



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on February 15, 2021

## Cuomo Faces Bipartisan Backlash for Covering Up Nursing-home Death Toll

After New York Governor Andrew Cuomo's top aide [admitted](#) his administration withheld data on the state's nursing-home death toll to stymie a federal investigation, Cuomo is facing serious bipartisan opposition that could derail his political ambitions.

During a February 10 conference call, Secretary to the Governor Melissa DeRosa apologized to state Democratic leaders for putting them in a precarious "political position" by withholding information they sought last summer about the number of Empire State nursing-home deaths related to COVID-19. The Cuomo administration did so, she explained, because the Trump administration, in its investigation of nursing-home deaths in several states, could have "used [the information] against" Cuomo, who in March had ordered nursing homes to accept COVID-19 patients.

DeRosa's confession, combined with [recent revelations](#) of how vastly the administration [lowballed death counts](#), infuriated lawmakers of both parties

State Senate Republicans [called](#) for a special session to revoke Cuomo's emergency powers, which the legislature granted him nearly a year ago to combat the pandemic. They also repeated their call for an investigation into the nursing-home cover-up and the resignation of anyone involved in it, up to and including Cuomo.

On Friday, 14 Democratic state senators issued a [statement](#) asking the legislature to rescind the governor's emergency authority.

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"Without exception, the New York State Constitution calls for the Legislature to govern as a co-equal branch of government," the senators said. "While COVID-19 has tested the limits of our people and state — and, early during the pandemic, required the government to restructure decision making to render rapid, necessary public health judgment — it is clear that the expanded emergency powers granted to the Governor are no longer appropriate."

"While the executive's authority to issue directives is due to expire on April 30," they continued, "we urge the Senate to advance and adopt a repeal as expeditiously as possible."

At least one of those senators, Gustavo Rivera of the Bronx, had the good sense to oppose giving Cuomo



AP Images



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dictatorial powers in the first place. Asked by the [Associated Press](#) if he was “disappointed by the lack of transparency from the governor’s office,” Rivera said “he never expected it in the first place.”

An anonymous source told the AP the senate was already strongly considering revoking the powers, but DeRosa’s Wednesday confession “almost slam dunks that.”

New York Republican Congressman Tom Reed, meanwhile, [told](#) Fox Business’ Maria Bartiromo on Friday that he planned to file “a personal criminal complaint” against DeRosa, saying she had “committed criminal activity to cover up” the nursing-home death toll, which now stands at roughly 15,000, or about one-seventh of the state’s nursing-home population.

Individuals who lost family members to COVID-19 in nursing homes also want the Cuomo administration’s cover-up investigated.

“With the stroke of Gov. Cuomo’s pen, he sentenced thousands of people like my father to death, and he sentenced us, the families, to a lifetime of heartache, anguish and pain,” Tracey Alvino, whose father died after contracting COVID-19 in a New York rehabilitation facility, [told](#) Bartiromo Monday. “He needs to answer for what he’s done, so we need an independent investigation.”

Likewise, “Three children who lost their mother in a New York nursing home at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic last year want ‘justice’ for their loved one and say Gov. Andrew Cuomo needs to be investigated for trying to cover up the number of senior deaths linked to the facilities,” reported the [New York Post](#).

The paper itself [called for](#) “an independent federal investigation” into Cuomo’s actions, saying it “may be the only way to get the full truth” of the matter — “not just the ‘what’ of how many lives it cost, but the ‘why’ behind this madness, and the months and months of coverup.”

It all adds up to headaches and heartburn for the governor who, just months ago, had “soaring approval ratings, an Emmy and a book deal,” as [Politico](#) put it. The AP suggested that the scandal “could make him less likely to be tapped for a post in the Biden administration,” and it may complicate his 2022 bid for a fourth gubernatorial term. Cuomo may have won a political battle with Washington, but it could cost him skirmishes against adversaries — and erstwhile allies — in Albany.



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