The first issue we will discuss is on one of our most vital resources—**clean water**.

Water is the foundation of life, essential for our health, our environment, and our communities. Yet, challenges such as pollution, waste water management, and overuse threaten this precious resource.To address these challenges, it is crucial to implement sustainable practices. This includes reducing water waste, improving wastewater treatment technologies, and protecting natural water sources. By fostering awareness and community involvement, we can ensure that future generations have access to clean and safe water.

New York faces significant challenges when it comes to wastewater infrastructure. Much of our system is aging, with some sewer lines dating back over a century. During heavy rainfall, many areas experience combined sewer overflows (CSOs), where stormwater and untreated sewage mix and discharge directly into our rivers, lakes, and coastal waters. This not only contaminates our waterways but also poses serious risks to public health, aquatic life, and recreational areas.To address these issues, New York is investing in modernizing its wastewater treatment facilities and implementing green infrastructure solutions. These initiatives aim to reduce CSOs by capturing and managing stormwater more effectively. Additionally, public awareness campaigns are essential to educate residents about reducing pollution and protecting our waterways.

Addressing this issue requires investment in modernized treatment facilities, green infrastructure, and stormwater management solutions. New York State has made progress through initiatives like :the Clean Water Infrastructure Act and the Environmental Protection Fund, which allocate funds for upgrading aging systems. Additionally, community engagement and partnerships with local organizations are essential to ensure that these investments meet the needs of all residents while promoting sustainable practices.

1. Clean Water Infrastructure Act (CWIA): Enacted in 2017, the CWIA allocated $2.5 billion to upgrade drinking water and wastewater systems, support land acquisition projects for source water protection, and manage contaminants. By 2024, the Act had funded over 2,100 clean water projects across nearly every county in the state.

Note: governor attempted to cut the budget for this in half for 2025.  It was restored to $500 M.  If anything it should have been increased.

1. Water Infrastructure Improvement Act (WIIA): Established in 2015, WIIA provides grants to local governments to support the repair and upgrade of water infrastructure. This financial assistance has been crucial in initiating essential drinking water and wastewater projects that might have been unaffordable for many municipalities.
2. Environmental Protection Fund (EPF): The EPF, fully funded at $300 million annually since 2016, supports various environmental programs, including open space conservation, invasive species control, and water quality improvement projects. In the State Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget, the EPF was allocated $400 million, reflecting the state's ongoing commitment to environmental protection.
3. Recent Investments in Water Infrastructure: In November 2024, Governor Kathy Hochul announced $435 million in grants for 102 water infrastructure projects, with increased awards for wastewater projects in smaller, disadvantaged communities. Additionally, in August 2024, the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation approved $265 million in financial assistance for water infrastructure improvement projects across the state.

As we proceed, please focus on specific challenges you’ve encountered in your communities regarding water preservation. This will help us tailor our discussion to the most pressing issues. Remember, concise questions will enable our legislators to provide more thorough answers. Let’s work together to foster meaningful dialogue.