



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

## Senate Republicans: Cuomo Can't Be Trusted with Life-Saving Vaccines

ROBERT G. ORTT March 15, 2021

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Senate Republican Leader Rob Ortt, along with members of the Republican Conference, today sent a letter to United States Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand urging Washington to assume control of New York State's vaccination distribution program in the wake of disturbing news reports about the potential politicization of this program by the Cuomo Administration.

Recent news reports that Governor Cuomo's "vaccine czar" Larry Schwartz is simultaneously engaged in surveying county leaders' loyalty to his embattled boss suggests that politics may improperly impact the equitable distribution of vaccines to New Yorkers. It is highly improper and unethical for Mr. Schwartz -- or anyone involved in granting counties' day to day requests for vaccine supplies -- to be prodding those very same local officials on whether they politically support the Governor.

"It would be a gross understatement to suggest that having the same man carry out both roles simultaneously is a situation fraught with profound moral and ethical conflicts. What's more, the legality of this arrangement is also highly questionable. In fact, one of the contacted county government officials has already filed a complaint with the Public Integrity Unit of the State Attorney General's Office," stated Leader Ortt.

The Senate Republican Conference was the first in Albany to call for Governor Cuomo to be stripped of his emergency executive powers, going back to last May, and have advanced a proposal to do so each session day since January knowing that something was amiss on this administration's handling and subsequent coverup of nursing home deaths. Senate Republicans have also called for investigations and received no response from the Administration and Legislative Majorities. Senate Democrats were silent partners to the Governor who failed to rise to the occasion and advocate for the people of this state who elected them. It wasn't until the Attorney General's bombshell report on nursing homes that some of their heads began to turn, but still far too slowly and ineffectually.

"We've made our position clear that the Cuomo Administration is unfit to make any decisions related to this pandemic, including the vaccination rollout. Our conference has held roundtable events with County Executives to listen and hear about the troubling vaccination rollout. These communications documented the many inadequacies in the state's stewardship of vaccinations, including the inability or unwillingness of the State

Department of Health to answer questions and address the concerns of their local partners. Mr. Schwartz's recent actions remove the last bit of credibility or confidence that might have remained in the state's vaccination program," said Leader Ortt.

Leader Ortt and members of the Senate Republican Conference are now urging New York's Federal officials to step in and demand the federal government fully take over the distribution of vaccinations and completely remove the Governor's office from the vaccination process. It is evident the Executive Branch is increasingly unable to focus on anything but the scandals of the Governor's own making.

"At a time when New Yorkers are begging for leadership, the Governor is incapable of providing it. Everything he has done during this pandemic has been wielded to his own political advantage, including obtaining a book deal and making late night TV appearances. And now the very distribution of life-saving vaccines has taken on disturbing political overtones. Andrew Cuomo's political domination of this state is coming to an end. If he will not resign, he must be impeached and removed from office. Until that process plays out, lives are at stake and we need Washington to step in and help vaccinate our state's population," concluded Leader Ortt.

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