

Paterson orders 2,500 political appointees to write undated resignation letters

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ALBANY -- Gov. [David Paterson](#) is clearing the decks for his successor by asking about 2,500 "at-will" political appointees to submit undated letters of resignation.

The move will allow [Gov.-elect Andrew Cuomo](#) to figure out who he wants to place in choice posts throughout state agencies.

Agency heads received notice on Tuesday from [Lawrence Schwartz](#), Paterson's secretary, directing all appointees to submit undated resignation letters by Friday.

A person familiar with government transitions said about 2,500 people occupy "at-will" jobs covered by the memo. The person, who asked not to be named, said the request for resignations at this point and in this manner is highly unusual -- and that resignations without a specific date of departure may not be binding.

"It's unusual and strange," said [Joseph Sano](#), executive director of the [Organization of Management Confidential Employees](#). "So what else is new?"

Some appointees serve in roles that have set terms. The group includes [Francine James](#), Paterson's former appointments officer, who last year became chief deputy director at the [New York State Insurance Fund](#). It's unclear whether those people are expected to disregard such employment protections.

Schwartz said in the memo that the goal is to give the incoming administration "maximum flexibility." People in Paterson's executive office -- such as Schwartz -- are not required to write the resignation letters, Paterson spokeswoman [Jessica Bassett](#) said.

The assumption is that the appointees will remain in their jobs through the transition to Cuomo's governorship on Jan. 1, and remain in posts while the new governor reviews agency personnel or until otherwise notified.

"Top political appointees serve at the pleasure of the governor," Schwartz wrote.

The people required to submit their departure letters include agency heads, acting agency heads, deputy and assistant agency heads, counsels and deputy counsels, public information officers and others in senior exempt positions.

The resignations must be open-ended "while the new administration reviews each agency and its personnel or until otherwise notified," Schwartz wrote. "Should appointees desire to be considered for re-appointment, please notify the appointments office and this information will be provided to the transition team."

Bassett said she did not know the total number of appointees affected, or if Cuomo's team sought the early resignation letters.