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The Week That Was

05-11-18

1. Life is Stranger Than Fiction

Our Spin:

In a stunning turn of events, Attorney General Eric Schneiderman resigned within three hours of the release of a story in *The New Yorker*, alleging abuse of four women by the former AG. Schneiderman's initial response was that he was "role playing." His second response was he was out. The Governor and Senate GOP are advocating to keep acting AG Barbara Underwood in place while Speaker Heastie is setting up interviews for potential candidates next week. Make sure those resumes are up to date!

The Story:

Facing allegations of physical abuse and drug and alcohol misuse, Attorney General Eric Schneiderman on Monday night announced he would resign his office effective Tuesday. The announcement came just three hours after *The New Yorker* posted a story online in which four women accused Schneiderman of abusive and erratic behavior.

In the statement, Schneiderman said he "strongly" contested the claims made against him, though in previous statement had suggested some of the allegations constituted "role play." "It's been my great honor and privilege to serve as Attorney General for the people of the State of New York. In the last several hours, serious allegations, which I strongly contest, have been made against me," Schneiderman said in the statement.

"While these allegations are unrelated to my professional conduct or the operations of the office, they will effectively prevent me from leading the office's work

at this critical time. I therefore resign my office, effective at the close of business on May 8, 2018." The statement came after a growing barrage of calls, including from Governor Andrew Cuomo and U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, for Schneiderman to step aside. Cuomo also called for an investigation into some of the allegations made in *The New Yorker*.

Schneiderman, a former state senator, had increasingly been handed a national profile in part of his push against the policies of President Donald Trump's administration as well as his public advocacy for women's issues. Schneiderman had led a national effort of Democratic Attorney Generals to file legal challenges against the Trump Administration's environmental and immigration policies. Schneiderman is the latest state elected official to leave office in disgrace and his downfall, so swiftly, comes as he was considered a lock for a third term. Unlike Eliot Spitzer, felled by a prostitution scandal, Schneiderman enjoyed a solid reputation among his liberal base.

His replacement will now be up to the Legislature and, in effect, the 150-member Assembly to fill. A number of potential names had been floated in recent days, including Public Advocate Letitia James and Assemblywoman Helene Weinstein, the chairwoman of the Ways and Means committee. Senator Mike Gianaris was also rumored to be interested but he said Friday in a statement he would not participate in the legislative vetting process for attorney general.

[NY State of Politics](#)

2. Rabbinical Advisor

Our Spin:

Speaking at the Jewish Community Council of New York Dinner on Wednesday night, Governor Cuomo announced he will be visiting Israel in light of escalating tension on Israel's Northern Border. Benjamin Netanyahu is all Trump all the time, but how about a little love for the Gov.!

The Story:

Governor Andrew Cuomo will, "as soon as convenient," travel to Israel to show solidarity amid ongoing clashes at the Middle East nation's border with Syria. Cuomo, who is seeking a third term in November and has been positioning himself for a possible 2020 presidential bid, has made several trips to Israel, including one in 2014 as he campaigned for a second term.

Cuomo said Wednesday evening that New York fully supports Israel, while announcing the trip at a dinner organized by the Jewish Community Council of New York. Cuomo, who is Roman Catholic, is facing a Democratic primary opponent, Cynthia Nixon, who is Jewish.

"I believe true friendship is shown not in the easy times, but in the hard times. In 2002, when suicide bombers were attacking Israeli buses and everybody left, there was no tourism, there were no visitors, I led a New York delegation as a sign of solidarity to go to Israel. In 2014, when Hamas was bombing Israel, we wrote a letter of support, the Prime Minister invited us to put together a delegation to visit and we headed a bipartisan delegation."

"It's these moments that dissolve the gray into black and white and ask each of us individually, where do you stand and who do you stand with? My answer is simple. As long as I am Governor of New York, this state stands 100 percent with Israel and we are proud."

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3. Just One Last Thing...

Our Spin:

"Just one last thing," were words Sheldon Silver used often when he was at the negotiating table as Speaker of the Assembly. This time, however, "one last thing" could be in the form of a dreaded guilty verdict for a man who, for two decades, was the most powerful person in New York State government. Silver's first conviction was tossed out last June after the Supreme Court redefined the standard for public corruption cases. It remains to be seen if the ex-speaker has one last Ace up his sleeve or if his time has finally ran out. Either way, Silver has repeatedly told the press during the trial that he has "full confidence" in the legal system. We are glad someone is confident, because the government's star witness testified at the retrial that "My purpose was to incentivize Mr. Silver to be an

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advocate for mesothelioma cases and help raise funds for research." Many legal experts believe that testimony establishes quid pro quo and is enough to convict the 74 year old. Mr. Silver's fate will be likely be decided sometime next week.

The Story:

Jurors began deliberating at Sheldon Silver's retrial Thursday after hearing simple advice from a prosecutor: it's about what one of New York's most powerful politicians put in his pocket.

"It is clear as day this is all about the money for Sheldon Silver," Assistant U.S. Attorney Tatiana Martins said in closing arguments at Silver's fraud and extortion trial in Manhattan federal court. Silver, 74, didn't betray any nervousness about the outcome on Thursday. Asked by the Daily News in the morning how he felt, he answered, "I don't know."

Jurors got the case shortly before 5 p.m. and worked until 5:30 p.m. before Judge Valerie Caproni sent them home. They resumed deliberations today.

In her closing, Martins outlined how Silver sent \$500,000 in taxpayer grant money to Dr. Robert Taub's mesothelioma research lab at Columbia medical school and got names of Taub's patients in return. Those patient names made Silver rich, Martins said. The law firm Weitz & Luxenberg pursued asbestos claims and lawsuits on their behalf, and paid Silver \$3 million in referral fees.

"Why did Silver do all this? Why did he use his immense power to help Dr. Taub, a man he barely knew?" Martins asked. She answered her own question, "There were three million reasons for it ... Dr. Taub was Sheldon Silver's golden goose." Martins also talked about Silver's collection of \$800,000 in legal referral fees from childhood friend and lawyer Jay Arthur Goldberg. Silver got Goldberg work from two real estate developers Glenwood Management and the Witkoff Group, which have an interest in the Legislature's handling of rent regulation and housing finance laws. "This is bribery. This is extortion. This is corruption — the real thing," Martins told the jury. "Don't let it stand."

"It was legal," countered Michael Feldberg, Silver's lawyer. "And even if you think it was unseemly, that is no reason to find Shelly Silver guilty of the crimes charged." Besides, Feldberg said, being a member of the state Assembly or Senate is a part-time job. "It is perfectly legal for a New York State legislator to earn outside income." Referral fees from law firms like those Silver got from Goldberg and Weitz & Luxenberg are "common, standard and accepted," Feldberg said.

[NY Daily News](#)

