

January 1, 2011

Cuomo Promises Emergency Plan on Finance Woes
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NY Times

ALBANY — Andrew Mark Cuomo became the 56th governor of New York on Saturday, promising to immediately take on the state's huge financial problems and to fight to limit taxes on homeowners across the state.

In his inaugural address, Mr. Cuomo said he would unveil an emergency financial plan this week — a month before his first budget proposal is due — and push aggressively for stronger ethics enforcement in Albany.

“There is no more time to waste,” Mr. Cuomo, 53, said in a 25-minute speech, his voice often rising. “It is a time for deeds, not words, and results, not rhetoric. It is time for a bold agenda and immediate action. There is no more waiting for tomorrow, and there are no more baby steps, my friends.”

Mr. Cuomo, a Democrat, pledged to approach his job with “constructive impatience,” shrink the size of the sprawling state government, and represent the interests of those who have lost faith in Albany.

He emphasized his plan to cap the growth of local property taxes, a particular concern to suburban and rural residents. That proposal is already setting off worry among local officials and some public-employee unions, who say that it will result in deep spending cuts in cities and towns.

Mr. Cuomo described residents as being imprisoned in their homes, which are losing value even as their tax bills keep climbing.

“Nothing is going up in their lives,” Mr. Cuomo said. “Their income isn't going up, their banking account isn't going up, their savings aren't going up. They can't afford the never-ending tax increases in the state of New York, and this state has no future if it is going to be the tax capital of the nation.”

His first moves as governor were symbolic: Mr. Cuomo declared that he would remove the concrete barriers that have surrounded the Capitol building since the aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks; within minutes of his speech, workers began loading the barriers onto a flatbed truck.

He also opened a historic hallway outside the governor's office that Gov. George E. Pataki had closed off to the public.

“To get into this Capitol is like running an obstacle course, and it shouldn't be,” Mr. Cuomo said. “People refer to the Capitol as a fort or as a bunker, and it is anything but. This is a beautiful monument to democracy, this building. This is the people's meeting

place, and they should be invited in. And today, my friends, we will reopen the Capitol, literally and figuratively.”

Mr. Cuomo is taking office at a time when the state faces daunting problems and the public expresses little confidence that its political leaders can solve them. A parade of government officials and lawmakers have admitted or been found guilty of abusing their office for personal gain; the governor and comptroller elected in 2006 resigned their offices amid scandal.

Mr. Cuomo must grapple with a \$9 billion budget deficit and a divided and perennially dysfunctional Legislature.

“People all across the state, when you mention state government, literally are shaking their heads,” he said. “Worse than no confidence, what they’re saying is no trust. The words ‘government in Albany’ have become a national punch line, and the joke is on us.”

Much remains in flux in Mr. Cuomo’s nascent administration. At least for now, Mr. Cuomo is relying on his predecessor’s budget director, and he has yet to fill the state’s top economic post.

Aides to Mr. Cuomo would not provide details about the financial plan he will present in an address to the Legislature on Wednesday; the governor referred to the proposal as an “emergency financial reinvention plan.” But in recent months, Mr. Cuomo has vowed to shrink the number of state agencies by one-fifth and to make substantial cuts to the state’s Medicaid program, the most costly in the nation.

To underscore the seriousness of the situation he confronts, Mr. Cuomo eschewed any galas after his inauguration, and instead held a cabinet meeting in the morning, before the ceremony, calling Saturday a regular working day.

“In my administration this is going to be the way it works,” he said. “When we actually do something and perform and help the people of New York State and make government function, then we’re going to have a big party and celebrate, and not before.”

Still, there were moments of warmth and humor. And interestingly, in an era when politicians often decry the culture of government, Mr. Cuomo embraced the state’s history, saying he was inspired by his father, former Gov. Mario M. Cuomo, and the men his father worked alongside. He cited former Gov. Hugh L. Carey; Stanley Fink, the former Assembly speaker, who died in 1997; and Warren M. Anderson, the former Senate majority leader, who died in 2007.

“I remember sitting there watching them, saying, you know what, maybe one day I could do this,” he said.

Mr. Cuomo was joined as he took the oath by his girlfriend, the Food Network star Sandra Lee; his three daughters; his mother, Matilda; and his father, who, he said, “taught me everything I know.”

The inauguration brought the extended Cuomo clan back to Albany, with nieces, nephews, siblings and cousins bearing a resemblance to the new governor roaming the halls of the Capitol. In his speech, Mr. Cuomo avoided reciting a roll call of his kin, explaining, “I have so many family members here today, if I start to point them out I’ll miss someone, and there’ll be a whole family disturbance come the next holiday time.”

Mr. Cuomo is also moving, at least part time, into the Executive Mansion, where his parents lived for a dozen years. Asked by a reporter after the ceremony whether it felt odd to be occupying his parents’ old bedroom, he responded, laughing: “I could answer that, but I won’t.”

Elizabeth A. Harris contributed reporting.