

The state's constitution mandates that every 20 years we vote on whether to hold a constitutional convention, or what I call a "people's convention." Mario Cuomo - our current governor's father - appointed a Temporary Commission on Constitutional Revision, which worked through 1995 and gave rise to a comprehensive 500-page book of recommendations and considerations. [...] back in June of 2010, prior to his election, Cuomo's emissaries promised me that as governor, Cuomo would move up the convention vote and go all-in to see that it passed. Spokesmen for the Legislature's majorities, the Assembly Democrats and Senate Republicans, both lamely attributed the missing \$1 million to the governor's failure to provide enough details about the commission. (Legislators) know they're at risk because the Trump-Sanders phenomenon is a protest movement, and if New Yorkers catch on to the fact that there's a vehicle for protest that could effect real change, they're in trouble

<http://www.timesunion.com/tuplus-opinion/article/Thanks-to-governor-no-threat-of-much-needed-7377005.php> Thanks to governor, no threat of much-needed reform By Bill Samuels, Commentary Published 5:30 pm, Tuesday, April 26, 2016 There has been a recurring theme throughout Andrew Cuomo's six-plus years as governor: He says one thing and then does the opposite. Cuomo said he wanted to clean up Albany, but then shut down the Moreland Commission on Public Corruption when its investigations heated up. He said he wanted to end partisan gerrymandering, and then masterminded a redistricting amendment to the state constitution that stymied reform and made sure the process wouldn't be independent. He said he wants campaign finance reform, but has done nothing to bring it about except for a pilot matching funds program in the 2014 comptroller's race that was designed to fail. More Information Bill Samuels is the founder of the public policy think tank EffectiveNY and host of Effective Radio on AM970 in New York City and WVOX in Westchester. The latest example of this bait-and-switch approach is his alleged support of a state constitutional convention. In his State of the State address in January, Cuomo said Albany needs a "citizen-government relationship reboot" and that a convention "could make real change and reengage the public." The state's constitution mandates that every 20 years we vote on whether to hold a constitutional convention, or what I call a "people's convention." The next time that referendum comes to the ballot is November 2017. The last time a convention came about was in 1997. In May 1993, more than three years before the convention vote, then-Gov. Mario Cuomo - our current governor's father - appointed a Temporary Commission on Constitutional Revision, which worked through 1995 and gave rise to a comprehensive 500-page book of recommendations and considerations. This January, less than two years before the 2017 vote, Andrew Cuomo inserted \$1 million into his executive budget to create a comparable nonpartisan commission to prepare for the convention. While \$1 million is inadequate to fund a commission of this consequence, the budget item was nonetheless appreciated by convention supporters. I was particularly enthused about the commission because of my own family ties to the convention. In 1965, my father, Howard Samuels, founded the Citizens' Committee for an Effective Constitution to generate bipartisan support for a convention in Albany. In part as a result of my father's efforts, a vote on whether to stage a convention was held that year, and passed, though ultimately the voters rejected the recommended amendments to the constitution. I have been a supporter of a People's Convention ever since, and urged this governor, even before he took office, to use the convention as a mechanism to fundamentally reform Albany. In fact, back in June of 2010, prior to his election, Cuomo's emissaries promised me that as governor, Cuomo would move up the convention vote and go all-in to see that it passed. He broke that 2010 promise, and just last week we learned that he is gearing up to betray the convention again in 2017. When the fine print emerged from this year's disgracefully opaque budget negotiations, we learned the \$1 million had been quietly stripped out. As with Moreland, Cuomo talked tough and then

caved behind closed doors to the self-interest of the Legislature - where there is bipartisan contempt for a People's Convention because it would circumvent its members' authority Spokesmen for the Legislature's majorities, the Assembly Democrats and Senate Republicans, both lamely attributed the missing \$1 million to the governor's failure to provide enough details about the commission. Of course, the implied notion that the governor couldn't push through a mere \$1 million allocation in a \$147 billion budget is laughable. In an interview with YNN, SUNY New Paltz professor Gerry Benjamin, a convention expert, laid bare the rationale behind this backroom deal: "It's really classic. They'll block preparation and then say we're not prepared. (Legislators) know they're at risk because the Trump-Sanders phenomenon is a protest movement, and if New Yorkers catch on to the fact that there's a vehicle for protest that could effect real change, they're in trouble." Thanks to Cuomo, Albany is once again in no danger of reform. But hope springs eternal, at least rhetorically. A Cuomo spokesman announced the governor is looking for another way to fund a commission. I'll believe those words when I see the governor actually do something to prove them true. This is a TU+ story. Click for more information.

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