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What's next for the RAISE Act?

By **MADISON FERNANDEZ** with **CHRIS SOMMERFELDT** | 09/21/2026 06:00 AM EDT

Presented by

With help from Molly Reinmann

HAPPY MONDAY. It's **Madison Fernandez**. This morning, we have new details on what's next for the state's landmark artificial intelligence legislation, along with reports on a clean energy group eyeing New York and what to expect at the United Nations General Assembly this week.

BUT FIRST: Mayor **Zohran Mamdani** plans to meet with President **Donald Trump** at Gracie Mansion today ahead of this week's high-stakes United Nations General Assembly debate. The mayor's office would only say yesterday that the meeting was expected to focus on "issues affecting New York City and New Yorkers," our **Chris Sommerfeldt** reports.

Neither Mamdani's office nor the White House would immediately say whether the mayor and the president plan to address reporters. No matter what, we'll keep close tabs on the sit-down, which is their third in-person meeting since Mamdani's election, with the first two having been almost shockingly cordial despite their deep political disagreements. Later Monday, Trump's expected to speak at a Republican National Committee fundraiser in Manhattan, and the president will then address the UNGA Tuesday.

Have news tips or just want to share what's on your mind? Reach me at mfernandez@politico.com.

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DRIVING THE DAY

EYES ON AI: Gov. **Kathy Hochul** is looking to create a stark contrast with the federal government when it comes to how aggressively the state is policing artificial intelligence.

Hochul will announce on Monday the next steps for implementing the RAISE Act, New York's landmark AI safety legislation that goes into effect in January, as well as the first major hire for the office overseeing the law.

Starting in November, frontier AI developers will begin registering through a state portal to prepare for compliance with the RAISE Act, with a Jan. 1 deadline. Additionally, **Marc Gilman** will serve as deputy director for the RAISE Act. He's the first hire for the state's new Office of Digital Innovation, Governance, Integrity and Trust, also known as DIGIT.

Department of Financial Services acting Superintendent Kaitlin Asrow, whose department DIGIT is established within, pointed to Gilman's "hands-on work with technology companies" and "deep legal experience in the AI space" as reasons he stood out for the role. Gilman previously served as general counsel and vice president of compliance at Theta Lake, an AI security and compliance company. He's also an adjunct professor of law at Fordham University.

THE WASHINGTON VOID: The moves come amid heightened angst about the potentially dire consequences of the rapidly evolving technology. While some in Washington are eager to implement restrictions to slow down AI and bolster protections, Trump has tried to shut down those efforts, calling the AI dooming a “HOAX.” Over the weekend, the president suggested he envisions some role for the federal government in monitoring the technology for potential dangers, but the details of what he's proposing were unclear.

Last week, Hochul vowed she will find “additional actions that we can take at the state level to lead the way in the absence of leadership from Washington,” though she did not specify what that might look like. Hochul has pointed to efforts her administration has taken to address AI long before the conversation hit a fever pitch in recent weeks, including signing the RAISE Act in December and implementing a one-year data center moratorium over the summer.

“Donald Trump and Washington Republicans may be standing still as AI grows more unpredictable, but New York will not,” Hochul said in a statement. “When companies are building some of the most powerful technology in the world, people deserve to know what they’re doing to keep it safe, and those companies should be held accountable when things go wrong.”

WHAT’S NEXT: But even before the RAISE Act is implemented, some are already urging DIGIT to do more to get to that goal.

“That office is empowered to propose additional regulations and/or potentially laws to help improve the frontier of AI safety,” Democratic state Sen. **Andrew Gounardes**, one of the sponsors of the RAISE Act, told our **Marie J. French** last week. “I really hope and expect that that office takes that charge seriously and does become an office that has the expertise necessary to provide guidance on what future regulations can and should look like.”

Gounardes, along with state Assemblymember Alex Bores, spearheaded the RAISE Act, which Hochul later negotiated to make it more palatable to the tech industry and more closely aligned to California’s AI legislation.

Bores, who is slated to appear with Hochul on Monday as she rolls out the RAISE Act implementation updates, also said he would like to see DIGIT ask for more data from the tech companies. In addition, he wants to see universal monitoring of all AI that’s deployed, third-party auditors for the companies with employee-level access, a prohibition

on developers releasing models that fail their own safety tests and expanded whistleblower protections. Some of those provisions were included in an earlier iteration of the RAISE Act.

“I have always said that we need action at the federal level for AI, but so far the federal government has been completely incapable of doing it and states have been the only level of government that has actually regulated AI,” Bores said. He added that even though he thinks the RAISE Act needs to “go a lot further,” he’s “very pleased to hear the governor talking about the role of states and the role of New York in continuing to push forward AI safety.”

IT’S MONDAY: Got news? Send it our way: **Madison Fernandez, Nick Reisman** and **Chris Sommerfeldt**.

WHERE’S KATHY? In New York City making an AI safety announcement.

WHERE’S ZOHRAN? Attending a U20 roundtable; holding a bilateral meeting with Brazilian President **Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva**; holding a meeting with Trump; and appearing on Telemundo 47.

State and Local Politics Takes Center Stage at Climate Week

POLITICO is partnering on a full-day climate policy symposium during NYC Climate Week on Tues, Sept 22nd. Across seven panels and two dozen speakers, sessions will dig into data centers, utility policy, federal rollbacks, food systems, insurance reform, and climate justice.

[Register for free here.](#)

BELOW THE FOLD

THE NEWSSTAND

Here’s what we’re watching around New York:

1: There’s a dearth of debates in competitive upstate New York House races, the Times Union’s **Alexander MacDougall** reports. “There are no debates scheduled in the closely watched 21st District race between Republican **Anthony Constantino** and Democrat **Blake Gendebien**, or in the 19th District contest between incumbent Democrat **Josh Riley** and Republican state Sen. **Peter Oberacker**. ... The apparent resistance of

congressional candidates to partake in what has traditionally made up an essential component of democratic elections in the country reflects a broader, changing political reality — one in which candidates see debates less as an opportunity to argue over policy and more as a risk-vs.-reward of going viral with a few seconds of clipped video.”

2: Democrat congressional candidate Cait Conley is fending off attacks from Republicans “portraying her as a corporate puppet beholden to her former employers,” The New York Times’ **Grace Ashford** and **Benjamin Oreskes** write. Conley has “has declined to divulge the specifics” of what she did during her contracting work for tech companies, and said it is “such a political operative thing” for her opponent, Republican Rep. **Mike Lawler**, to “spin my private sector work as something other than a continuation of my public sector work.”

3: Over in Berlin, Elif Eralp, who took inspiration from Mamdani’s victory, was leading the mayoral election for Germany’s capital. Eralp is a member of Die Linke — “the left” in English — whose “party members traveled to New York in the weeks leading up to the city’s mayoral race to learn more about Mamdani’s campaign and met with some of his advisers,” per The Washington Post’s **Maegan Vazquez**. Eralp also met with **Morris Katz**, one of the architects of Mamdani’s campaign.

4: GOP City Council member Vickie Paladino said she’ll run for Senate in 2028 if Council member **Chi Ossé**, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, does. She was responding to a New York Post write-up of a report from Hell Gate’s **Alisha Allison** about Ossé’s recent jaunt to Buffalo and Kingston.

A message from Amazon:



MIDTERMOIL

FIRST IN PLAYBOOK: A clean energy group is sending a warning shot to New York pols, Madison writes.

Invest in Tomorrow Coalition, an organization backed by solar executives and investors, is launching an ad campaign in the city as Climate Week kicks off. It's dropping \$150,000 on ads in Penn Station, as well as on LinkNYC kiosks and roving billboards, with a foreboding message: "Don't mess with solar." One touts a quote from Rep. **Eric Burlison** (R-Mo.), who recently told our D.C. colleagues that the spending should be a warning to step up fundraising. He said the left is like a "prowling lion, looking for the weakest part of the flock."

The Invest in Tomorrow Coalition said earlier this year it's armed with \$15 million to spend ahead of the midterms. The group has primarily played in GOP primaries, including pouring in more than \$1 million against Texas Rep. **Chip Roy**, who lost his race for state attorney general. It also opposed Tennessee Rep. **Andy Ogles** and South Carolina Rep. **Ralph Norman**, both of whom lost their races, and boosted Iowa Rep. **Mariannette Miller-Meeks** in fending off a primary challenger.

The group waded into the Democratic gubernatorial primary in Rhode Island, spending against incumbent Gov. **Dan McKee**, who was ousted earlier this month.

Tom Matzzie, CEO of solar company CleanChoice Energy and chair of the Invest in Tomorrow Coalition, would not confirm where the group would play in New York's congressional races, but said it's "finalizing our general election slate and looking very closely" at the Empire State.

"In the meantime here is a few million dollars worth of free advice for any New Yorker who wants to be in Congress: we can smell weakness and we're undefeated," he said in a statement. "Keep trying to politicize the industry and see what happens."

Solar energy is a prominent topic, particularly in more rural congressional districts with large concentrations of farms. In New York's 21st District, the sweeping upstate seat held by outgoing Republican Rep. **Elise Stefanik**, Constantino has been vocal in his opposition to solar on farms, citing concerns about destroying farmland. He's also slammed "green energy regulations that have made costs skyrocket."

His Democratic opponent, Gendebien, has expressed support for renewable energy and "solar development on rooftops and non-tillable land while protecting productive

farmland,” according to North Country This Week. (Constantino is also in favor of solar roofing.)

While the 21st heavily favors the GOP, Democrats are feeling bullish they can pick up the seat. Sabato’s Crystal Ball, the nonpartisan election rater, recently shifted it *slightly* in Democrats’ favor — from “safe Republican” to “likely Republican” — and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee has the race on its target list.

MAMDANI’S NEW YORK

STAFFING WOES: New York City’s Department of Investigation, which acts as the municipal government’s internal ethics watchdog, provided less than 170 anti-corruption lectures to city employees last fiscal year — the fewest since the pandemic — due to staff shortages that are also snarling some of the agency’s other core functions, Chris reports.

The dire outlook for the DOI was included in Mamdani’s first management report released Thursday. The report includes performance metrics for all city agencies during fiscal year 2026, which spanned the first six months of Mamdani’s tenure as well as the final six months of former Mayor **Eric Adams**’ administration.

The importance of DOI’s work was highlighted following Adams’ September 2024 corruption indictment, which came out of an investigation that the city agency played a leading role in.

Yet, DOI has continued to reel from serious staff shortages, in part due to a lack of funding, and the new mayoral management report provides a window into the consequences.

The DOI only provided 163 “corruption prevention and whistleblower lectures” to municipal employees during FY26 — down from 298 the prior fiscal year, according to the report. The FY26 level is the lowest since FY22, when the city was in the throes of the pandemic and the agency only provided 72 such lectures. DOI officials wrote in the management report that the dropping lecture volume is “partially due to DOI’s staffing challenges.”

Additionally, DOI officials partially blamed staffing shortages for it now taking the agency an average of 312 days to complete an investigation — up from 251 days in FY25. The rate is also the highest since at least FY22, the report shows.

Correspondingly, the number of arrests resulting from DOI investigations and the number of DOI referrals for criminal prosecutions have hit the lowest levels since FY22, according

to the report.

It's also now taking DOI an average of 144 days to complete background checks on high-level city employees. That's the worst rate on that metric, too, since at least FY22, according to the report.

Advocacy groups have long raised alarm about DOI staff shortages and called on the city to allocate more funding for the agency. Still, Mamdani's administration and the Council did not provide the agency with any significant headcount boost as part of the municipal budget adopted over the summer.

UNGA STATE OF MIND: Mamdani plans to meet with Norwegian Prime Minister **Jonas Gahr Støre** on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly Tuesday, the latest engagement showcasing Mamdani's desire to build bridges with like-minded politicians outside the U.S.

The expected meeting with Støre, a member of Norway's left-leaning Labour Party, comes after Mamdani held private audiences over the weekend with mayors from Canada, Mexico, the Netherlands, Spain and France. All five of those mayors are fellow leftists who share many of Mamdani's policy goals and, bolstered by his election last year, are having a collective moment on the world stage.

Mamdani and Støre, who are expected to visit a local public school together, will focus their discussion on artificial intelligence and how it's making its way into classrooms, said **Dora Pekec**, a spokesperson for the mayor. Under Støre, Norway has instituted a near-total ban on AI in elementary schools, and Mamdani's administration — which recently enacted a similar directive — sees the prime minister's model as a potential inspiration.

“Mayor Mamdani and Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre will come together to participate in a roundtable with students to discuss New York City's artificial intelligence moratorium for public school students in 2-K through 8th grade,” Pekec said in a statement to POLITICO. “Mayor Mamdani looks forward to learning from the comparable approach Norway has taken in its school system nationwide.”

Given Mamdani's already global renown and social media reach, the annual gathering of diplomats represents a significant opportunity for the 34-year-old to bolster his brand and meet with fellow leftists like Støre. But the general assembly also comes amid heightened international and domestic tensions — and carries the risk of highlighting a confluence of failed campaign promises to Mamdani's supporters at home.

Daily demonstrations near U.N. headquarters are expected, and many protesters plan to take aim at Israel and its prime minister, **Benjamin Netanyahu**, over the country's military campaign in Gaza and southern Lebanon and Israeli encroachment into Palestinian land in the West Bank.

Not only has Mamdani already walked back his campaign pledge to arrest the Middle Eastern leader, much to the chagrin of his base, but the mayor's police department will be running crowd control with a controversial NYPD unit waiting in the wings — a unit Mamdani promised to ban on the stump last year but has instead left intact.

Read the whole story by Chris and Joe Anuta in POLITICO.

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SOCIAL DATA

Edited by Daniel Lippman

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WHAT YOU MISSED: In Friday's New York **Playbook PM**, we reported on how state lawmakers are thinking about addressing AI. *Read it and subscribe here.*

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