

Cynthia Nixon announces gubernatorial run

By Rachel Silberstein Updated 3:44 pm, Monday, March 19, 2018



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Actress and education advocate Cynthia Nixon speaks during a press conference with school superintendents, academics and other officials to push for more funding for schools Monday, March 24, 2014, at the
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ALBANY — Actress and activist Cynthia Nixon on Monday announced a left-flank challenge to Gov. Andrew Cuomo in this fall's Democratic primary.

Nixon, best known for her role as attorney Miranda Hobbes on HBO's "Sex & The City," made the announcement with a video [posted to](#)

Twitter that ends showing her on a train. The last line, delivered over the PA, is "Next stop, Albany."



Nixon, who has for years advocated for higher public school spending, foreshadowed her intention to run in recent weeks — a period that has been especially rough for Cuomo, whose former top aide Joe Percoco was found guilty last week of swapping official favors for bribes.

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The actress registered a campaign committee Monday and posted a link to [her fundraising site](#) on Twitter.

Beating Cuomo in his attempt to secure a third term will be an uphill battle. The governor has more than \$30 million in his campaign account, according to his most recent filing with the state Board of

Elections, and is about to embark on a robust season of additional fundraising events.

A [Siena College poll](#) released Monday found that that Cuomo **is favored** by New York voters over Nixon, 66-19 percent.

There are factors at play that may work in Nixon's favor, however. Notably, her campaign treasurer Zephyr Teachout challenged Cuomo for the Democratic ticket in 2014. Despite a shoestring budget and lack of support from much of the party establishment, Teachout — a Fordham Law professor, author and progressive activist — pulled in a remarkable 34 percent of the vote in that year's Democratic primary, and won all four counties in the Capital Region.

The 2014 election was marked by a battle for the endorsement of the progressive Working Families Party, which forced Cuomo to prove his progressive bona fides or risk a three-way race in the general election. Many rank-and-file WFP members were disappointed when the party's leadership wound up endorsing Cuomo over Teachout.

Progressive advocacy groups must now decide whether to endorse Cuomo — who has in his second term shifted to the left, passing worker-friendly legislation like paid family leave, a \$15 minimum wage, and key criminal justice reforms — or Nixon, who has said she will shun big money in favor of a people-powered campaign.

The governor has been criticized by progressive activists for propping up the alliance between the state Senate's breakaway Independent Democratic Conference and the chamber's Republicans, a coalition that has helped the GOP retain its last significant grip on state power. A tentative [Democratic unity deal](#) on the table is conditioned on whether Democrats regain two vacant Senate seats in April special elections.

If the deal falls through, Cuomo risks aggravating the party's progressive base.

According to Gerald Benjamin, a political scientist at SUNY New Paltz, Nixon's candidacy similarly complicates things for U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, a Democrat who is running for re-election in New York this year and has been an outspoken advocate for women seeking elective office.

"There are these wild cards, like a woman senator in office who has encouraged women candidates across the state, who now has to choose between a woman candidate and an incumbent governor," said Benjamin.

Meanwhile, Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro and state Sen. John DeFrancisco, R-Syracuse, are the leading contenders for the Republican gubernatorial nomination. If Nixon wins the WFP nod, New York could see a dynamic three-way contest this fall, said Benjamin.

Public education advocates, who have argued that many of Cuomo's education policies have failed to address inequities between wealthy and impoverished school districts, welcomed Nixon's entry into the race.

"I think that Gov. Andrew Cuomo has a huge weakness on public education," said Billy Easton, executive director for the Alliance for Quality Education, a union-affiliated group that presses for increased public spending on public schools.

Nixon, he said, "is a public school mom, she's been an avid advocate for our public schools, and Andrew Cuomo has only been an impediment to funding public schools."

Nixon's kickoff video – which shows her walking through New York and interacting with her daughter – also mentions health care inequities, ending mass incarceration and fixing New York City's ailing subway system.

If elected, Nixon would be the first openly gay governor of New York.

State Sen. Terry Gipson, a Democrat from the Hudson Valley, has also announced his intention to challenge Cuomo for the party's nomination.

One person who welcomed Nixon's entry into the race was Ed Cox, state Republican Party chair and son-in-law of President Richard Nixon. The party's Twitter feed posted a photo of Cox flashing a grin and the late president's trademark double V-for-victory.

"Nixon's the One!" the post said.

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