



Charities Press Cuomo For Talks On Cuts

Top nonprofits urge governor-elect for seat at table, state tax breaks for rich.

Wednesday, November 10, 2010

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Gov.-elect Andrew Cuomo.

Assistant Managing Editor

A coalition of the state's top nonprofit social-service providers presented Gov. -elect Andrew Cuomo on Tuesday with a plan for protecting funds for their neediest clients while reducing public spending, and asked for seats on his transition committee.

The representatives of UJA-Federation of New York, the United Way, the Federation of Protestant Welfare

Agencies and other groups called on Cuomo to include them in the process as the new chief executive tackles Albany's \$9 billion budget deficit.

"We are anticipating that New York will be in the same situation as the federal government and other states that have to make significant budget cuts, and the health and human services sectors will feel the impact," said Ron Soloway, UJA-Federation's managing director of external and governmental affairs in a phone interview before a press conference at the State House.

"[Cuomo] hasn't been specific but he did indicate that Medicaid was an area he needed to look at closely."

The coalition of charities on Tuesday offered Cuomo, currently the state attorney general who handily defeated Republican Carl Paladino in last week's gubernatorial election, the benefit of their experience.

"Given our long history in working with state agencies, charity leaders are in a unique position to offer insight regarding a more efficient and effective business relationship in support of community services," said Susan Hager, president of United Way of New York State in a statement.

She added that chronically late state budgets have played havoc with the ability of nonprofits that rely on state grants to plan their programs, while reductions in funding tend to be across the board, rather than targeted where they will have minimal impact. Greater collaboration with those groups' leaders, including the creation of a cabinet-level nonprofits czar, Hager said, would address those issues.

The coalition also wants immediate resumption of state tax breaks for the wealthy to prompt more donations to charitable organizations and streamlined contract oversight to avoid late payments.

Cuomo's campaign press office did not return calls and an e-mail requesting comment about the proposals.

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Soloway of UJA-Federation said the coalition made its concerns known to Cuomo's campaign before the election but "did not get a significant response."

Other organizations joining in Tuesday's event included the [Asian American Federation](#), the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families and the Coalition for Children's Mental Health Services.

At his own press conference in Manhattan Tuesday with outgoing Gov. David Paterson, Cuomo offered few specifics about his budget axe.

"There is a lot that needs to be recalibrated and redesigned," he said. "You cut funds where you spend them: Health, education and state operations are where we spend the most." Cuomo said he would embark this week on a tour of state-run facilities to assess how they operate. "We have to analyze the system and redesign it to eliminate waste and fraud," he said.

Paterson, at the same event, noted that he had vetoed \$1.5 billion in proposed legislative programs that had no set funding sources and that another \$315 million in such spending still "needs to be balanced."

Agencies under the UJA-Federation umbrella have lost a total of \$6 million due to Paterson's veto of legislative earmarks known as member-item grants, the latest in eight cycles of budget cuts that have rocked the non-sectarian network of special education, child care, mental health, immigrant and other services, lowering revenue by 5 to 7 percent, said Soloway.

"We expect that the next couple of years will result in cutbacks of the same magnitude," he added. "That's why we believe it's important for the [new] governor to sit down with the human services community."

Orthodox See City Voucher Program Linked To Bloomberg AG Endorsee

In the run-up to last week's election, activists in Orthodox communities that rely heavily on an endangered city subsidy program for child care seem to have been concerned that Mayor Michael Bloomberg might not renew the program if Orthodox voters didn't back his pick for attorney general.

Republican Dan Donovan, the Staten Island district attorney, lost — despite Bloomberg's backing — to Democrat Eric Schneiderman.

Several diverse sources told The Jewish Week they believed that how well Donovan fared in Borough Park and Williamsburg, where the vouchers are most utilized, would affect the mayor's decision on whether to renew the Priority 7 voucher program, which is overwhelmingly utilized by Orthodox Jews. The vouchers pay up to \$288 per child for after-school programs.

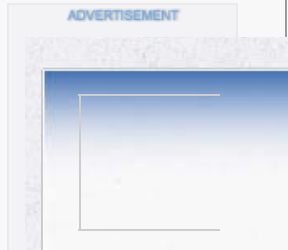
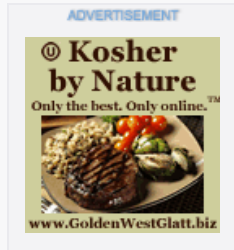
When Bloomberg planned to eliminate the \$16 million program in 2009, City Council members delivered thousands of letters to City Hall urging him to reconsider. The program was maintained as Bloomberg headed into his 2009 re-election campaign but again was threatened with cuts this year. A deal in June between the Council and the mayor kept the program alive for six months at a cost of \$12 million.

Heading into the 2010 election, some Orthodox leaders openly urged voters in the community to support Donovan as a way of currying favor with the mayor to ensure that the voucher program is renewed, sources said.

"There was some scuttlebutt around town that the mayor's interest in helping Mr. Donovan had to be taken into consideration in light of the upcoming discussion we will be having on Priority 7 vouchers," said one prominent Orthodox leader who spoke on condition of anonymity to avoid harming those discussions. The leader added that he was not aware of anyone connected to the mayor who had created such a linkage.

In addition to Donovan, Bloomberg also endorsed Andrew Cuomo's successful bid for governor and various New York legislators as well as candidates elsewhere in the nation.

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Donovan and Staten Island Rep. Michael McMahon are among the more prominent losers on the mayor's list.

While official voting tallies have not been posted, early reports suggest that Donovan handily carried Borough Park and Williamsburg.

Last week Deputy Mayor Howard Wolfson told The Jewish Week there was no immediate plan to defund the program.

"This decision was made when we passed the budget in July and, absent a change in our budgetary situation, we don't envision any change to it," he said.

But Tuesday, the Orthodox Web site Yeshiva World News and the newspaper Hamodia reported, evidently from an announcement by Borough Park City Councilman David Greenfield, that the program had been abruptly canceled as of Nov. 26.

"The Bloomberg administration mailed out letters on Friday, informing the struggling families of 2,200 children — most of them Orthodox Jewish — that their subsidized childcare will end on Dec. 31, the middle of the school year," Hamodia said.

After lobbying by Greenfield and several other Council members, the program is to be continued until the end of the calendar year, both news sources reported.

"We were shocked that we received less than 24 hours notice of the program's early termination," said Greenfield as quoted in both stories.

In response to the report, City Hall spokesman Mark LaVorgna told The Jewish Week Tuesday evening that it appeared there would be a shortage in funds in November because of a rising number of qualified applicants, but that projection proved unfounded.

"It looked like the money we allocated was not going to last," he said. "The funding level is going to permit us to get through the end of the year."

Hamodia, however, quoted City Hall press secretary Stu Loeser saying that all the funds were depleted in November and "we put in extra money." LaVorgna said he stood by his statement.

Bishop Demands Recount In Suffolk House Race

Lawyers for Suffolk Democrat Rep. Tim Bishop went to court Tuesday to call for a hand recount of some 185,000 votes cast in his re-election bid, which is still up in the air with Republican challenger Randy Altschuler ahead by a hair.

The unofficial count has Altschuler, 39, ahead by just 383 votes.

Election officials have started a 3 percent recount of a random vote sample as required by law in close races, said Altschuler spokesman Rob Ryan. "We're of the opinion that they are following the process set down by New York law," said Ryan. "We feel Bishop is jumping the gun."

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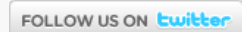
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