



111 WASHINGTON AVE, SUITE 501
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12207

WWW.FWC-LAW.COM

PHONE: (518) 436-0786
FAX: (518) 427-0452

The Week That Was

01-18-19

1. Sending Out an SOS

Our Spin:

Less than two years after calling marijuana a dangerous “gateway” drug, Governor Cuomo on Tuesday included the Cannabis Regulation and Taxation Act in his 2019 budget proposal. It would create a three-tiered system, similar to alcoholic beverage laws, regulating the cultivation, distribution and retail sales of marijuana to adults over the age of 21. The Governor’s progressive agenda indicates that more than one New York elected official may have their eye on Pennsylvania Avenue.

The Story:

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo released his state budget proposal for 2019 on Tuesday, which included plans to legalize both sports betting in casinos and recreational marijuana. The Democratic governor also pitched increased education aid, voting reform, more infrastructure commitments, environmental measures including carbon neutrality, expansion of the Bottle Bill and a ban on plastic bags, as well as boosts to economic development for Upstate New York cities like Syracuse, Buffalo, Rochester and Utica.

With shaky financial markets starting to hit state revenue, Cuomo’s 2019 proposals are heavy on social policies and an assortment of new ways to bring in more taxes. The governor called for a \$175.8 billion spending plan, up 2 percent, that would be balanced in part by \$1.3 billion in new tax and fee hikes. That does not include \$300 million the state expects in the coming years from three

new taxes associated with plans to legalize adult recreational marijuana use. Projected personal income tax revenues — a key barometer of the state’s fiscal and economic health — are expected to slide. But Cuomo proposed a litany of new spending ideas paid for either with cash or through borrowed money. It also includes \$150 billion in statewide infrastructure improvements over the next five years and new drinking water system updates.

The budget was presented amid a new political reality for the Democratic governor: an all Democratic Legislature that is already moving to pass many of the policy items he proposed before the budget takes effect on April 1. “It’s a lot, but there’s been a lot bottled up for many, many years,” Cuomo said of his agenda now that the Republicans have lost control of the state Senate.

Cuomo also proposed a new congestion toll on vehicles heading below 60th Street in Manhattan starting in 2021. He did not suggest a toll amount, or whether discounts would be given to small businesses or low-income commuters. Cuomo said billions of dollars in revenue would support upgrades and repairs to the city’s aging subway system.

Syracuse.com



2. Candidate for most powerful person in the world plants flag at Brunswick Diner

Our Spin:

Troy, NY, famous for being the home of Uncle Sam was in the national spotlight this week as Senator Kirsten Gillibrand announced she will run for president in 2020 at the famed Country View Diner. Gillibrand's announcement, just outside of her campaign headquarters in Troy, had locals abuzz about the prospect of their neighbor becoming the nation's first Madame President. Gillibrand joins a growing field of democratic candidates that includes her beer drinking colleague, Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren. Cheers Kirsten!

The Story:

U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand blasted away at President Donald Trump during her first campaign stop, accusing the incumbent of choosing "to tear this country apart." "We have to take on President Trump and what he is doing," Gillibrand said outside of the Country View Diner in Troy, New York, where supporters assembled in the early morning chill for a chance to meet the politician.

"I'm running for president of the United States," Gillibrand said. "As a young woman, I will fight for your children as I will fight for my own." One of Ms. Gillibrand's signature causes, is her work fighting sexual harassment, and she emphasized her admiration for female leaders. "This is going to be a very different campaign," Ms. Gillibrand said on Wednesday, "Because we're willing to take on those systems of power that do not want Americans to have that opportunity."

Gillibrand joins an increasingly crowded Democratic slate of candidates, seeking the party's nomination to challenge Trump in 2020. Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren and former San Antonio Mayor Julián Castro have also declared they are running for the White House. Meanwhile, New Jersey Sen. Corey Booker, California Sen. Kamala Harris, Ohio Sen. Sherrod Brown and former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg are all openly testing the waters.

She will make stops across Iowa this weekend, announcing details of the trip just two days after launching a presidential exploratory committee. It will be Gillibrand's first visit to the first-in-the-nation caucus state as part of the 2020 primary process.

[Democrat & Chronicle](#)

3. Don't Lobby Me Argentina

Our Spin:

It is not an issue at FWC but with other firms... lobbyists without conflicts of interest? Sounds like an oxymoron to them. Or how about preventing political consultants from lobbying the elected officials who they helped get into office... Off the top of my head, I can think of a few firms that might need to rethink their future business models if these sorts of reforms are adopted in the 2019-2020 New York State budget. However, for those interested, rumor has it Karl Kruger for City Council is hiring!

The Story:

Emboldened by full Democratic control of the State Senate and Assembly, after years of a split Legislature where Republicans controlled the upper chamber, Governor Cuomo reiterated many of the proposals that he has introduced in previous years during his budget proposal this week. He also added some new ideas to combat public corruption, reduce the effects of money in politics, and provide more transparency about the workings of the Legislature and Executive branches.

Cuomo proposed banning all corporate contributions to candidate campaigns, while also lowering contribution limits across the board. He also proposed prohibiting any contributions from individuals or entities that have recently applied or are seeking government contracts. Separately, the governor pushed a measure to require reporting of intermediaries or "bundlers" who collect donations from several contributors and funnel them to candidates.

Cuomo is also seeking to take on the scourge of "dark money" flowing into elections through independent expenditures by anonymous sources. His budget briefing book calls for expanded disclosure by 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) nonprofit groups of the "extent and nature of their expenditures used to influence the debate on public issues, and the identity of large donors who facilitate that speech." "These loopholes make the entire campaign system fraught for a lack of integrity," Cuomo said. "You want to talk about franchising individuals who now feel disenfranchised - a corporation, a large contributor with a \$10 million check can buy an election and nobody knows who he or she is."

Cuomo also floated a "Lobbying Code of Conduct" to severely limit real and perceived pay-to-play politics and to curb the revolving door practices that have become commonplace in Albany. He proposed greater penalties for violations of lobbying laws, lowering the threshold for disclosure of lobbying activities to \$500, down from \$5,000, a ban on loans from lobbyists to candidates, and preventing political consultants from lobbying the elected officials who they helped get into office. He is also advocating for expanding the blackout period in which government employees and elected officials, as well as their staff members, would be prohibited from becoming lobbyists from two years to five.

