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Last Year's History, Next Year's Mystery. We'll Tell You About One and Help You Through The Other

12-22-17

1. Hotel New York

Our Spin:

2017 felt a little bit like musical chairs if you were trying to follow all the new hires and promotions within Governor Andrew Cuomo's Administration and the New York State Senate Republican Majority Conference. As a result, we thought it would be helpful to highlight some of the significant changes that were made heading into 2018. Don't be surprised if you recognize the names of some of the Governor's new hires. As some folks close to Cuomo have said before when asked about what it's like working for him, it's kind of like Hotel California... "You can check out anytime you'd like, but you can never leave."

The Story:

Last March Governor Cuomo announced [27 new hires or promotions](#), some of which were veterans of the Obama administration or Hillary Clinton's unsuccessful presidential campaign. Then in November, Cuomo announced [another set of appointments](#). "Over the past seven years, this administration has worked hard and made great strides toward creating a stronger and more just New York for all," Governor Cuomo said. "I am proud to welcome these talented and dedicated individuals to their new roles on our team where, together, we will continue to

move this great state forward." Below are some of his appointments.

Melissa DeRosa was appointed Secretary to the Governor. She succeeds Bill Mulrow who departs the administration for the private sector but remains campaign chair.

Cathy Calhoun was appointed Director of State Operations. Previously, Ms. Calhoun served as Acting Commissioner of the Department of Transportation. Ms. Calhoun's husband, FWC alum Frank Hoare who recently returned home from his third tour of duty on behalf of a grateful country, may try to remain checked out but will find he can never leave.

Linda Lacewell who previously checked out discovered she couldn't leave either. She was appointed Chief of Staff and Counselor to the Governor. In that senior role, Ms. Lacewell will oversee Executive Chamber operations, as well as ethics and law enforcement matters.

Letizia Tagliafierro, in her third position with the Governor, is still checking in. She was appointed Deputy Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs and Special Counsel to the Governor. Ms. Tagliafierro was previously serving as Special Counsel for Public Safety.

Checking in for the first time is Paul Karas. He was appointed Commissioner of the Department of Transportation to continue the Governor's \$100 billion investment plan to modernize aging infrastructure across the state. Before joining the Cuomo Administration, Mr. Karas served as Vice President and Manager of RS&H, Inc., a transportation and buildings infrastructure consulting firm.

Another new arrival, Carolyn Pokorny was appointed Chief Special Counsel for Ethics, Risk and Compliance. Most recently, she served as Deputy Chief of Staff and Counselor to U.S. Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch.

Mr. Christopher O'Brien, also an FWC alum, just keeps moving up the ladder and is now Director of Special Projects. Previously, Mr. O'Brien worked at Xerox Legal and Compliance Solutions for more than ten years, most recently as Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer.

Peter Kiernan, formerly Counsel to Governor Paterson, is now special counselor for interagency initiatives. Mr. Kiernan has taken on Rick Cotton's previously held portfolio.

Valery Galasso was appointed Senior Policy Advisor. She had been happily employed by the Clinton-Kaine Transition Team as a Special Advisor for Cabinet Nominations in the Office of the Chief Counsel. She then found out she needed new employment...

Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan also made some changes to his staff heading into an election year. Flanagan appointed David Previte to serve as counsel to the majority. Previte previously served as senior counsel, focused on Health, Medicaid, Racing and Wagering, and Elections. He replaced Beth Garvey, who, Flanagan announced back in August, had informed him of her "desire to step away from the position." Flanagan also said that as part of the "overall transition," he has elevated James Curran, who recently served as special counsel to the majority leader and advised the conference on education issues, to the position of first Deputy within the office. In addition, three other staffers – Lisa Harris, Jonathan Federman and Nicola Coleman – will each take on increased leadership roles within the office.

[NY.GOV](#)
[State of Politics](#)

2. A Con's Con?

Our Spin:

Voters answered yes. Who says you can't educate the public? In 1967 New Yorkers agreed to have a constitutional convention. Seven months and \$47 million later produced a spanking new constitution that needed

simply to go before the voters for approval. They promptly rejected it. Who says the voters can't learn. This year they rejected even the idea of a constitution convention by an overwhelming vote of 76.78 percent of voters voting no.

The Story:

New York voters turned down the idea of a constitutional convention this past November, once again rejecting an opportunity to open the state's founding document to a full-scale overhaul after opponents stoked fears that such a convention could result in lost rights and benefits. With opposition driven by some of the state's most powerful labor unions and interest groups, the proposal to hold a constitutional convention — known as Proposition One — was crushed by more than 75 percentage points. A spree of advertisements called the convention a "con's con," suggesting that it would be vulnerable to back-room and unsavory deals. Opponents argued that the convention could cost hundreds of millions of dollars, which seemed to be an exaggeration, but the message proliferated on "No on Prop 1" lawn signs throughout the state.

The convention also faced opposition from the Republican leader in the State Senate, John J. Flanagan of Long Island, and the Democrat leader of the State Assembly, Carl E. Heastie of the Bronx. Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, a Democrat with a re-election campaign looming next year, had initially offered qualified support for the convention, but he changed course, declaring he would vote against it because "the current delegate system does not offer enough protections to prevent the status quo and special interests from governing." The next vote on a con is due in 2037.

[NY Daily News](#)
[The New York Times](#)

3. What's In A Name

Our Spin:

After more than six decades of service, the Tappan Zee Bridge saw its last vehicle this past October. At the same time the new "Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge" opened traffic to the westbound span as construction continues on the eastbound span. Governor Cuomo's decision to name the bridge after his late former three-term governor father has not been without controversy. Critics have chided the designation and started a petition to strip the name from the bridge. However Cuomo remains steadfast in his decision and laser focused on the Grand Opening next year, which will no doubt occur prior to November, 2018. When the new bridge fully opens it will feature eight general traffic lanes, four breakdown/emergency lanes, a bike and pedestrian path, advanced traffic monitoring systems and enhanced express bus service. It will also be visually remarkable. Keep an eye out, you never know where that brilliant visual may appear.

The Story:

Governor Andrew Cuomo says backlash over renaming the Tappan Zee Bridge for his father is "personally hurtful." A petition on change.org has collected more than 75,000 signatures calling for the Gov. Mario M. Cuomo Bridge to return to its original name. "While Mr. Cuomo may be deserving of something named after him, it should not be at the expense of history, and the original settlers of our land: the Tappan Indians and the Dutch. And certainly not at taxpayer expense," the petition says. "The name Tappan Zee has no politics associated with it... Plus, it sounds cool to say, 'I'm taking the Tappan Zee.' It does not sound cool to say, 'I'm taking the Cuomo.' Come on people!" The bridge was previously named the Governor Malcolm Wilson Tappan Zee Bridge, but was commonly known as the Tappan Zee Bridge. In June, the state legislature voted to name the new \$4 billion Hudson River bridge for Gov. Andrew Cuomo's father, who died in 2015 and served as NYS governor from 1983 to 1994. "There is no doubt that these are politically-partisan comments," said Abbey Fashouer, a spokeswoman for Cuomo. "The law was passed by an overwhelming majority of both Democrats and Republicans and it is a fitting tribute to a life-long public servant who achieved great things for the people of New York," Fashouer added, noting a September Siena College poll showed 44 percent of voters prefer the name.

[LoHud](#)

4. Show Me The Ziti

Our Spin:

New York State Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno acquitted of corruption charges, found not guilty. New York State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver acquitted of corruption charges, found not guilty. New York State Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos acquitted of corruption charges, found not guilty. On and on they go, when they will end even Preet doesn't know.

The Story:

Governor Andrew Cuomo will deliver his State of the State address on January 3, when he will outline what will likely be an ambitious to-do list for himself and lawmakers for the coming year. Five days later, another event will begin to take place: His most loyal former aide will face trial on felony bribery charges. The trial of Joseph Percoco, Cuomo's longtime friend and confidant, will begin Jan. 8 at the Thurgood Marshall U.S. Courthouse in Manhattan, where prosecutors will argue he pocketed more than \$300,000 in bribes from companies with business before

the state. Cuomo himself is not accused of wrongdoing but his longtime working relationship and personal bond with Percoco will have plenty of Capitol watchers following the trial's ins and outs as it moves along.

[The Buffalo News](#)

5. A Blue Blue Christmas

Our Spin:

Governor Cuomo and his administration will have a blue blue Christmas as they prepare the Executive Budget proposal in the face of the largest deficit during his time as Executive. The Governors of the three largest blue states-Cuomo, Murphy and Brown all rallied against the Federal tax reform proposal but were handed a lump of coal by President Trump and his Republican colleagues in Washington.

The Story:

With a projected multibillion-dollar deficit and looming federal changes that could cost the state billions more, the biggest obstacle in the upcoming 2018 legislative session will be balancing the state budget. A report from the state comptroller last month suggests that the budget deficit could be as high as \$7 billion, according to an analysis by E.J. McMahon of the Empire Center.

In particular, the proposed elimination of deductibility of state and local taxes (SALT) will have a major impact on New York taxpayers, especially higher earners who face a combined state and New York City tax rate of almost 13 percent. The state Comptroller's office estimates that New York residents stand to lose more than \$72 billion in reported deductions for income and property tax. "I've been working for years to cut the state's income tax, we have it down to record lows, and in one fell swoop, they do a 20 percent increase," Governor Cuomo said on a conference call last week. "It will make this state structurally less competitive, and they know it, and I believe that's one of the purposes. To make the blue states economically less competitive than the red states."

Beyond the budget, we expect 2018 to focus on; the impact of Federal initiatives to our health care system and the delivery of health insurance, congestion pricing in New York City, reactions to the ongoing sexual harassment claims, infrastructure development and the Supreme Court decision on sports gambling.

[NPR](#)

[NY.GOV](#)

