

Cuomo Strikes Deal on New York Budget With Big Cuts

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS – NY Times

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ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Gov. [Andrew Cuomo](#) said a tentative \$132.5 billion state budget deal he struck with legislative leaders Sunday was nothing less than historic for its spending cuts as well as its timeliness.

The tentative plan would reduce state spending by more than 2 percent and would address a \$10 billion deficit without raising taxes or borrowing money.

The plan stands a chance to be finalized by legislators this week, in time to meet the Friday deadline, when the state fiscal year begins.

"It's an exceptionally big deal when the state passes a budget on time under these circumstances," said Cuomo, who got the majority of his priorities into his first budget for the state. "It's a new day in New York."

New York's budget process is being watched nationwide. The state has the earliest budget deadline in the nation, but, like other states, is wrestling with deep deficits, weak revenues and unprecedented protests from advocates for the poor and middle class.

In his first three months in office, Cuomo did what his father, three-term Gov. [Mario Cuomo](#), couldn't do to win a fourth term. Ultimately, it cost Mario Cuomo his office in 1994 to Republican Gov. [George Pataki](#), who ran on a fiscal conservative platform. Pataki was the last New York governor to cut spending.

Legislative leaders Sunday praised their progress and the results.

"New York state is now functioning well, in a bipartisan way," said Senate Majority Leader [Dean Skelos](#), a Nassau County Republican who with the Democratic governor killed the Assembly's "millionaire's tax" for the year.

Assembly Speaker [Sheldon Silver](#) called the budget "grounded in reality ... a fiscally responsible budget that protects the most vulnerable among us."

"This is a sober budget, unquestionably," Silver said. "Government had to tighten its belt."

Among the details released Sunday was the restoration of \$272 million in school aid from Cuomo's proposed \$1.5 billion cut to schools. The restored funding would benefit schools, including New York City schools, schools for the deaf and blind, and summer schools for special education students.

Also in the plan is the restoration of \$86 million to the [State University of New York](#), [City University of New York](#) and their community colleges.

Billy Easton of the Alliance for Quality Education, a union and parent backed lobbying group, remained critical of the proposals because of the overall cuts to schools. "Nobody who cares about students is celebrating this budget," he said.

New York City Mayor [Michael Bloomberg](#) also did not like the latest agreement, saying that even with the restoration of some funding, the budget passes along new costs to the city that it can't absorb.

Also in the plan, 3,700 prison beds would be eliminated; \$22 million would be restored to proposed cuts for prescriptions for the elderly; and New York City senior centers will be funded. Cuomo's plan to layoff 9,800 state workers remained uncertain.

The governor said the budget would set New York on a new course after decades of overspending and overtaxing that have driven residents out of state for better opportunities.

The Legislature still must pass the budget bills. In past years, tentative deals have fallen apart after lawmakers, lobbyists and reporters pick apart deals struck in closed-door negotiations.

In a surprise move, Cuomo lopped off \$170 million from the court system budget, bringing cuts to the Office of Court Administration close to a 10 percent reduction he calls for in his executive branch. State Bar Association President Stephen Younger said he hoped that won't force courtrooms to close.

The move broke decorum in Albany where the executive branch rarely touches the legislative or judicial budgets as a nod to adhering to the constitutional separation of powers.

That and other cuts offset about \$250 million in increases the Legislature was able to get into the executive budget Cuomo proposed Feb. 1.

Cuomo called in a "new era" of accord between the executive and Legislature.

"They went the extra mile and I applaud them," Cuomo said.