

Cuomo seeks staff pay records from Espada as part of probe

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ALBANY -- Attorney General Andrew Cuomo on Thursday subpoenaed the state Senate for work records from the several members of Senate Majority Leader Pedro Espada Jr.'s legislative staff who are also affiliated with Soundview HealthCare Network, the Bronx-based operation run by Espada.

On Tuesday, Cuomo announced a lawsuit against Espada that alleges he siphoned more than \$14 million from Soundview. On Wednesday, its offices were raided by state and federal investigators.

From the Senate, Cuomo's investigators want time sheets, hiring records and other data on the 10 employees, including lawyer Daniel Pagano, former chief of staff Andrew Yong and John Feliciano -- Espada's former assistant and, according to the Attorney General's Office, his uncle.

If a familial relationship between Feliciano and Espada can be proven, his hiring as a legislative employee could violate the anti-nepotism provisions of public officers law.

"We want to know where these people worked and when. We also want to know why they were hired and under what circumstances," Cuomo said.

"The Senate is reviewing personnel and travel records, and will satisfy the Attorney General's request once the documents have been collected," said Austin Shafran, spokesman for the Senate Majority Conference.

The Senate's immediate cooperation stands in contrast with its response to a recent subpoena from Inspector General Joseph Fisch's office, which is looking into the selection of Aqueduct Entertainment Group as the winning bidder in the contentious Aqueduct racino competition.

The chamber's argument in that case is that the inspector general, who is appointed by the governor, lacks jurisdiction over the Legislature, although that argument has not held sway in initial legal skirmishes. The attorney general, an independently elected official, does have authority to investigate the chamber.

Espada has denounced Cuomo's suit as politically motivated payback for Espada's role in last summer's Senate coup. Despite calls for him to step down, Espada continues to retain his title and stipend as majority leader, a position conferred on him at the end of the coup.