

Governor urges patience

Cuomo says legislation on rent rules, tax cap is complicated, takes time

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ALBANY -- An earlier declaration that lawmakers were "on the cusp of historic progress" drowned in the muck of details Wednesday, as legislators continued to haggle over the actual bills needed to enact a property tax cap, legalize same-sex marriage, relieve state mandates and renew rent regulations in New York City.

Capitol hallways were jammed by screaming, singing demonstrators pressuring senators over the same-sex marriage bill. Republicans who control that chamber again punted a decision on bringing it to the floor, citing ongoing efforts to amend the legislation to clarify religious exemptions.

As frustration grew -- the legislative session was set to end Monday -- Cuomo urged patience.

"The rent regulation, property tax mandate relief bill is a complicated bill," Cuomo said, referring to omnibus legislation lawmakers have called "the Big Ugly." "If it takes a little bit more time, it takes a little bit more time. I would much rather get it right than rush it."

Lawmakers are poised to approve a new process for siting power plants in the state, paving the way for the construction of new facilities. The last siting law, known as Article X, expired in 2003. The bill also made it easier for homeowners to finance energy-savings work by placing the payment plan on their regular utility bill.

Power producers and environmentalists lauded the bill. "I think it is a balanced approach, and that's really what we were striving for," said Assemblyman [Kevin Cahill](#), a Kingston Democrat who chairs the chamber's energy committee.

But most of the day's discussions focused on unfinished bills. Assembly Speaker [Sheldon Silver](#) and Senate Majority Leader [Dean Skelos](#) met with Cuomo for 90 minutes during the middle of the day, discussing the Big Ugly and the same-sex marriage amendments.

"We're closing the few outstanding technical issues on rent regulations," said Skelos, R-Long Island. Both he and Silver said the proposed property tax cap follows the outline announced in late May: annual increases more than 2 percent or the rate of inflation (whichever is less) must be approved by 60 percent of voters, minus some pension costs. It will last five years, the leaders said, while rent regulations will last four years.

The mandate relief aspects of the Big Ugly remained fluid Wednesday, as negotiators picked from proposals in a Senate bill and in the report of Cuomo's Mandate Relief Redesign Team.

This likely won't include the big-ticket items sought by local governments and school boards. "They're picking and choosing," said Assemblyman [Marc Molinaro](#), R-Tivoli. "There's an earnest effort to address mandate relief items that don't cause controversy."

Negotiations over the same-sex marriage amendments continued during the afternoon, Cuomo said, and appear close to resolution. Silver, D-Manhattan, said he saw a draft of the Republican-driven tweaks and agreed to the changes in concept.

Cuomo said the amendments were not directed at undecided senators -- 31 have publicly declared their support for the same-sex marriage bill, one vote shy of the tally needed for passage -- but rather for the Republican conference to feel "comfortable" with bringing the measure to the floor. Skelos again said a vote has not been scheduled on the bill.

Lobbying continued on both sides of the same-sex marriage debate. [Conservative Party](#) Chairman [Mike Long](#) issued a terse statement urging against a vote. Celebrity chef [Mario Batali](#) and Broadway star [Audra McDonald](#) visited the Capitol to urge passage. Church groups sang hymns. Gay activists shouted, chanted and gave out flowers.

"Every day that goes by is another victory for traditional marriage," said Rev. [Jason McGuire](#), an evangelical Christian who says his religion defines marriage as between a man and a woman. "Every day Republican senators are seeing more of their base and more opponents."

But Cuomo remained optimistic, even while acknowledging the same-sex marriage vote won't take place until the Big Ugly is printed and passed.

"I think this is great progress, and you want to get to something else -- I get that," he told reporters hungry for details on the fate of same-sex marriage. "But this chapter is a very powerful chapter for the state of New York."

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'Power NY' Act

The major elements of the bill include:

Consumers will be able to repay loans for energy efficiency improvements on their monthly utility bills.

New power plants will be subject to a 12-month review, as they were under a previous siting law that expired in 2003.

All plants, including wind energy farms, generating more than 25 megawatts of electricity are subject to the siting process. The previous threshold was 80 megawatts.

Power producers would be required to study the impact of their project on "environmental justice," a provision that seeks to prevent unwanted plants in low-income areas.

Power producers must provide money for an "intervenor fund," which relevant community groups could access to raise questions about their proposals.