

Governor takes charge with promises to keep

Which issues will survive the cut is the unanswered question at the Capitol

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ALBANY -- Each governor has a catchphrase. Gov. [George Pataki](#) would rail about the "failed policies of the past," which was an unsubtle poke at his predecessor, Mario Cuomo. Then came [Eliot Spitzer](#), who promised that "On Day One, everything changes," a swipe at Pataki.

Andrew Cuomo hasn't developed a pithy slogan, but his refrain that New York state is entering an era of austerity has been heard from the beginning of his campaign through Saturday's inaugural .

Against this backdrop, Capitol observers will continue to speculate, wonder and opine on who's up and who's down -- as well as which issues will rise to the fore during the legislative session.

With that in mind, here's a look at how some political fortunes will be rising, falling or holding steady. We've assigned rankings ranging from a plus (+), minus (-), or equal sign (=) depending on the ascendancy, descent or equilibrium of each topic.

Property tax cap +

Will likely be Job One for Cuomo given the level of expectation he has set for it, as well as polls showing that voters overwhelmingly want the mechanism. Watch for Cuomo to work hard to keep the cap debate separate from wrangling over the state budget, to keep it from getting confused or watered down. Keep an eye on possible exemptions to a cap -- such as employee health or pension costs -- which could raise questions about its effectiveness.

Economic development +/-

High on Cuomo's agenda, but could prove elusive. Cuomo spoke of the need to generate "jobs, jobs, jobs," in his inaugural speech. But of press time, the governor is still said to be hard at work searching for an economic development guru, a difficult job given New York's high taxes and heavily regulated environment. Insiders say he needs to make some strides in this area to deflect the pain, negativity and sense of sacrifice that will come as the governor and lawmakers wrestle with the upcoming \$9 billion budget deficit.

One key player here will be Lt. Gov. [Robert Duffy](#) who on Saturday said, "the area of economic development, that in particular, is a passion for me."

Same-sex marriage +

By pushing for it, Cuomo can offer succor to a Democrat base that will likely be angered by some of his budget moves. The measure has been passed numerous times in the Assembly; returning Republican Senate Majority Leader [Dean Skelos](#) has said he'll allow another floor vote -- although it remains to be seen if enough seats in the chamber have turned over to close the 14-vote margin of defeat when the Senate voted it down in late 2009.

State work force -

Members will likely feel more pain on top of the roughly 900 layoffs that former Gov. [David Paterson](#) initiated. Cuomo has warned about "cuts" facing employees when their contracts expire at the end of March. He wants to consolidate as many state agencies as possible, which would render many administrators and managers as well as rank-and-file workers redundant.

One unanswered question: How will Cuomo's policies impact local public employees such as teachers, police and other municipal workers, who actually make up a larger part of the entire public sector?

The Executive Mansion +

Its profile will rise as Cuomo uses it to regale, cajole and arm-twist small groups of lawmakers into seeing things his way. The governor has expressed admiration for the way former Gov. [Nelson Rockefeller](#) cultivated relationships with legislators, and the mansion is the perfect spot for that.

In a side note, Cuomo on Saturday moved to open more of the state Capitol to the public, having workers remove the imposing concrete "Jersey barriers" outside the building's southern end and allowing free access to the Second Floor executive chambers, which were closed during the Pataki years, leading to the term "Fort Pataki."

Criminal justice issues =

Cuomo has said little about this phase of state government, suggesting no big changes -- at least not yet.

Privatization of assets +

They may not call it that, but watch for deals in which infrastructure, buildings or even bridges and roads are "sold" and then leased back to the state, or operated by concessionaires. It will be controversial, but could raise lots of cash in a hurry. Cuomo

has hired [Paul Francis](#), who under Spitzer helped develop a plan -- which wasn't enacted -- to securitize or sell future lottery proceeds to investors for a large chunk of cash to help create a fund for higher education.