

INTRODUCTION TO STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP 2020



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WEEK 5

REAL LIFE APPLICATION

KNOWING HOW TO LEAD

EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP CASE STUDY – Andrew Cuomo, The Nation’s Governor

Andrew Mark Cuomo is an American politician, author, and lawyer serving as the 56th governor of New York since 2011. A member of the Democratic Party, he was elected to the same position his late father, Mario Cuomo, held for three terms. ¹

In 2020, Andrew Cuomo received widespread praise from epidemiologists for his handling of the evolving COVID-19 pandemic in New York State which includes a state-wide lockdown and a shutdown of non-essential businesses in an effort to help flatten the curve of the virus. Cuomo's emergence in the pandemic is an example, political observers say, of how different leaders react in a crisis. Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine, a Republican, has been praised for a nonpartisan approach. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has been criticized for refusing to close Florida's beaches. Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves has asked people to pray to end the crisis. ²

Andrew Cuomo’s Daily Morning briefings, carried live on several networks, have a common template, a routine that is in itself reassuring. He starts with an update on the coronavirus numbers, followed by a PowerPoint illustrated account of what his government is doing to address the crisis. He moves on to new directives to control the spread of the virus and heal those infected with it. Then – appropriately seated two arms-length away from everyone else at the briefing – he gets personal, talking about how emotionally draining and frightening the coronavirus is, how it has affected his own family, and how he knows Americans will get through it together.

Political observers say he is filling the leadership role for people across the nation. Andrew Cuomo has been among the most aggressive in ordering business closures and using New York's resources to buy personal protective equipment and expand hospital bed space. And he's gotten unusually personal as he's sought to convince New Yorkers to take the virus very seriously, but not to panic.

"He's becoming America's daddy and America's son at a time when people's communities and relationships are falling apart. He's become the protector of the people from a bullet they can't see," says Hank Sheinkopf, a longtime, New York-based political consultant who has known Cuomo his entire life. "He is embodying America's sense of who it really wants to be at moments of crisis," adds Sheinkopf.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Cuomo

² <https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2020-03-23/how-coronavirus-made-andrew-cuomo-americas-governor>

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Andrew Cuomo was born in New York City, Cuomo is a graduate of Fordham University and Albany Law School of Union University, New York. He began his career working as the campaign manager for his father, then as an assistant district attorney in New York City before entering private law practice. He founded Housing Enterprise for the Less Privileged (HELP USA) and was appointed chair of the New York City Homeless Commission, a position he held from 1990 to 1993.³ In 1993, Andrew Cuomo joined the Clinton Administration as Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development in the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. From 1997 to 2001, he served as the U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. In 2006, Cuomo was elected Attorney General of New York. He won the election as Governor of New York in 2010 and has been reelected twice.⁴

Mario Matthew Cuomo (Andrew Cuomo's father) served as the 52nd Governor of New York for three terms, from 1983 to 1994, Lieutenant Governor of New York from 1979 to 1982, and Secretary of State of New York from 1975 to 1978. Mario Cuomo was born in the Briarwood section of the New York City borough of Queens to a family of Italian origin (from Campania, Italy).⁵

Mario Cuomo played baseball for the Pittsburg Pirates before giving up baseball and returning back to St. John's University to earn his bachelor's degree (summa cum laude) in 1953. Deciding on a legal career, Cuomo attended St. John's University School of Law, from which he graduated tied for first in his class in 1956. Cuomo clerked for Judge Adrian P. Burke of the New York Court of Appeals. Despite having been a top student, the ethnic prejudice of the time led to his rejection by more than 50 law firms before he was hired by a small but established office in Brooklyn! During his tenure at the law firm of Comer, Weisbrod, Froeb and Charles, Mario Cuomo represented Fred Trump. Cuomo eventually became a partner at the Comer firm, but stepped down in 1974 to become New York Secretary of State. In addition to practicing law, Cuomo also worked as an adjunct professor at St. John's Law School.

Interestingly enough, Mario Cuomo (the father) 1st became widely known in New York City in the late 1960s when he represented "The Corona Fighting 69", a group of 69 home-owners from the Queens neighborhood of Corona, who were threatened with displacement by the city's plan to build a new high school. He later represented another Queens residents group, the Kew Gardens–Forest Hills Committee on Urban Scale, who opposed Samuel J. LeFrak's housing proposal adjacent to Willow Lake in Queens.

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Cuomo

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mario_Cuomo

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In 1972, Mario Cuomo became known beyond New York City when Mayor John Lindsay appointed him to conduct an inquiry and mediate a dispute over low-income public housing slated for the upper-middle-class neighborhood of Forest Hills.⁶

In Mario Cuomo's first term as Governor of New York State, he produced a balanced budget and earned the highest credit rating over the long term for the State in one decade. His philosophy in leading the State was one of "progressive pragmatism". Cuomo and the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives (Democrats had over a 3:2 margin in House) was successful in stopping U.S. President Ronald Reagan's administration from eliminating "federal income tax deductibility of state, local and property taxes".

During his second term as governor, Mario Cuomo successfully pushed for the enactment of sweeping fiscal reforms for the State. Comprehensive reform measures were also enacted in governmental ethics for New York State under Cuomo's leadership. Cuomo extended New York State's economic reach in business globally, contributing to both strengthening and developing it.

Mario Cuomo is also known for beginning the "Decade of the Child" initiative, an effort that included multiple health care and educational strategies to better the lives of children in New York State. Further, in 1988, the "Rebuild NY" Transportation Bond Act was an initiative under Cuomo that was a continuance of efforts to rebuild bridges and roads throughout the State. Cuomo increased assistance to local law enforcement agencies in order to help reduce or eliminate crime; and prison expansion in the State was continued which he is said to have regretted. Under Cuomo, New York State was also the first in the nation to enact seat belt laws.

Governor Mario Cuomo and his wife Matilda Cuomo presided over the First New York State Family Support Conference in 1988. His statewide initiatives in developing over 1,000 family support programs are today termed "individual and family support" nationwide and are cited by the National Council on Disability. He was the first governor to support an ecological approach to families which was represented by community integration and community development as the goal of deinstitutionalization. Healthcare was also an area that Mario Cuomo improved as governor, implementing initiatives that succeeded in reducing costs of prescription medications. This endeavor assisted senior citizens in making the medications more affordable. Under Governor Mario Cuomo's leadership, a public health plan that tackled the AIDS epidemic was the most intense in the nation.

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mario_Cuomo

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With all of the training and influence Andrew Cuomo must have received from his father (Mario), we can see that Governor Andrew Cuomo represents the scripture's motto:

"For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish.

Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14 NKJV)

In an August 15, 2018, anti-sex trafficking bill-signing event, Andrew Cuomo said: "We're not gonna make America great again. It was never that great. We have not reached greatness. We will reach greatness when every American is fully engaged." The assembled audience of Cuomo's supporters booed.⁷

Then, later in a February 2019 opinion poll, Andrew Cuomo's approval rating dropped to 43 percent, the lowest of his tenure as governor, and a full 50% said they disapproved. The poll showed an eight percent drop from January 2019; it was taken after Cuomo signed several pieces of progressive legislation, including an expansion of abortion in New York and stricter gun laws, suggesting that the legislation may have upset certain voters and contributed to the drop.

However, in March 2020 when the Coronavirus pandemic swept the globe, Governor Andrew Cuomo provided decisive leadership that many Americans expect from President Donald Trump and his administration during the global public health crisis that has scared individuals and spooked the financial markets.

Strategic leadership is coming from New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, whom associates say is rising to the unhappy occasion with a take-charge attitude they had expected and a comforting manner that has come as a surprise.

"One thing is sure. Andrew has now become the nation's governor."⁸

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Cuomo

⁸ <https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2020-03-23/how-coronavirus-made-andrew-cuomo-americas-governor>