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GOVERNOR KATHY HOCHUL



Statement (/keywords/statement)

SEPTEMBER 29, 2026 | Albany, NY

Statement From Governor Hochul on Cornell University Sexual Assault Case

“The allegations in this case are nothing short of horrifying. For any student to come forward after an experience like this takes extraordinary courage. No student should ever be left wondering whether the institutions meant to protect them will listen and act.

“I support the district attorney’s decision to reopen the criminal investigation. But there are also serious questions about Cornell’s campus culture and its systems for prevention, reporting, and response. That is why I am calling for outside counsel to conduct a transparent, independent review of the university’s response to determine whether Cornell met every obligation to protect its students and pursue justice.”

Contact the Governor’s Press Office

 **Contact us by phone:**

Albany: [\(518\) 474-8418](tel:5184748418)

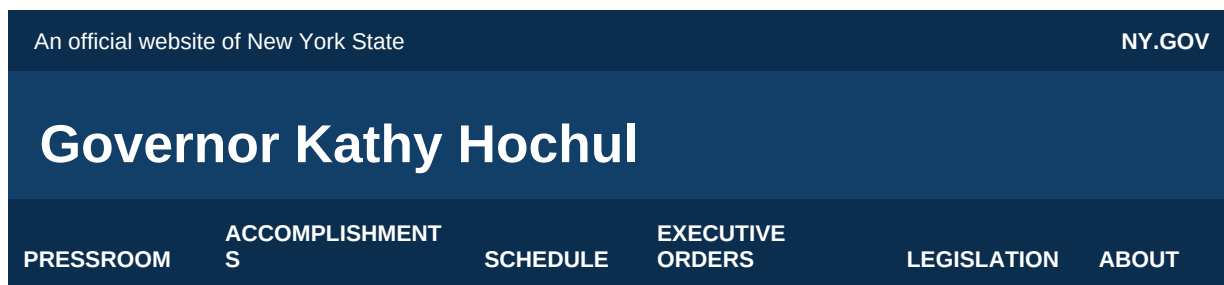
New York City: [\(212\) 681-4640](tel:2126814640)

 **Contact us by email:**

Press.Office@exec.ny.gov

Translations

Arabic Translation الترجمة إلى العربية
Bengali Translation বাংলা অনুবাদ
Chinese Translation 中文翻譯
French Translation Traduction en français

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October 2, 2026

Albany, NY

Video, Audio, Photos & Rush Transcript: Governor Hochul and Attorney General James Provide an Update on the Cornell Sexual Assault Investigation

Governor Hochul: “This woman, this young woman, had already endured something that is utterly unspeakable and then at every turn, she was failed by people and institutions with an obligation to protect her... That is why I'm invoking the power conferred to me as the Governor of the State of New York to enlist Attorney General James as an independent special prosecutor in this case.”

Hochul: “This case also exposed another problem we need to address — a gap in State law. If someone is too intoxicated to consent, it should not matter whether they chose to use drugs or alcohol. Voluntary Intoxication is not a license for sexual assault or gang rape, period. I support closing this loophole and will work with the New York State Legislature to accomplish this.”

Earlier today, Governor Kathy Hochul and Attorney General Letitia James provide an update on the Cornell sexual assault investigation.

VIDEO: The event is available to stream on YouTube [here](#) and TV quality video is available [here](#) (h.264, mp4).

AUDIO: The Governor's remarks are available in audio form [here](#).

PHOTOS of the event will be available on the Governor's Flickr.

A rush transcript of the Governor's remarks is available below:

Good morning. Last night, I signed an executive order appointing Attorney General Letitia James as a special prosecutor in the sexual assault case at Cornell University. I want New Yorkers to understand what prompted that decision. Earlier this week, I called on Cornell to conduct an independent investigation led by outside counsel.

I spoke directly to the University president who agreed to take those steps, but we learned yesterday raised even more troubling questions about what was done and not done after this young woman came forward. She spoke to the police. She sat for hours and told them exactly what happened to her. And according to new reports, she could not have been clearer that she was 100% confident that she had been raped.

Yet, shockingly, those words never made it into the account that the Cornell police sent to prosecutors. The [District Attorney] then declined to pursue charges after reviewing that incomplete account and never interviewing her.

Think about that — in what world would the police learn from a victim that she'd been literally gang raped while intoxicated by five men in a fraternity house and not elevate those allegations to the District Attorney? In what world is the District Attorney not even interview her or anyone else involved, or even request the full transcript?

This woman, this young woman, had already endured something that is utterly unspeakable, and then at every turn, she was failed by people and institutions with an obligation to protect her. When the Tompkins County District Attorney announced that he is reopening the case, he pointed to Jane Doe's statement and said, "It did not establish that a crime had occurred." But new reporting raises serious questions about the information his office relied upon when it made that decision.

That's why I believe this case demands a special prosecutor who will provide a fresh and thorough review of all the facts, including the information that has recently come to light. And that is why I'm invoking the power conferred to me as the Governor of the State of New York to enlist Attorney General James as an independent special prosecutor in this case. She'll follow the facts, she'll examine the evidence and go wherever it leads. And if the evidence supports criminal charges, she will pursue them.

No institution gets to protect its reputation at the expense of a young person seeking justice. No public official gets to look the other way when the system breaks down and fails our young people. And as Governor, I will not allow anyone to sweep this case under the rug.

We are ensuring that all the facts of this case are brought into the light. This case has also exposed another problem we need to address — a gap in State law. If someone is too intoxicated to consent, it should not matter whether they chose to use drugs or alcohol. Voluntary intoxication is not a license for sexual assault or gang rape, period. I support closing this loophole and will work with the New York State Legislature to accomplish this.

But at the heart of all this is one young woman and what she deserved from the very beginning. Every parent who sends their child off to college expects them to be safe, and if something terrible happens,

the student deserves to know that the people they turn to will listen to them, protect them and fight for them — that is the bare minimum.

This brave young woman deserved that in 2024, and she deserves it now. And I'm going to use every part of my power, do everything I possibly can, to make sure that she finally gets it.

With that, I'll turn it over to our Attorney General, Tish James.

Contact the Governor's Press Office

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New York City: (212) 681-4640

Official webpage:

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/video-audio-photos-rush-transcript-governor-hochul-and-attorney-general-james-provide-update>