



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on February 18, 2021

NY Assemblyman Says Cuomo Threatened Him Over Criticism of Pandemic Mismanagement

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo's nursing-home pandemic [scandal](#) is finally getting well-deserved attention in the mainstream media as the story continues to develop. The latest revelation is an accusation by Democratic Queens Assemblyman Ron Kim that Governor Cuomo not only threatened his career over criticisms of the Cuomo administration's coronavirus management, but also asked him to lie to protect the coverup of nursing-home deaths.



AP Images

Governor Cuomo was once the media's pandemic darling, praised for his handling of the public-health crisis even as New York continued to have a higher death toll than the more populated states of Texas and Florida, both of which enacted far more lenient lockdown measures. But revelations that the death toll in the state's nursing homes was far higher than Cuomo's health officials claimed has prompted an [investigation](#) by the FBI and U.S. attorney's office and forced the media and New York Democrats to [admit](#) that Cuomo mismanaged the pandemic.

According to the *New York Post*, a [report](#) by New York Attorney General Letitia James revealed "at least 4,000 residents died after the state issued a controversial, March 25 Cuomo administration mandate for nursing homes to admit 'medically stable' coronavirus patients — which James said 'may have put residents at increased risk of harm in some facilities.'"

Most damning is that Cuomo's administration deliberately undercounted the nursing-home deaths by as much as 50 percent.

But whether the high number of nursing-home deaths is merely the result of poor policy is another issue. According to the watchdog group OpenTheBooks.com, Cuomo actually [received](#) large donations from hospitals asking him to put coronavirus patients in nursing homes.

"Gov. Cuomo forced nursing homes to take COVID patients, then wrote a book praising his own pandemic actions. Now we find he got campaign donations from the hospital bodies that lobbied for his lethal policy," *New York Post* writer Miranda Devine [wrote on Twitter](#).

What's more, the Cuomo administration has been accused of "stonewalling," the *Post* reports, as



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lawmakers from both parties have demanded data on the nursing-home-related deaths but have been met with refusals and excuses.

Those evasions prompted more than a dozen Democrats, including Assemblyman Kim, to sign and circulate a [letter](#) asking to strip Cuomo of his COVID-19 emergency powers and accuse the governor of obstruction of justice for failing to provide data on nursing-home deaths during the pandemic, the *Post* reports.

Kim believes he was particularly targeted by Cuomo, however, because of comments he made after the *New York Post* reported that one of Cuomo's top aides admitted during a private call that the administration [deliberately withheld](#) the data in fear it would be "used against" them in a federal investigation. The assemblyman remarked the aide's statement amounted to an admission that "they were trying to dodge having any incriminating evidence."

Kim claims it was just hours after his comment was published that Cuomo called him at his home to berate him for the letter and intimidate him with vague threats.

"He goes off about how I hadn't seen his wrath and anger, that he would destroy me and he would go out tomorrow and start telling how bad of a person I am and I would be finished," Kim [told](#) the *New York Times*.

Cuomo then pressured Kim to lie about the aide's disclosure of the nursing-home death totals.

"Basically, I saw a crime and he's asking me to say that I did not see that crime. I heard what I heard and I can't lie," Kim said.

Cuomo's office is claiming that Kim has misrepresented the conversation that took place between the assemblyman and the governor, Fox News reports.

"Mr. Kim is lying about his conversation with Governor Cuomo Thursday night. I know because I was one of three other people in the room when the phone call occurred," said Rich Azzopard, a senior advisor to Cuomo. "At no time did anyone threaten to 'destroy' anyone with their 'wrath' nor engage in a 'coverup.' That's beyond the pale and is unfortunately part of a years-long pattern of lies by Mr. Kim against this administration."

"We did ask for Mr. Kim to do the honorable thing and put out a truthful statement after he told the Governor he was misquoted in a news article, which he said he tried to correct but the reporter refused," Azzopardi added. "Kim said he would correct the story and then broke his word. No surprise. Instead over the last six days he has baselessly accused this administration of pay to play and obstruction of justice."

But even the *New York Times* [admits](#) Cuomo may have "made good on his threat" this week during a press briefing, during which he levied "allegations of impropriety at the assemblyman, saying that he and his administration have had a 'long and hostile relationship'" with Kim. Cuomo also accused Kim of a "continuing racket" that involved donations from nail-salon owners angered by a 2015 nail-salon reform law Kim helped craft.

Accusing Kim of engaging in "pay to play," Cuomo said, "I believe it was unethical if not illegal."

Of course, if that is true, why would Cuomo have waited until now to address it? After all, if Cuomo was aware of an ongoing "pay to play" scheme and withheld that information until now when it suited him, wouldn't that make him just as culpable?



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