



Signs of trouble arise in the private lending sector

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Funeral director faces felony charges

AG: Mount Vernon home operated without license

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An unlicensed Mount Vernon funeral director has been indicted on 20 charges related to illegally providing funeral directing services for at least eight months, the New York State Attorney

General's Office announced.

Michael Naughton, 55, is accused of operating as an unlicensed funeral director and defrauding New Yorkers out of thousands of dollars between May 2025 and January 2026 after a state Department of Health inspection of Camelot Funeral Home in Mount Vernon discovered 13 bodies in various states of decomposition and 17 boxes of cremated remains in January.

According to the AG's Office, Naughton's license was revoked by the depart-

ment's Bureau of Funeral Directing in 2019.

"Planning a loved one's funeral can be among the most difficult and vulnerable times in a person's life," New York Attorney General Letitia James said. "Naughton heartlessly took advantage of New Yorkers while knowingly operating his funeral home without a license and failed to take proper care of the remains in his possession."

Here's the latest.

Funeral home handled 20 funerals since August, despite closure

Camelot Funeral Home on Stevens Avenue was shut down by the state in May, previous Journal News/lohud reporting revealed. According to the criminal complaint, Naughton admitted the funeral home handled more than 20 funerals since August, despite its closure and Naughton's license revocation.

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New Rochelle program lifted by \$450K state investment



Yulisa Ceja, 17, a senior at New Rochelle High School, carries wood to a miter saw as she and Juan Mendoza, 18, also a senior at New Rochelle, learn to use the saw with the help of instructor Matthew Chacko of Soulful Synergy, during a class at New Rochelle Forward on April 8, 2025. Soulful Synergy was one of eight workforce programs across the state awarded funding from New York Power Authority trustees at their March board meeting in White Plains. Soulful Synergy will receive \$450,000 of the \$5 million awarded by NYPA. SETH HARRISON/THE JOURNAL NEWS

Soulful Synergy to train dozens more in clean energy field

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A New Rochelle workforce training program will use its share of \$5 million in New York Power Authority funding to train dozens of individuals for work in the clean energy industry.

Soulful Synergy will receive \$450,000 in NYPA funding to train dozens of students to work in weatheriza-

tion, energy efficiency, building electrification and other fields.

The company was one of eight workforce programs across the state NYPA trustees identified for funding at their March board meeting in White Plains.

"The \$5 million in workforce investments will help ensure New Yorkers have the skills required to succeed in the state's growing clean energy

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This is the second time NYPA has awarded funding to Soulful Synergy, which was founded in 2013 to prepare workers in underserved communities.

New York AG warns of AI tax scams

James says fake videos, clone phone calls on rise

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With tax season underway, New York Attorney General Letitia James issued a consumer alert, warning New Yorkers about tax preparation fraud and scams.

According to James, these scams can take many forms, but fraud involving sophisticated artificial intelligence has been increasing this tax season. Since Tax Day is two weeks away, James and the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) provided New Yorkers with tips on how to avoid, catch and report tax scams.

"As New Yorkers file their taxes, I encourage everyone to be on the lookout for scammers who try to steal their money and personal information," Attorney General James said. "I encourage everyone to follow the tips from my office and contact us immediately if you believe you have been targeted or victimized by a scam."

Here's what New Yorkers should know about tax preparation fraud and how to avoid it.

What are AI-powered tax scams?

According to James, New Yorkers should look out for these common AI-powered tax season scams:

● **Fake videos of government officials or celebrities providing false tax information:** AI scammers can make fake, lifelike videos of popular

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