



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara, Palumbo call for legislative investigation into Hochul contracting practices

THOMAS F. O'MARA September 22, 2022

| ISSUE: **SENATE INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE**

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New Yorkers – who work hard every day and move this state forward – are sick and tired of watching the same corruption nightmare repeat in Albany.

ALBANY, NY – Republican Members of the New York State Senate Committee on Investigations and Government Operations, Senator Tom O'Mara and Senator Anthony Palumbo, today called on Committee Chairman James Skoufis to open an immediate investigation into the Hochul Digital Gadgets Contract Scandal and the Governor's slow-walked "after-action Covid review."

"Governor Hochul's outside consultant – being hired by her own administration – to conduct an 'After-Action Review' of the state's pandemic response clearly will not do. The firm to conduct this so-called 'outside' review isn't being hired until sometime this month with work only to begin after Election Day. Enough of the slow-walking. We need answers and we need answers now. The full story of this contract and all emergency contracts need to be brought to light by a full investigation now," said Senator Tom O'Mara, Ranking Member of the Senate Investigations and Government Operations Committee.

“Senate Democrats have not reinforced ethics – they have reinforced corruption. A fear of holding their own party accountable has blinded them from doing the right thing. As members of the Investigations Committee, we are here to seek the truth on behalf of all New Yorkers. Regardless of political party affiliation, our focus should be ethics, truth, and accountability. Governor Hochul’s contract with Digital Gadgets has raised very serious questions – let’s find the answers,” said Senator Anthony Palumbo, Member of the Senate Investigations and Government Operations Committee.

Last week, it was **reported** again that Governor Kathy Hochul’s deal for COVID-19 tests with a major campaign donor has left taxpayers on the hook for millions. The State of California paid 45 percent less for the same COVID-19 tests that New York obtained through this contract. According to the report, if New York had paid the same amount as California, it would have saved taxpayers \$286 million.

It was **reported today** that the founder of the company that landed the deal with the Hochul administration threw a fundraiser for her just a week prior to the contract being signed. **Four days after the fundraiser**, the Governor declared a statewide emergency, which allowed her administration to avoid the standard state bidding process and official oversight conducted from the Office of the Comptroller for the purchasing of the Digital Gadgets COVID-19 Tests.

Senate Republicans and stakeholders have called on the Governor for over a year to allow for an independent commission with subpoena power to conduct an after-action review of New York’s Covid Response. Coincidentally, Governor Hochul will be **handpicking an outside consultant** to do an after action review with **results not to be available till after Election Day**. The firm will be reporting directly to the Governor, not the public. The recent stories of possible pay-to-play corruption raises further questions about the Governor’s slow-walking on this announced review of the state’s pandemic response.

Any investigation would need to answer a series of questions:

> Who negotiated the Digital Gadgets COVID-19 Testing contract? Was the Governor directly involved?

> Is the Governor aware that a younger member of the company founder's family **began working as a paid intern for Hochul's campaign fundraising staff** in November?

> Is the Governor aware that New York City under the former de Blasio administration **had to cancel a \$91 Million ventilator contract with Digital Gadgets**, after they failed to deliver the goods?

> Will the after-action Covid review contract need the State Comptroller's approval? Or will it be signed like the emergency contracts were signed?

> Will this after-action review examine all emergency contracts, including the Digital Gadgets COVID-19 Testing contract?

"New Yorkers – who work hard every day and move this state forward – are sick and tired of watching the same corruption nightmare repeat in Albany. We need a complete restoration of ethics in our State Capital and that starts with Senate Democrats initiating a Senate Investigations Committee Process for accountability – not covering for their own party interests," concluded Ranking Member O'Mara.