

Hochul Wins Backing of N.Y. Democratic Leader for 2022 Race

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- ▶ Chairman Jacobs was one of last to call for Cuomo resignation
 - ▶ Jacobs said Hochul support is 'best for the Democratic party'
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The leader of New York's Democratic Party endorsed Governor Kathy Hochul as the party's nominee for governor for 2022.

Democratic Committee Chairman Jay Jacobs, during a webcast press conference on Long Island, said he was speaking for himself and not the other committee members, who will make their intentions known at the nominating convention in February.

Jacobs, who was appointed by former Governor Andrew Cuomo, was a stalwart supporter of the scandal-plagued governor almost to the end. The chairman was one of the last remaining Democratic leaders to call for Cuomo's resignation, with his statement following the release of a report from state Attorney General Letitia James that corroborated 11 allegations of sexual harassment against Cuomo.

Cuomo has denied the claims. The three-term Democrat resigned under pressure on Aug. 23.

Jacobs "is switching his loyalty from one incumbent governor to another," said Gerald Benjamin, a distinguished professor of political science at the [State University of New York at New Paltz](#).

Jacobs was very close to Cuomo, and even helped him make it more difficult for third parties to get on the ballot through changes to election law, Benjamin said. Endorsing Hochul early could help him secure a relationship with her, he said.

"I think this should be read more in terms of his role in the party down the road," Benjamin said.

Hochul, the former lieutenant governor who took over from Cuomo, has said from her first day that she plans to run in 2022, but has only a short window of time in which to prove herself.

“It is best for the Democratic party for us to be as unified as possible,” Jacobs said.

Field of Dreams

The announcement comes less than a week after New York City Public Advocate Jumaane Williams formed a committee to explore a bid for governor. Other potential Democratic candidates include James and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio.

Williams, on Twitter, said he was “undeterred” by the announcement.

Jacobs “has endorsed in a primary for governor (where he should be impartial) before the rest of us even had a chance to make our case,” Williams said.

During his press conference, Jacobs said multiple candidates could tear the party apart and weaken its chances. He said he selected Hochul because she “can do the job,” and because she can win the election. He described her as a “pragmatic progressive” and a moderate, adding that she can help those down-ballot. “She has earned our support,” he said.

By publicly announcing his support, Jacobs is “sending the message for other candidates to stay out,” Democratic strategist Na’ilah Amaru said in an email.

“Whether this strategy works will become clear by February,” she said.

“Also, if potential candidates continue to publicly express interest despite not having support from the Party chair, it may reflect that a significant number of committee member votes are undecided, particularly as many are waiting on James’ decision to run.”

And it won’t necessarily kick contenders out of the race, Amaru said. James, for example, has a history of running without support from the Democratic establishment; it’s how she won her seat in the City Council, Amaru said.

Cuomo Email

Jacobs said he reached out to Cuomo to give him a heads-up about his announcement. Asked whether the former governor planned to run in 2022, Jacobs said, “He has never in any of his conversations specifically said to me that he is looking to primary for the governorship.”

Jacobs said it’s “a bad idea” for Cuomo to run again, adding that the state needs time. Jacobs said it would be a “very bad big mistake” that wouldn’t be successful.

Prior to Jacobs’s press conference, Cuomo sent an email paid for by “Andrew Cuomo for New York, Inc.” In the email, Cuomo maintained his innocence and said he fears the state is in a dangerous moment.

“We are seeing extremists and political expediency rule the day and ‘the tail is wagging the dog’ in the Democratic Party,” he wrote. “Government incompetence, political slogans and pandering are prevailing,”

The state’s Republican Party, also looking to avoid a primary, in June selected U.S. Representative Lee Zeldin as its presumptive nominee. Other potential Republican candidates who have said they still intended to run include former Westchester County Executive and 2014 gubernatorial nominee Rob Astorino; Andrew Giuliani, son of former New York City Mayor and former President Donald Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani; Lewis County Sheriff Mike Carpinelli; and Derrick Gibson, a Queens construction consultant.