



METRO INSIDE ALBANY



# Cuomo 'on edge' as federal corruption probe continues

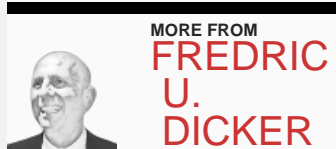
By Fredric U. Dicker

January 26, 2015 | 1:48am



Andrew Cuomo

Photo: AP



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Assembly Republican blocks coup effort against Sheldon Silver

Gov. Cuomo is "freaked-out and furious" over the bombshell criminal charges dropped on Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver last week — and "obsessed with fear" because of the ongoing federal corruption probe.

One source described Cuomo as "doubly enraged" by hard-driving Manhattan US Attorney Preet Bharara's decision to bring the five criminal corruption charges against Silver just hours after the governor delivered his State of the State address — and then, less than 24 hours after that, to indict Albany's "three men in a room" culture in which Cuomo is the lead player.

"Cuomo feels Preet just walked all over him," said the source.

Knowledgeable insiders, including law-enforcement experts, said it wasn't accidental that Bharara brought

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the charges against Silver just hours after Cuomo's State of the State.

"Prosecutors have a lot of discretion, and when they time a high-profile arrest in a way that steps all over Cuomo's speech, that's the use of discretion for a purpose," a former federal prosecutor told The Post.

And several sources described Cuomo — who along with his aides is being investigated by Bharara over the abrupt disbanding of the governor's Moreland Act commission on public corruption — as "on edge" over Bharara's ominous statement Friday that the public should "stay tuned" for more criminal charges to come.

"Andrew's been working the phones day and night, staying up into the early morning hours, making hundreds of calls in one day trying to find out what the hell is going on," a source close to the governor said.

Cuomo, who has retained a private lawyer, has enlisted several former federal and state-level prosecutors with

ties to Bharara's office including Steve Cohen, his former chief-of-staff, in an effort to find out Bharara's next move, the sources said.

"He's freaked-out, furious, and obsessed with fear, it's like a nightmare for him. The whole narrative he laid out for his second term has been derailed by Bharara," said a source in regular contact with the governor.

"The narrative has been taken over by Bharara and it's all about Albany's corruption, not Cuomo and his program for the state," the source said.

State political circles are abuzz with speculation that Bharara is seeking to determine if Cuomo had any knowledge of Silver's allegedly illegal outside income last spring when he agreed with Silver and Senate Republican Leader Dean Skelos to fold the commission.

The hair-pulling turmoil that has engulfed Assembly Democrats over the possible (and many believe likely) need to replace Silver as speaker hasn't been seen since Syracuse-area Assembly Majority Leader Michael Bragman unsuccessfully sought to oust Silver in 2000.

A half-dozen names of possible replacements are on lawmakers' lips and here, direct from a usually authoritative Assembly member, is a late bulletin on the maneuvering: "The Queens County organization is making calls for [Queens Assemblywoman] Cathy Nolan.

"A Queens/Bronx coalition would counterbalance a Brooklyn/Manhattan coalition under [Assemblymen] Joe Lentol [Brooklyn] and Keith Wright [the Manhattan Democratic chairman], with 30 votes each.

"Bronx County Chairman [Carl Heastie] is looking like the kingmaker here."

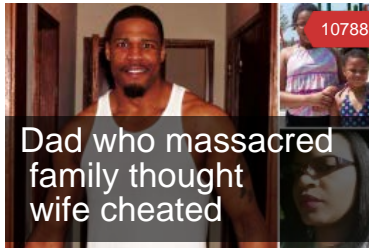
That said, a lot of smart money is on well-regarded Assembly Ways and Means Committee Chairman Herman "Denny" Farrell Jr. of Manhattan, a former state Democratic chairman, as a non-controversial successor to Silver, at least on a short-term "interim" basis.

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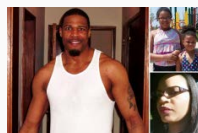
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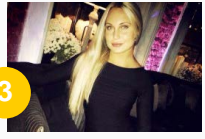
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