

Cuomo sets bold fiscal, ethical agenda in State of State, vows to 'restore credibility' to Albany

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[ALBANY](#) - Gov. Cuomo delivered a sobering - and occasionally soaring - call to arms to state lawmakers on Wednesday in his first State of the State address.

In a nod to technology, Cuomo also became the first chief executive to use a [PowerPoint](#) presentation to outline Albany's ills - and his sweeping proposals to fix the state's financial and ethical woes.

"This is a time of crisis for our state, a time when we must transform our government to once again become the progressive capital of the nation and to seize the moment of opportunity.

"What we do today ... will determine the course of this state for decades to come."

Cuomo even used the PowerPoint for levity, depicting himself and legislative leaders as battleship captains bracing for budget war, with the special interests portrayed as a warplane firing missiles at Cuomo.

In his wide-ranging, 47-minute long speech - delivered at a convention center near the Capitol - Cuomo unveiled a host of proposals, including:

- Creating expert panels to develop recommendations to trim the expensive [Medicaid](#) program, slash the number of state agencies by 20% - and spike burdensome unfunded mandates.
- Trimming costs by imposing a pay freeze on unionized state workers when their contracts expire at the end of March and consolidating the juvenile justice systems.
- Filling a \$10 billion budget deficit without borrowing or hiking taxes - though he did not provide details.
- Requiring caps on property tax increases and state spending.
- Demanding strict new ethics laws to crack down on lawmakers' shenanigans.

"We currently have a government of dysfunction, gridlock and corruption," he said.

"Every time there is another headline, there's another cut on the body politic - and a little more trust has bled out," he said as the three large video screens used for his presentation showed headlines of recent scandals.

Cuomo's much-hyped speech was not all about belt-tightening - he pitched \$900 million worth of new initiatives, including merit-based education funding.

And he threw a few bones of red meat to his Democratic base by demanding legalization of same-sex marriage.

Cuomo also sought to inspire lawmakers - and everyday New Yorkers - to aspire to greatness.

"Let this 234th Legislature stand up and write a new page in the history book of [New York State](#) government," said Cuomo, his voice rising.

"Let this 234th Legislature solve these problems at a time of crisis - and bring this state to a place that it's never been.

"We're not just going to build back, we're going to build back bigger, stronger than ever before. That's what we're going to do together."

By delivering his speech at the convention center, Cuomo became the first governor since 1923 to give a State of the State address outside the historic Assembly chamber.

In doing so, more than 2,000 people were able to attend, including state legislators, [Mayor Bloomberg](#) - and about 1,000 members of the public.

To underscore his commitment to every region of the state, Cuomo positioned one high school student from every New York county to sit behind him on the stage.

And in another first, Cuomo turned the microphone over to [Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver](#) and Senate [Majority Leader Dean Skelos \(R-Nassau\)](#) briefly, enabling each to address the crowd.

"The Assembly is ready and willing to work with the governor, and with our colleagues in the Senate, to fully address NewYork's economic challenges and to restore faith in our government," Silver (D-[Manhattan](#)) said.

But even as he delivered the message, a number of his fellow Assembly members questioned how Cuomo can expect to close a \$10 billion deficit without raising taxes or borrowing.