

Gov. Cuomo outspent Nixon 10-1 to win Democratic primary

By Yancey Roy yancey.roy@newsday.com @yanceyroy

ALBANY — Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo outspent rival Cynthia Nixon by a 10-1 ratio to win the Democratic gubernatorial nomination, records filed Tuesday show.

And that's before you include help Cuomo received from the New York State Democratic Committee, which didn't stay neutral in the race.

Cuomo spent \$26.5 million on the campaign in 2018. Nixon, a former star of "Sex and the City," spent \$2.6 million after joining the race in March.

The state Democratic committee spent another \$5 million on Cuomo's behalf, largely on television ads, mailers ([including a controversial](#) one that tried to link Nixon to anti-Semitism) and "get out the vote" efforts.

The campaign spending, combined with strong union backing, helped Cuomo beat back criticism from the political left and rout the progressive Nixon in the primary, [66 percent to 34 percent](#).

The torrent of spending in a primary reflects that Cuomo took the first-time candidate seriously despite downplaying her on the campaign trail, analysts said. It also shows Cuomo reacted to stunning upsets in Democratic primaries around the nation by not holding back on spending.

"The governor rightly perceived this was a very serious challenge and he felt the need to use the resources he'd gathered in this election," said Gerald Benjamin, a dean at the State University of New York at New Paltz. He said previous "national outcomes" likely prodded Cuomo, referring to the surprising defeats of Rep. [Joe Crowley](#) in Queens and Rep. [Michael Capuano](#) in Massachusetts at the hands of younger, more progressive challengers.

In a state as diverse as New York, "money truly does matter" in elections, said Jeanne Zaino, an Iona College political scientist.

Cuomo's campaign spent a whopping \$5.1 million in the final 11 days of the contest — about \$500,000 per day. Almost \$2 million was spent on television ads.

Cuomo still has \$11.6 million remaining in campaign funds; he faces [Republican Marc Molinaro](#) in the November general election.

Cuomo's running mate, Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul, also outspent her rival in the primary, New York City Councilman Jumaane Williams. Records showed Hochul spent about \$2.1 million to Williams' \$311,000. Hochul won a surprisingly tight race, 53 percent to 47 percent.

The one primary race in which the biggest spender lost was attorney general. Rep.

Sean Patrick Maloney (D-Phillipstown) spent about \$5.3 million but finished third in the four-way contest.

The winner, Letitia “Tish” James, spent \$1.9 million. But, like Cuomo and Hochul, she too was aided by the Democratic committee which spent about \$860,000 on her behalf. James will face Republican [Keith Wofford](#) in November.