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OCTOBER 7, 2017 12:00 PM SOCIAL, MOBILE & MORE

ALBANY, N.Y. — In New York state

government news, Gov. Andrew Cuomo warns

of possible special legislative session in the

face of federal health care cuts, and a new push

is planned to legalize medically assisted

suicide.

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SPECIAL SESSION?

Capitol Watch: Cuomo floats special session for federal cuts

Cuomo has long warned that deep cuts to federal health care spending could rip huge holes in the state's budget and devastate health care coverage for New Yorkers. Now he's saying he may order lawmakers back to Albany this fall if some recent cuts aren't reversed.

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Long-planned reductions in federal aid to safety net hospitals will cost the state \$2.6 billion when they're fully implemented. Cuomo, a Democrat, said New York is taking a bigger hit than any other state.

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Lawmakers are already eyeing an estimated \$4 billion deficit in next year's budget, and Cuomo said other health care funding cuts proposed by

Washington Republicans would only make the situation worse.

Cuomo said he's been in touch with members of the state's congressional delegation who tell him they're working to reverse the cuts to hospitals. But if that effort falls flat before the end of the year, Cuomo said he may have to bring lawmakers back to revise the \$153 billion spending plan to absorb the cuts.

But first he's urging New Yorkers to lobby Congress to reverse the reductions.

"We will not stand idly by while the federal government targets middle- and working-class New Yorkers," Cuomo said.

MEDICALLY ASSISTED SUICIDE

When lawmakers do return to Albany, proponents of a bill authorizing medically assisted suicide for terminally ill patients plan to be ready.

A petition signed by 7,500 New Yorkers supporting the measure was submitted to Cuomo on Thursday. The signatures were collected during the New York State Fair this summer.

The proposal now before lawmakers would allow someone with a terminal illness to request life-ending medication from a physician. Two physicians would have to certify the patient has a terminal condition and is mentally competent to make the decision. It did not receive a vote last session.

Colorado, Washington, Vermont, California,

Oregon and Washington, D.C., have laws allowing people to seek medical help in ending their lives.

—

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION GETS ITS CLOSE UP

The experts have weighed in on the question of whether New York should hold a constitutional convention.

Voters will be asked on the Nov. 7 ballot whether they want to convene a convention to propose changes or wholesale rewrites to the state constitution. Those changes would then go back to the voters for approval.

At a forum on the subject Wednesday at The Times Union in Albany, supporters argued a convention would give voters their best chance of finally taking on pervasive government corruption. Equal rights, protections against discrimination, environmental safeguards, campaign finance reform and laws codifying a woman's right to an abortion are other possible changes.

"People can take in hand their government, make it accountable," said SUNY New Paltz political scientist Gerald Benjamin.

Opponents, however, say that while a constitutional convention may sound appealing to frustrated voters, it could be taken over by political insiders or special interests looking to consolidate power or push changes that serve their own ends.

"We're con con-con," said Donna Lieberman, executive director of the New York Civil

Liberties Union. "Because it's a con."

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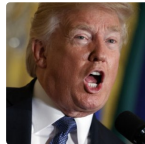
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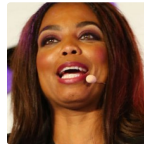
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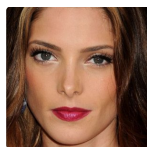
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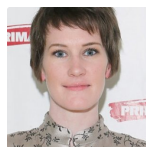
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