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The Week That Was

03-01-19

1. Baby Come Back

Our Spin:

After a bad break up on Valentine's Day, Governor Cuomo isn't giving up on his relationship with Amazon just yet. At an event Thursday on Long Island, Cuomo confirmed he has had multiple conversations with the online retail giant in the last few weeks, including personal calls to Amazon Founder, Jeff Bezos. Unfortunately, it seems that Mr. Bezos's has not moved, yet the governor refuses to believe it's all his fault. "I've had many conversations with Amazon. I hope that they reconsider. Up until now, we haven't seen any change in their position. It would be helpful if the state Senate said that they would approve it. That would be helpful, but in the meantime I haven't heard anything new," Cuomo said.

The Story:

In New York, Governor Andrew Cuomo is begging Amazon to reconsider its decision to back out of plans to bring 25,000 jobs to Queens after public criticism. In the latest sign that the argument isn't close to over, on Friday New York civic leaders published an open letter to Amazon Chief Executive Officer Jeff Bezos, promising that Cuomo will personally oversee state approval and a package of tax incentives totaling about \$3 billion, and apologizing for the "rough and not very welcoming" debate that prompted the company to withdraw. Cuomo himself didn't sign the letter, but the New York Times reported that he had made a personal pitch to Bezos in an effort to revive the deal.

The governor however has had multiple phone conversations with Amazon executives, including Mr.

Bezos, over the past two weeks, according to people with knowledge of the efforts. In those calls, Mr. Cuomo said he would navigate the company through the byzantine governmental process. Mr. Cuomo did not offer a new location but rather guarantees of support for the project, one person said. Amazon executives gave no sense the company would reconsider.

Andrea Stewart-Cousins, the Democratic majority leader of the State Senate, said in a statement that she had indicated her "willingness to work" with Amazon. "I have always been clear that I support job creation and was disappointed with Amazon's decision and hoped they would reconsider," she said.

The conversation between Mr. Cuomo and Mr. Bezos appeared to have been the first time the two had spoken at any point about Amazon's plans for Queens, or about the company's abrupt decision earlier in February to cancel the project amid noisy opposition.

[NY Daily News](#)

2. Professor Young

Our Spin:

Senator Catherine Young went from the powerful Chair of the Senate Finance Committee and the Senate Republican Campaign Committee to the ranking minority member of the Senate Ethics and Internal Governance Committee. This week she decided to take the lessons learned in those heady positions and teach them to the students at the New York State Center for Excellence for

Food and Agriculture. Who says all academics are liberals?!

The Story:

State Senator Cathy Young, who has represented portions of the Southern Tier in the state Legislature for two decades, will resign to take a job with Cornell University. Young, R-Olean, has been named director of the New York State Center of Excellence for Food and Agriculture at Cornell AgriTech in Geneva. Her first day as director will be March 11, according to Cornell.

"It was a very challenging decision to leave my service in the New York State Senate because I care so deeply about the people and issues facing my district," Young said in a statement. "However, this new role will provide me with more direct opportunities to make progress in one of the industries that is closest to my heart." Young, 58, was elected to the state Assembly in 1998 and won a special election in 2005 to represent the 57th state Senate District. The district is now made up of Allegany, Cattaraugus and Chautauqua counties, along with the southern portion of Livingston County.

During her state Senate career, Young rose to top positions within the Republican conference. She led the Senate Republican Campaign Committee, which is responsible for recruiting and supporting candidates in races across New York. In 2015, she became chair of the powerful Senate Finance Committee. After Republicans lost the majority in the 2018 elections, Young ran for minority leader against state Sen. John Flanagan, the incumbent GOP leader. She lost the race to Flanagan.

With Flanagan continuing to lead the Senate Republicans, Young was replaced as head of the Senate Republican Campaign Committee by state Sen. Fred Akshar. She also lost the top GOP seat on the Finance Committee. Flanagan named state Sen. Jim Seward as ranking member of the committee.

[State of Politics](#)

3. Called Off

Our Spin:

At a time when doing business in New York seems to be very difficult, business owners finally received some positive news this week. The Department of Labor reversed course in announcing the withdrawal of proposed employee call-in regulations. The proposal was viewed as onerous and expensive by business across the state and industry

sectors. The reversal from call in to called off is a victory for business.

The Story:

The state Department of Labor has decided to no longer pursue a proposal requiring employers to pay workers for scheduling changes made with less than two weeks' notice. Many business owners had expressed concerns about the potential costs of the change, especially at companies like car washes that see business fluctuate based on unpredictable weather conditions.

Department officials said they realized their intention to support workers was being viewed as a one-size-fits-all approach that didn't work for every industry after holding hearings and taking public comments. When they revised the rules in December, the results were "praised by opponents and criticized by supporters," said Jill Aurora, a spokeswoman for the state labor department. That's why officials are dropping the proposal for now, she said.

"At this time, due to the constraints of the regulatory process, the best course of action is to let this process expire and re-evaluate in the future, likely in concert with the Legislature, which would have a broader authority and better legal standing than Department of Labor regulations alone to balance the various needs of workers, businesses and industries," Aurora said in a statement.

The proposed state rule would have required employers to notify workers of their schedules 14 days in advance. If a shift is canceled within 72 hours of its scheduled start, the employer would have had to pay workers four hours of call-in pay. There was an exception for "an act of God or other cause not within the employer's control," which would have allowed the employer to notify workers 24 hours in advance instead.

Capital Region Chamber vice president Tom O'Connor agreed. He said it's important that businesses looking to locate operations in the state see government trying to help, not hinder. "I think everyone, including the governor, agrees we really need to focus on the business climate, especially with the Amazon deal," O'Connor said. "These kinds of policies that DOL was considering like scheduling set the wrong tone and send the wrong message to the business community. So if they're in fact deciding not to pursue that regulation I think the business community and small businesses are glad that they listened to our concerns."

[Albany Business Review](#)

