

PENN STATION AREA WORSENS UNDER HOCHUL

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on NY Gov. Hochul:

The Catholic League's offices are located directly across the street from Penn Station. No area in New York City has deteriorated more than this—it is the filthiest and most dangerous spot in Manhattan.

Former Mayor Bill de Blasio did more to create this mess than anyone; the current mayor, Eric Adams, has not done nearly enough to rectify it. The person most to blame today is unquestionably Gov. Kathy Hochul.

Unlike most parts of New York, there is no neighborhood in this area. It is home to the train station, Madison Square Garden, Macy's, stores, offices, eateries and bars. This is one reason why de Blasio dumped scores of homeless people here during the pandemic; he knew there would be no neighborhood opposition.

The riots that took place in New York in 2020, with de Blasio's blessing, literally destroyed this part of the city. During one riot, the huge Footlocker store on the corner of 34th street and 7th avenue was broken into by looters who cleaned it out; they put their stash into a line of BMW's waiting outside (camera footage proves it). The store is still empty.

Across the street from Footlocker there was an eatery, A&H, that workers in the area stopped for breakfast and lunch. It closed and remains an empty story. Dali, another eatery up the block, next to Macy's, closed and is still unoccupied. Lenny's, right outside Penn, trimmed its hours significantly.

Across the street and up the block from Macy's there was a big eatery, Bread and Butter; it went under over the summer. A vitamin store also closed. Hale and Hearty left and no store has taken its place. Burger King recently shut down, reportedly because the homeless took it over. Down the block from us on 34th street, we lost a 7-11 and a Wendy's. And due to construction inside Penn Station, almost every food station and bar has closed.

Having no amenities is one thing—being terrified to go to work is another.

Escort service has been available for women who work in the area and are afraid to walk to and from Penn Station. While things have improved lately, the number of deranged men in this area—many of whom are dangerous—would blow the mind of tourists. This explains why so many who live in New Jersey and Long Island elected to stay away for the past few years; they are only now returning.

All around Penn Station, one set of barriers after another have been erected, trying to discourage drug addicts and the mentally ill from hanging out. They are shaped in a manner to stop them from sitting down—many are pointed—so out of control have things become. Flower beds have been placed on rectangular cement structures to dissuade the underclass from camping out.

In front of my building, a man employed by the owners of the 45-story edifice is constantly hosing down the sidewalk in the morning, stopping the derelicts from sleeping or passing out there; otherwise few would feel safe walking over them to return to the office.

We have seen, or read reports of, men and women defecating and urinating in the street, changing clothes in ATM storefronts, running into traffic, shooting up, selling drugs, cursing out commuters, robbing them, assaulting them, and yes, even

killing them. And nothing is done about it.

So where are the cops? They have been told to stand down. When they do make an arrest, because of bail reform and other pro-criminal legislation, offenders are released so quickly that the police have no incentive to risk their lives to do their job.

The Manhattan D.A., Alvin Bragg, is responsible for the catch-and-release policies that Hochul endorses. Mayor Adams has no authority to unseat him, but Hochul does: she can fire Bragg today. But she won't. Worse, she has the gall to insist that bail reform plays no role in the crime surge.

"The reforms were successful: Fewer New Yorkers are kept behind bars just because they can't pay, and we've saved taxpayer dollars in the process." That is Hochul's position.

This is the way she thinks. She thinks the proper way to measure criminal reform laws is by counting the number of criminals who have not been sent to jail. She should instead do a head count of all those who have been robbed, assaulted, thrown onto train tracks, and murdered. Saving lives should matter more than the bucks saved.

Hochul's fixation on money explains why her answer to the Penn Station area fiasco is to allow real estate developers to build one tower after another, thus destroying the livelihood of the few small businessmen who are left. Vornado Realty Trust is the big winner. It is owned by billionaire Steve Ross; he and his family have contributed hundreds of thousands to Hochul's reelection campaign.

Hochul is not alone in allowing this deterioration, but she is one of the big reasons why the Penn Station area is such a disaster.