



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## State Senate Democrats once again block O'Mara, Senate GOP effort to investigate Cuomo's COVID failures

THOMAS F. O'MARA April 19, 2021

| ISSUE: **COMBATING COVID-19 AND PROTECTING NEW YORKERS; PROTECTING NURSING HOME RESIDENTS**



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**Albany, N.Y., April 19--**New York State Senator Tom O'Mara, ranking member of the Senate Investigations Committee, and Senator Anthony Palumbo, a member of the Committee, today advanced a motion to send multiple subpoenas to current and former officials at the New York State Department of Health (DOH) for testimony and records related to the

Cuomo administration's failed handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senate Democrats on the committee again blocked the attempt to provide strong oversight of the Executive Branch, despite a mountain of evidence suggesting the Governor and his staff engaged in a year-long disinformation campaign to bolster his image and profit off of the pandemic.

O'Mara said, "Senate Republicans have been demanding a top-to-bottom investigation of the Cuomo administration for months on end, with subpoena power, and every single one of our efforts have been ignored or blocked by the Senate Democrat supermajority. Why is the Senate Majority protecting this Governor from the full legislative scrutiny his administration demands? We know Governor Cuomo and his inner circle failed our most vulnerable during the pandemic. We know he doesn't 'trust the experts.' What we still don't know is why top-ranking Department of Health officials left the administration, who's really calling the shots on the state's COVID response, and why did New York do worse than nearly every other state in the country? The Senate Majority should follow our lead and immediately launch a full-fledged, aggressive investigation so that we can expose the cover-up, learn from the failures, and be better prepared in the future."

Palumbo said, "Today's subpoena requests are a continuation of Senate Republicans' efforts to get to the bottom of the nursing home scandal and other issues surrounding the Governor's mishandling of the COVID pandemic. Sadly, we continue to be stonewalled by a Senate Democratic Conference more interested in protecting the Governor than uncovering the truth. Like many New Yorkers, I have grown weary of Senate Democrats' tough talk on subpoenas, while taking no meaningful action to obtain crucial information into these serious matters."

The New York State Attorney General, the Empire Center for Public Policy, and multiple media reports over the past year have shown the Governor and his staff:

- > Concealed crucial data and information on COVID-related nursing home deaths for months;
- > Deliberately undercounted COVID nursing home deaths by thousands;
- > Altered a state medical document to align with the fake numbers;
- > Lied to the public numerous times about the full picture surrounding nursing homes while apologizing to Democratic lawmakers behind closed doors; and
- > Exhibited no remorse or doubts about their months-long conspiracy to hide the truth.

In addition, media reports in the past year suggest the Governor and his staff:

- > Used the nursing home cover-up to burnish the Governor's fake "COVID hero" image in his book *American Crisis: Leadership Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic* (which reportedly made the Governor between \$4-5 million);
- > Used state resources to help produce *American Crisis*, a clear violation of state ethics rules;
- > Used state resources, through DOH and the Wadsworth Center laboratory, to provide preferential testing to the Governor's family and friends at the onset of the pandemic, another clear violation of state ethics rules; and
- > Issued many COVID guidances and/or directives without first consulting multiple state public health experts who have since resigned, retired, or otherwise left the administration.

Despite the ever-growing cloud of corruption and scandal engulfing the Cuomo administration and their failed handling of the pandemic, Senate Democrats rejected Republicans' motion to subpoena:

- > New York State Department of Health Commissioner Howard Zucker, who was intimately involved in the publication of the whitewashed July medical report on COVID nursing home deaths;
- > Sally Dreslin, former Executive Deputy Commissioner for the State Health Department;
- > Dr. Jill Taylor, former Director of the Wadsworth Center; and
- > Dr. Elizabeth Dufort, former Medical Director of the State Health Department's Division of Epidemiology.