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The Week That Was

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1. No Uber, But Can New Yorkers Continue To Get A Free Ride From Medicaid?

Our Spin:

The battle to repeal and replace Obamacare gave rise to a special New York twist this week. The Faso and Collins amendment was designed to end the unfunded Medicaid mandate to local government and secure the votes of upstate Republican representatives. Governor Cuomo reacted by proposing an increase in income taxes, threatening a lawsuit and complaining about the unfunded mandate on the state. Irony is so ironic.

The Story:

On Thursday Governor Andrew Cuomo threatened the federal government with a lawsuit if they force the state to take over the counties' share of Medicaid costs. The proposed amendment by upstate Reps. Chris Collins (R-Buffalo) and John Faso (R—Kinderhook) would end the state's 50-year tradition of sharing costs for Medicaid – which funds health care for lower-income Americans and nursing home care for those without resources – with the counties. Cuomo during a conference call said that the proposed amendment to the House bill to repeal and replace Obamacare would violate state sovereignty. “I believe it is unconstitutional and we're seriously considering a lawsuit on behalf of the people of the State of New York to prove what a scam and a fraud this delegation

is trying to perpetrate on the people of this state,” he said. “There's no justification as to why you're targeting New York,” he added. “States are sovereign.” The state's counties currently pick up 13 percent of the total cost of Medicaid, a tab that is expected to top \$8 billion in the coming fiscal year, though much of that is in New York City. Some other states also require counties to cover some Medicaid costs but New York residents pay far more than those in other states, according to the New York State Association of Counties — something that has been blamed for high property tax rates in many parts of New York. Collins defended his plan, accusing Mr. Cuomo of exaggerating its impact. “He is Chicken Little: The sky is falling,” said Mr. Collins, adding that the governor was “in a panic” because it would force him to spend discretionary state money. He also noted that the change wouldn't take effect until 2020. “The best news is that he's not going to get re-elected next year,” Mr. Collins said. “I'm sure a new governor is going to have no problem with this.”

[Times Union](#)
[The Buffalo News](#)

2. Guilty Ortt Not?

Our Spin:

What a run it was folks! 136 days...136 days it had been since the last public corruption scandal that

led to an indictment of a New York State government official. On Wednesday State Senator Robert Ort broke the streak when he and his predecessor, George Maziarz, were indicted on felony Election Law violations. What would a legislative session in Albany be without a public official getting indicted? Man I LOVE NY.

The Story:

Republican State Senator Robert Ort and his predecessor, George Maziarz, pleaded not guilty on Thursday in a pair of schemes involving payments to a spouse and a former aide, the latest in a long line of corruption cases to rock New York State's capital. Ort, a former North Tonawanda mayor whose district stretches into Monroe County, is accused of padding his mayoral salary through a no-show job for his wife, who was indirectly paid \$21,500 over four years by the Niagara County GOP. Former Senator Maziarz is accused of shielding \$95,000 in secret campaign payments to a former staff member who left his government job after being accused of sexual harassment. Both alleged schemes involved the Niagara County Republican Committee, whose former chairman, Henry Wojtaszek, pleaded guilty Wednesday to his role in the alleged Maziarz scheme. A defiant Ort standing outside the courtroom speaking to reporters vowed to fight the charges, describing them as a political hit job. "I have no doubt that the only reason I am involved in this case, that I was part of this investigation, is to make it more politically appealing and to further Eric Schneiderman's partisan agenda," Mr. Ort said. "My constituents in the 62d District know me, they know what kind of person I am, and they know what kind of public servant I have been. I am guilty of nothing." Mr. Ort's attorney, Stephen Coffey, said the charges against his client apparently stem from documents filed by the Niagara County Republican Committee that omitted payments to Mr. Ort's wife by a Niagara County marketing firm. "He didn't sign that document, he didn't author the document, he didn't read the document, he wasn't aware of that document," Mr. Coffey said of Ort's involvement. "Schneiderman's office knows this."

[State of Politics
Democrat & Chronicle](#)

3. Who Says You Need to Pay to Play

Our Spin:

The house always wins right? Unless of course the house is New York State... in which case The Seneca Nation of Indians (SNI) seems to always beat the odds. For the second time since becoming Governor it looks as though Cuomo has been out-smarted by the SNI. In 2013, after disputing gambling revenues for three years, the two parties came to an agreement that saw New York State receive nearly \$270 million and the Senecas retain about \$209 million of the disputed funds. Is this really happening again?! As former President George W. Bush said, "There's an old saying in Tennessee — I know it's in Texas, probably in Tennessee — that says, fool me once, shame on — shame on you. Fool me — you can't get fooled again."

The Story:

The Seneca Nation of Indians announced this week that it will stop sharing its casino revenue with New York State at the end of the month after turning over \$1.4 billion over the last 14 years. The decision stops the cash flow of more than \$110 million per year to Albany, a portion of which then goes to host casino communities in Buffalo, Niagara Falls and Salamanca. The western New York tribe's President, Todd Gates, told reporters the tribe is willing to continue payments to the cities where its casinos are located in exchange for services, but that its financial obligation to the state as outlined in a 2002 compact has ended. "This is not new," Gates said. "The language of the compact has not changed. We're following the language of the compact as we always have." In the 2002 contract, the state gave the tribe exclusive rights to operate three casinos in western New York in exchange for up to 25 percent of slot machine revenues. Gates stated that although the compact remains in place through 2023, the revenue-sharing requirement ended after 14 years. On Thursday, the Cuomo administration claimed there is no gray area, and that both documents require the Senecas to make payments during a 21-year period that began in 2002. However people who are familiar with the contract say the tribe has commenced a clever maneuver that surprised the state and will end up saving the Seneca Nation in excess of \$700 million in revenue-sharing payments over the next 7 years.

[The Buffalo News
Times Herald-Record](#)