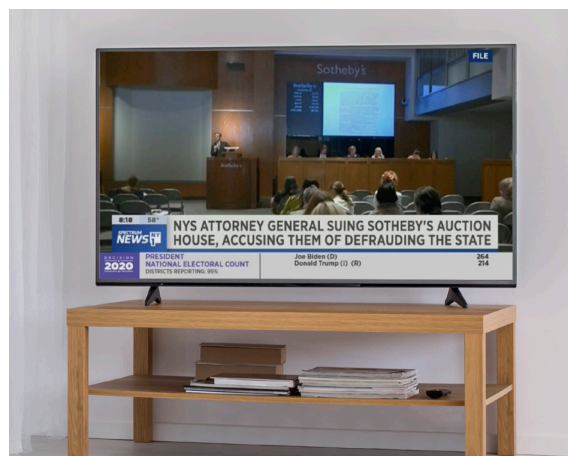
After a year-long investigation, Attorney General James convicted Michael T. Mann for laundering more than one billion dollars in stolen funds from employers, employees, financial institutions, and financing companies between 2016 and 2019. Mann owned or operated over a dozen entities, including payroll service companies such as ValueWise Corporation and MyPayrollHR.com. On a daily basis, Mann illegally diverted millions of dollars in payroll funds that he held on behalf of client-employers to pay their employees paychecks and taxes.

Thousands of employees in New York and across the country were left in financial distress in the fall of 2019 when Mann's scheme came to light and his payroll accounts were frozen. Mann is scheduled to be sentenced in March 2021 to up to 8 to 24 years in state prison, and as part of his global resolution with the Attorney General's Office and the United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of New York, he was ordered to pay over \$100 million in restitution to his victims. This case was prosecuted as part of Attorney General James' Combatting Upstate Financial Frauds Schemes (CUFFS) Initiative, which was implemented in an effort to assist local law enforcement in investigating and prosecuting complex financial crimes and money laundering cases in upstate New York.

## Prosecuting Money Laundering Schemes

When international auction house Sotheby's helped one of its wealthy clients defraud the state of New York and its taxpayers out of millions of dollars in unpaid sales tax, Attorney General James took action. Sotheby's violated the law by using false tax exemption certificates for one of its major clients, an art collector. The auction house enabled its wealthy client to buy art tax-free by claiming that he was an art dealer when it knew full well that he was not, and that the works of art were bought for his personal use. Millionaires and billionaires cannot be allowed to evade taxes while every day New Yorkers pay their fair share. This lawsuit sends a clear message that no matter how wealthy or connected a person is, no one is above the law.

## Cracking Down on Tax Evasion





## *Protecting New Yorkers from Prescription Drug and Health Care Fraud*



Attorney General James believes that health care is a basic right, not a luxury. She has taken on companies in New York that seek to undermine our system by cheating taxpayers, held health care executives to account for putting patients in harm's way to turn a quick profit, and worked to make sure that patients have access to the critical medications they rely on.

Daraprim is a life-saving drug used to treat toxoplasmosis, a common parasitic infection that can cause serious consequences for those with HIV. For decades, it was cheap and accessible, but that changed when the drug was bought by Vyera Pharmaceuticals, a company led by now convicted felon Martin Shkreli and his partner, Kevin Mulleady. The pair raised the price of the drug by 4,000%. The cost of a single tablet went from \$13.50 to \$750 overnight, effectively depriving ill and vulnerable patients around the country of a life-saving drug. Attorney General James took Vyera to court for egregiously manipulating the market at the expense of patients. In the ongoing lawsuit, Attorney General James is fighting to end Vyera's monopolistic conduct, to return stolen profits to victims of the illegal scheme, and to permanently ban Shkreli from ever working in the pharmaceutical industry again.

## Cracking Down on Greed to Ensure Affordable Prescription Drug Costs

**AP**

NY, feds sue 'Pharma Bro' for 'scheme' to keep drug price up

**CNBC**

Federal Trade Commission, New York Attorney General seek lifetime ban for 'Pharma bro' Martin Shkreli for 'illegally monopolizing' drug

**REUTERS**

New York, FTC sue 'pharma bro' Shkreli, others over Daraprim price hikes

**DAILY NEWS**

'Pharma Bro' Martin Shkreli sued by NY Attorney General James

When New Yorkers are prescribed medication, they trust it is in order to improve their health, not to enrich their physician. For years, Novartis paid doctors to praise their products at sham events, which were falsely advertised as educational, in an attempt to evade the law. These doctors were paid in cash, lavish meals, entertainment, and honoraria payments to dangerously dupe patients into taking these medications while cheating the state out of millions. Attorney General James took on Novartis and delivered \$22.7 million to New York to resolve the allegations. Attorney General James will continue to root out fraud and hold accountable any entity that tries to endanger or cheat New Yorkers.

## Holding Pharmaceutical Companies Accountable

## Tackling Price-Fixing of Critical Medication

Generic drugs are meant to provide consumers with reliable, cost-effective alternatives to brand name medications. Stemming from her ongoing investigations into the generic drug industry, Attorney General James filed a complaint against 26 generic drug manufacturers and 10 individual executives who engaged in a price-fixing and bid-rigging scheme. This scheme unnecessarily and illegally raised prices for consumers on a number of medications used for pain relief, dermatological issues, and allergy relief, all for the purpose of lining the pockets of drug industry executives. Affordable medication is vital to ensuring the health of all Americans, and Attorney General James will never stop fighting to ensure everyone has access to the medications they need.

## Rooting Out Medicaid Fraud

Attorney General James secured \$4 million from companies that were involved in an alleged fraudulent physical therapy scheme. Alex and Diana Klurfeld, and their companies Williamsburg Physical Therapy, P.C. and Euro Physical Therapy, P.C., employed non-licensed individuals to provide physical therapy services, putting patients at risk of physical harm. The Klurfelds then billed Medicaid, Medicare, the Federal Employees' Compensation Act Program, and the Federal Employees' Health Benefits Program for those services, while fraudulently listing licensed therapists on the claims.

# Shutting Down Drug Trafficking Operations



February 2020

Attorney General James is committed to taking drugs off our streets and out of our communities. Over the past year, her office has taken down numerous trafficking rings and successfully prosecuted dozens of individuals who have flooded regions throughout the state with dangerous drugs. The safety of our communities will always be top priority, and Attorney General James will continue to go after individuals who put New Yorkers in harm's way.

Attorney General James' Organized Crime Task Force (OCTF) broke up numerous drug trafficking rings that operated in more than 10 major cities and counties across the state. While the COVID-19 pandemic caused major delays in grand jury proceedings, OCTF still made 97 felony arrests, indicted 111 individuals, and convicted 43 people for their roles in these illegal operations.

## Taking Dangerous Drugs off Our Streets

As a result of OCTF's work and support from law enforcement partners around the state, OCTF seized significant amounts of illegal drugs over the course of the year, including: 39.7 kilograms of cocaine, 129 grams of heroin, 195 grams of fentanyl, 75 grams of methamphetamine, and more than 1,700 pills of Oxycodone. OCTF also seized more than \$640,000 in cash.

In one of the most significant busts of the year, OCTF arrested and charged 47 individuals with 303 crimes for their alleged involvement in a large narcotics trafficking ring that operated in Saratoga, Albany, Rensselaer, Schenectady, and Warren Counties, and was sourced by dealers in New York City. This network of dealers distributed heroin laced with fentanyl, pure fentanyl that they marketed as heroin, powder and crack cocaine, and prescription pills. In partnership with the City of Saratoga Springs Police Department, the Warren County Sheriff's Office, the Schenectady Sheriff's Office, and the New York State Police, OCTF recovered approximately seven kilograms of cocaine, 70 grams of heroin, 120 grams of fentanyl, dozens of narcotic pills, and seized \$40,000, as part of "Operation Red Dawn."

In another takedown, OCTF arrested and charged 54 individuals for conspiring in three major drug trafficking rings that funneled heroin, fentanyl, and cocaine to Jefferson County in the North Country. The investigation, dubbed "Operation Heat Wave," led to the recovery of 850 bags of heroin mixed with fentanyl, 65 grams of heroin, three kilograms of cocaine (with a street value of more than \$300,000), and dozens of oxycodone and hydrocodone pills.

These investigations were part of the Attorney General's Suburban and Upstate Response to the Growing Epidemic (SURGE) initiative, which has taken 608 alleged traffickers off the streets since 2017 in an effort to root out violent drug trafficking.

**Broke up rings in**

**10**

cities & counties  
across NYS

**Indicted**

**111**

individuals

**Seized over**

**\$640,000**

in cash

**Recovered**

**39.7**

kg of cocaine,

324 gm of heroin and fentanyl,  
75 gm of methamphetamine,  
1,700 pills of oxycodone,

# *Rooting Out Public Corruption*



*September 2020*

New York's public servants have a responsibility to serve with transparency, integrity, and respect. Attorney General James has made it a priority to ensure that, in New York, those holding elected office and seeking public trust will always be held accountable for their misdeeds. Since 2011, the Attorney General and State Comptroller have worked together to fight corruption through their Joint Task Force on Public Integrity. They have brought charges against dozens of individuals implicated in public corruption schemes around the state – resulting in significant restitution to taxpayers.



# Holding Public Officials Accountable for Illegal Activity

As Corporation Counsel, Lawrence Porcari was the top lawyer for the City of Mount Vernon, where he served under former Mayor Richard Thomas. In 2019, following an investigation conducted by Attorney General James, Thomas was convicted for stealing campaign funds for personal use and later lying about those funds in disclosure forms to the New York State Board of Elections. Attorney General James continued her pursuit of justice for the people of Mount Vernon and prosecuted Porcari for engaging in a scheme that defrauded the Mount Vernon Board of Water Supply of more than \$300,000. The former Corporation Counsel misappropriated these funds to pay law firms for the personal defense of Mayor Thomas in criminal proceedings, as well as a public relations firm hired at the time of Thomas' arrest. By using funds from the Board of Water Supply, which consist of money paid by customers for their use of water and whose use is limited to Board of Water Supply purposes, Porcari broke state and local law and violated public trust. Porcari was found guilty, and will serve time in prison.

## LAW.COM

**Ex-Mount Vernon Corp Counsel Sentenced to 1 to 3 Years for Diverting Public Funds to Then-Mayor's Defense**

## lohud.

**Lawrence Porcari sentenced in Mount Vernon Corruption Case**

**DAILY VOICE**

**Former City Counsel In Westchester Sentenced For Corruption Conviction**

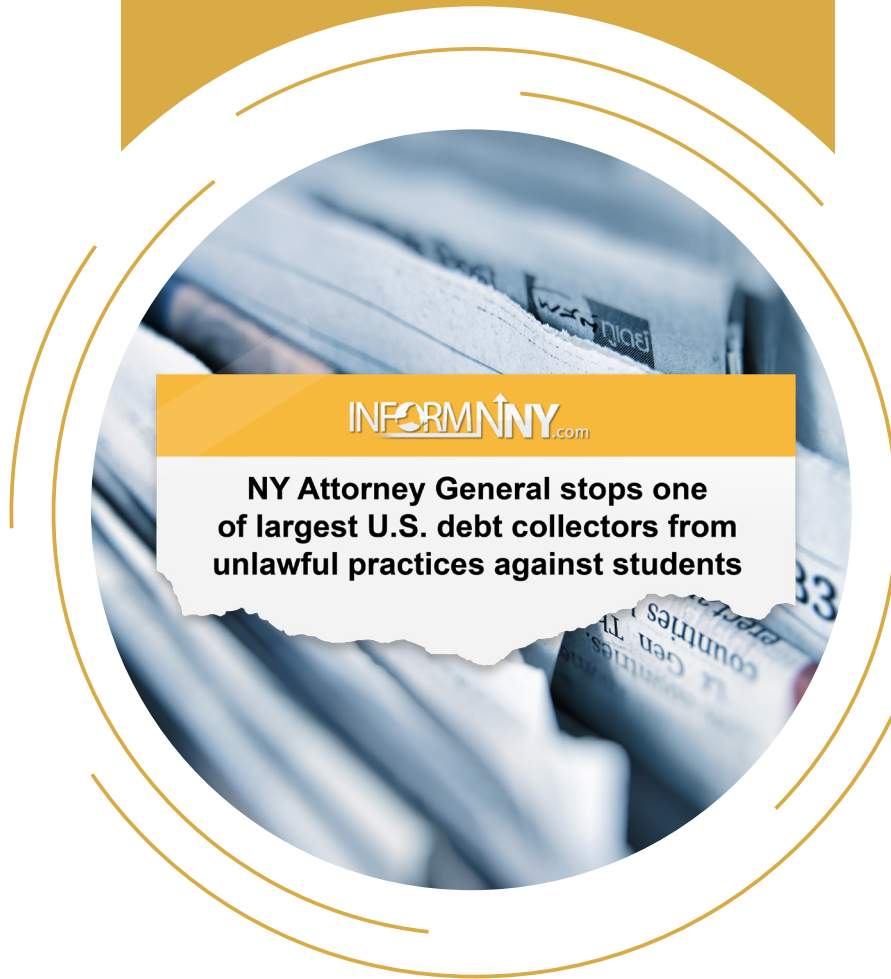
New York City offers public matching fund programs for candidates for public office, allowing candidates who rely on small donors to be financially competitive. Those who illegally take advantage of this matching funds program are taking advantage of hardworking New Yorkers who are supporting candidates for office. Attorney General James successfully prosecuted nonprofit executive Anna Mendez for helping former New York City Council candidate Albert Alvarez in such a scheme. Alvarez accepted straw donations that were funded by money stolen from Mendez's nonprofit daycare center. Staff members at the daycare center, including Mendez, provided funds to other employees to make small dollar donations eligible for matching funds. Mendez was found guilty and sentenced to five years of probation.

## Stopping Illegal Campaign Fundraising

When Michael Erber, who operated a nonprofit organization known as MAG-V, stole money that was intended to pay the rent of homeless New York City veterans, Attorney General James prosecuted him to the fullest extent of the law. MAG-V was an organization that recruited homeless veterans and those at risk of becoming homeless with promises of housing and job training. After an investigation, Attorney General James found that Erber pocketed federal funds he received to pay rent for homes for the veterans. She also found that Erber stole money directly from individual veterans who were being housed by MAG-V, including approximately \$200,000 in lottery winnings from one veteran with disabilities. As a result, all of the veterans were evicted for non-payment of rent and were deprived access to desperately-needed shelter. Erber was found guilty and sentenced to up to 21 years in prison.

## Going After Those Who Steal Public Funds

# Protecting Our Students



Attorney General James has worked tirelessly over the last year to protect New York's students from companies that seek to take advantage of them and jeopardize their health. From cracking down on retailers that illegally sell dangerous nicotine products, to going after companies that market usurious debt schemes, to stopping federal threats to deport more than a million international students at colleges and universities across New York — Attorney General James will always put students first.

## Taking on Predatory Lenders to Deliver Student Debt Relief

Attorney General James, along with a coalition of states and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, secured \$5 million in debt relief for former ITT Tech students in New York. ITT pressured and coerced its students to take out loans to cover their tuition, including threatening to expel them if they did not accept loan terms at usurious rates. Before Attorney General James took action, 80 percent of the students who took out these loans faced default. Attorney General James will always stand with students who face misleading and aggressive tactics from the educational institutions that they rely on.

For years, Transworld Systems, Inc., a student debt collector, engaged in aggressive, misleading, and unlawful debt collection practices involving thousands of student borrowers in New York. The company filed lawsuits to collect defaulted debts and obtain judgments against student borrowers at an alarming rate. The Attorney General's Office found that the lawsuits brought against these borrowers often included inaccurate sworn affidavits and complaints with false information. After an investigation, Attorney General James secured \$600,000 in penalties and restitution for New York borrowers. Additionally, the company agreed to make changes to their debt collection practices and provide enhanced training for their staff.

When a ring of student debt relief companies fraudulently claimed to be able to provide aid for student borrowers in New York state, Attorney General James took action. These companies, Debt Resolve, Inc., Student Loan Care, LLC, and Progress Advocates, cheated thousands of New York student loan borrowers out of millions of dollars by promising loan forgiveness that they could not deliver, claiming an affiliation with the government that they did not have, and charging upfront fees and extremely high interest rates that exceeded New York state's usury cap. Concluding a lawsuit brought in 2018, Attorney General James secured hundreds of thousands of dollars for New York student borrowers.

# Stopping Sales of E-Cigarettes to Minors, Online, and In Stores

Teen vaping has skyrocketed in recent years, and flavored products are a major cause of this increase. Candy and fruit flavored vaping products exist to reel teens into the dangerous habit of smoking, which is why New York banned them. When Attorney General James learned that these products were being illegally sold online and sold to minors, she took action and ordered three companies, Cloud X Vapes, HQD Tech USA, and PodVapes, to immediately cease these sales.

She didn't stop there. To rein in the sales of these flavored vaping products in shops all across the state, she issued cease and desist letters to 47 retailers in Albany, Buffalo, Elmira, New York City, Rochester, Syracuse, Watertown, and Hamilton, Nassau, Saratoga, and Warren Counties. These businesses skirted the law by selling nicotine products to underage buyers, selling illegal flavored vaping products, and selling flavored liquids for customers to create their own flavored vaping products. Many of these stores were located just steps from middle schools and high schools.

These actions are the latest in a series of measures Attorney General James has taken to tackle the ongoing youth nicotine epidemic and to protect the health and safety of New Yorkers.

## Student Perspectives on Youth Vaping



### YOUTH VAPING ROUNDTABLE

The health and safety of our children is one of Attorney General James' top priorities. Over the past several years, vaping companies have taken a page out of Big Tobacco's playbook and created dangerous products marketed to teens. In December, as part of her ongoing efforts to combat the teen vaping epidemic, Attorney General James held a roundtable discussion to hear directly from young students, parents, advocates, and elected officials.



Attorney General James sued the Trump administration for threatening to deport more than a million international students at colleges and universities across New York and the rest of the nation if they did not register for in-person classes on campus in the middle of the pandemic. The administration's sudden reversal in policy was an attempt to use international students as an excuse to coerce schools into offering in-person instruction at the risk of jeopardizing the health of millions. Immediately after filing her lawsuit, the Trump administration rescinded this ill-conceived and harmful policy.

## Supporting International Students and Academic Institutions



*"We thank New York Attorney General James for taking on this important legal action to send a clear and direct message that we will fight against any injustice that aims to strip away the access of a high-quality education for our international students, which is at the core of SUNY's deep-rooted mission of education for all."*

**Tod Laursen, provost and senior vice chancellor of the State University of New York**



*"We want to state unequivocally that our international students, who contribute so much to the scholarly, social, and cultural environments at the University of Rochester, are essential to our enterprise and they are core members of our past, present, and future. And we want to state unequivocally and directly to our international students: you are welcome here. The university thanks Attorney General James for her leadership and support of our students."*

**Sarah C. Mangelsdorf, president of the University of Rochester**



*"CUNY campuses have thousands of international students who are a valuable and vital part of our community. The university is proud to join New York State Attorney General Letitia James' challenge to the misguided federal rule change to the misguided international students to have to leave the U.S. or face deportation."*

**Félix Matos Rodríguez, chancellor of the City University of New York**



*"I stand in full support of New York Attorney General Letitia James and her efforts to stop this damaging directive before it takes effect. The Attorney General should be commended for adding her voice and the weight of her office to those opposing immigration policies that harm international students and the institutions of higher education that benefit immeasurably from their presence."*

**Lee C. Bollinger, president of Columbia University**

## *Supporting Small Businesses*



Small businesses are the backbone of our economy. The bakeries, delis, hardware stores, restaurants, and other shops that enrich our lives and power our economy are the lifelong work of many New Yorkers, and serve as a lifeline to financial security for many families. It is unconscionable that modern-day loan sharks prey on hardworking business owners with fake loans, opaque contracts, and outright threats of violence. While small businesses may not always have the tools to protect themselves from unscrupulous actors, Attorney General James is determined to use every tool at her disposal to stop these illegal fraudsters.

## Delivering Relief for Small Businesses

Manhattan-based firm Northern Leasing Systems financed lease agreements for credit card machines used every day by thousands of small, family-owned businesses in New York state and around the country. The company targeted these small businesses, such as flower shops, hair salons, automotive repair shops, bodegas, delis, restaurants, and bars, and trapped them into overpriced, never-ending lease agreements. Northern Leasing then abused the judicial process by filing tens of thousands of spurious lawsuits to collect on these “non-cancelable” leases. As the company knew, over 95 percent of the small business owners it sued did not reside in New York state, could not afford to physically appear in New York, or hire an attorney to represent them.

This year, after taking the company to court, Attorney General James won a major victory that will deliver much-needed relief for tens of thousands of small business owners. Fraudulently-induced leases that locked them into years of payments will be canceled; small business owners against whom default judgments were obtained will see those judgments vacated; and Northern Leasing Systems will be dissolved. Attorney General James’ victory will also force Northern Leasing’s chief executive officer, and others who engaged in the fraudulent scheme, to give up their profits and provide restitution to many of the small businesses that were defrauded.

## Stopping Predatory Lenders

In June, Attorney General James sued to stop a trio of loan companies, headed by a former drug trafficker, from issuing short term loans at astronomical interest rates, and terrorizing borrowers when they failed to pay. Jonathan Braun, who founded Richmond Capital Group LLC and other associated companies, collected \$75 million in payments on over 1,900 illegal loans to small businesses, sometimes charging more than 1000 percent interest. Braun’s companies targeted small businesses that could not receive funding from traditional banks and misrepresented the amounts of money they would owe on loans. When debtors failed to make payments, Braun would insult them, threaten to physically harm them, or to kidnap their children. Attorney General James is fighting to claw back every penny these companies swindled out of the pockets of small business owners.





***About***  
the Attorney  
General's Office

As head of the Department of Law, the Attorney General is both the “People’s Lawyer” and the state’s chief legal officer. The Attorney General serves as the guardian of the legal rights of the citizens of New York, its organizations, and its natural resources. Additionally, the Attorney General advises state agencies and defends actions and proceedings on behalf of the state.

The Attorney General’s Office serves all New Yorkers in numerous matters affecting their daily lives. The Office protects consumers and investors, oversees charitable institutions, ensures public health and the health of the environment, and safeguards civil rights and the rights of workers and businesses across the state.

The legal functions of the Attorney General’s Office are divided primarily into five major divisions: Appeals and Opinions, State Counsel, Criminal Justice, Economic Justice, and Social Justice.

The Attorney General’s Office has more than 1,700 employees located in 16 offices throughout the state.

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## **CONTACT US**

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***Letitia James***