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The Week That Was

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1. To Run or Not To Run

Our Spin:

This past Monday, here's what was made clear: Conversations definitely took place this past weekend about replacing Democratic candidate Nate McMurray on the ballot with Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul in New York's 27th Congressional District.

What's less clear is who was driving those conversations: the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee or Governor Andrew Cuomo?

For the moment, that question is moot, because both McMurray and Hochul insist they're not going anywhere, with McMurray intent on challenging Republican Rep. Chris Collins, and Hochul intending to seek a second term as Cuomo's running mate.

But it's worth examining why the whole idea of a switch came up in the first place. From the DCCC's point of view, McMurray has some things going for him, including the fact he emerged from what was originally a field of five Democrats to become the only one who ended up filing petitions to get on the ballot. But he is a bit of an unknown item outside of Grand Island, where he currently serves as town supervisor.

However, McMurray is actively campaigning both in public and on social media. He also seems to have the support, maybe even the confidence, of the Democratic county chairs who picked him out of a crowded field of interested contenders to duke it out with Collins in November.

McMurray has struggled to raise campaign cash, however. A recent FEC filing shows he only has about

\$35,000 on hand, which is dwarfed by Collins' \$1.27 million war chest.

And then on Thursday, while paying a visit to Buffalo to sign the Middle Class Recovery Act, Governor Cuomo offered his two cents. On the topic of who is best suited to take on Collins, Cuomo explained, "There are people, Democrats, who want to win. And if you want to win, what you try to do is get the strongest candidate. The overwhelming feeling is that Kathy Hochul would be the strongest candidate."

The Story:

While in Buffalo this week, Governor Cuomo publically acknowledged that concerted efforts were made last weekend to attempt to persuade current Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul to engage in a rematch with Republican Chris Collins for New York's 27th Congressional District seat. The Governor divulged that not only were local figures present, but national Democrats such as Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Representative Joseph Crowley of Queens were also unsuccessfully involved in urging Cuomo's lieutenant governor to abandon the statewide ticket for a second stab at a congressional run.

Names were named as the Governor explained the situation surrounding a Democratic challenge to the seat by stating: "Many many people say she will be a stronger candidate than Nate McMurray. If Kathy were willing to run, I think that would be the best chance the Democrats have. There's no doubt about that. But she's not willing to run."

All of the noise did not resonate well with Nate McMurray, the attorney and Grand Island supervisor who recently secured an endorsement from the Democratic county leaders to challenge Collins in the 27th District. Responding to questions about the situation, McMurray said, "I've put up my money and am taking on a powerful incumbent and don't need a downstate guy to come in here and tell us how to do things in the 27th District."

McMurray went further by responding to the Governor's comments on Twitter, saying "Today, @NYGovCuomo said that he and @NancyPelosi think I'm not the best choice to challenge my opponent. Clearly I'm not part of their inside Albany/DC game. Who cares? This is not an era where outsiders call the shots. No one owns me. No one owns the people of NY 27. We decide."

[Buffalo News](#)

2. From Cells to Polls

Our Spin:

In the great State of New York, an open cell now means an open ballot box...that's if the Governor pardons you first. Earlier this week, Governor Cuomo signed an executive order that seeks to restore voting rights to felons on parole, a move that could open the ballot box to more than 35,000 people.

In a deliberate effort to bypass the State Legislature, Governor Cuomo will now consider 'conditional pardons' for all 35,000 people currently on parole in New York, as well as any newly convicted felons who enter the parole system each month. The State law currently barring convicted felons from voting unless they are on probation or have completed parole, remains intact. The current Majority Leader of the Senate, John Flanagan characterized the Executive Order as "ridiculous public policy and that the taxpayers should be absolutely outraged."

The Story:

On Wednesday, Governor Cuomo signed an executive order granting convicted felons out on parole the right to vote. The announcement, made at the National Action Network convention in New York City, was made by Cuomo as he was flanked by NAN president and founder, Reverend Al Sharpton, and former Attorney General, Eric Holder.

Met with cheers and applause from the crowd gathering at the Sheraton New York Times Square Hotel, the Governor stated, "I've proposed a piece of legislation this last year that said parolees should have the right to vote, but the Republican Senate voted down that piece of legislation which is another reason why we need a new legislation this November. But I'm not going to take no for an answer. I'm going to make it a law by executive order and I announce that here today."

Albany Republicans moved quickly to criticize the decision with Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan

leading the charge. Flanagan, at an impromptu news conference on Thursday afternoon in the Capitol, said the decision will "allow rapists and murderers to be given voting privileges that they don't deserve and they shouldn't have." In response to Governor Cuomo's claim that the Senate previously voted down the proposal, Flanagan stated, "I'm not aware of any instances where we voted it down, but I'll tell you what – I would gleefully vote this down." The Majority Leader's biggest concern, however, was that the matter was not negotiated with the Legislature.

The executive order has been hailed by various Democrats, reformers and advocacy organizations like The Doe Fund, who made a statement claiming that the action is "righting a wrong that has targeted poor and minority people for far too long."

[Politico](#)

3. A Wave of Cash

Our Spin:

With the State and national political landscape focused on the 37th Senate District, big money independent expenditures are going all in. Based on our calculations, close to \$4 million dollars have already been spent on the special election for the swing senate seat in Westchester. Just how important is the election on Tuesday? Evidentially, important enough for four former Independent Democratic Conference (IDC) Senators to all give \$11,000 contributions to the Democratic candidate Shelly Mayer. In an effort to raise the stakes even higher, New Yorkers for a Balanced Albany, a political group backed by supporters of charter schools, dropped a cool \$800,000 in political ads in favor of Julie Killian.

The Story:

Next Tuesday, on April 24, two Senate and nine Assembly seats are being filled around the state during the special election. One of those seats, Senate District 37, is of particular importance as its outcome has the potential to tip the New York State Senate leadership Democratic, or hand the GOP a bona fide majority.

Residents of the 37th Senate District will head to the polls to choose between Republican Julie Killian, who ran for the Senate seat last election against George Latimer, and current member of the state Assembly, Democrat Shelley Mayer. The district, which has a 2:1 ratio of Democrat-to-Republican enrollment, is being contested as George Latimer has since left to become Westchester County's executive.

If victory goes to Shelley Mayer, it is likely that Senator Simcha Felder, a Democrat who caucuses with Republicans, will determine the control of the Senate. A victory for Julie Killian would likely translate to the GOP narrowly keeping its majority. Felder has not said whether he would return to the Democrats, even after having been approached by Governor Cuomo on the topic.

As of Monday, \$1 million has been spent by Mayer's campaign and Senate Democrats, about \$1 million has been spent by Killian's campaign and Senate Republicans, and about \$1.5 million has been spent by outside groups, predominantly on advertising. Numbers have risen since

then and are sure to continue that trajectory as we near election day on April 24th.

[Lohud](#)

