



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

## Senate Republicans Demand Special Session To Revoke Governor's Emergency Powers

ROBERT G. ORTT February 12, 2021

| ISSUE: **CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC; COVID-19; NURSING HOMES**



In the wake of the explosive New York Post story in which a top Cuomo aide was caught on tape admitting to a massive cover-up regarding COVID-related nursing home deaths, Senate Republican Leader Robert Ortt and members of the Republican Conference today called on the Senate Majority to convene a special session and immediately strip Governor Cuomo of his broad emergency powers. They also stressed the immediate need for a thorough, top to bottom investigation into the entire administration.

“For months, my colleagues have been accused of playing politics when in reality, we are trying to get answers for the thousands of families who lost loved ones in nursing homes. The leaked tape of the secret meeting held between administration officials and legislative Democrats confirms that not only did Cuomo’s office deliberately withhold information from the public and the Legislature, they did it to obstruct justice and dodge a federal investigation. It’s an absolute dereliction of duty and breach of public trust, and everyone involved must be held accountable. We have repeatedly called on the Majority to join us in revoking the Governor’s emergency powers -- after this report, it is clear the Majority must convene a special session and join us in doing so immediately,” said Senator Robert Ort.

“This administration has shown a callous disregard for these vulnerable residents and their families for months, but this stunning admission is a horrific new low. A full, independent investigation into the state’s handling of the COVID crisis in New York’s nursing homes needs to be launched immediately and any lawmaker who is not actively working to make that happen is complicit in the cover-up—period. Hiding data on the deaths of more than 15,000 New Yorkers and denying their loved ones the answers they deserve for political reasons has to be Albany’s rock bottom. This revelation has only strengthened our resolve to continue our fight for justice and accountability for these residents and their loved ones,” said Senator Sue Serino, ranking member of the Senate Aging Committee.

“The administration’s efforts to distort and cover up the true number of COVID-related deaths in New York nursing homes are outrageous. It is clear that a thorough investigation is needed to determine the true scope of this crisis and find out who was involved in misleading the public. Fear of being held accountable is not a reason to break the law. The public trust has been broken and the legislature must immediately act to end the governor’s emergency powers,” said Senator Patrick Gallivan, ranking member of the Senate Health Committee.

“This is a massive and unconscionable cover-up. Governor Cuomo and his inner circle need to be held accountable, on many levels, for their concealment, deception, whitewashing and worse. It’s time to immediately end government by Cuomo executive order, and it’s time to start every investigation that this deserves and demands. We should not be finding out the truth of this tragedy in nursing homes through leaks of secret Democrat-only meetings,” said Senator Tom O’Mara, ranking member of the Senate Investigations Committee.

“This obstruction of justice must be investigated on the federal and state levels and my colleagues in the majority should finally use their subpoena power to get the truth under oath. The Legislature should immediately revoke the Governor’s emergency powers as my Senate Republican colleagues and I have put forth amendments to do so for the past 14 session days so we can bring balance back to state government. The legislature needs to pass stronger penalties to hold officials accountable for violating open government and the Freedom of Information Law, which I am drafting. If this information that’s been reported is accurate, then Governor Cuomo has totally lost the trust of the people he represents and has violated his oath of office. He should then resign or face impeachment and removal from office,” said Senator Jim Tedisco.

Senate Republicans have repeatedly advanced an amendment – a total of 14 times - to remove the Governor’s broad emergency powers. Each time, every Senate Democrat has voted against the amendment. In addition, Senate Republicans have called on their colleagues in the Majority for months to use their subpoena power to hold the Governor and the DOH accountable, but again, the Majority sat on their hands and did nothing.

In the wake of the Attorney General’s report that showed the administration had dramatically underreported nursing home deaths, Senate Republicans called for a federal investigation to finally get the answers all New Yorkers deserve.

“It is more clear than ever who was really playing politics with this issue. First, we must strip the Governor of his executive powers, and then it is imperative that a full investigation be launched immediately. Justice needs to be sought for the grieving families. The Governor needs to demand the immediate resignation of anyone involved in this cover-up, and if he was aware, he must be removed from office,” said Senator Ortt.