

Cuomo just says no to favorite-son hopes



NATIONAL

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Gov. Mario Cuomo slammed the door Monday on an effort to make him a favorite-son candidate in the state's April 7 Democratic presidential primary.

Cuomo said in a statement that "because of the current intensity of the state's fiscal difficulties, and for the good of the party," he wouldn't be a favorite-son candidate.

"The governor is sending a clear signal, for the second time now, that he's not a candidate" for president, spokeswoman Anne Crowley said.

Crowley also said Cuomo would ask to have his name removed from the Georgia presidential primary ballot. Georgia officials listed Cuomo when he was considering running.

Cuomo's statement came less than two hours after the credit rating on some New York state bonds was lowered because of the inability of the governor and legislative leaders to agree on a plan for addressing state budget shortfalls.

Also Monday, Harold Ickes, chairman of Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton's presidential campaign in New York state, said Cuomo "owes it to the party and the rest of the people in the race" to say if he would be a favorite-son candidate.

John Connorton, head of Nebraska Sen. Bob Kerrey's New York campaign, agreed that a Cuomo favorite-son effort would have made life more difficult for the announced candidates.

Cuomo announced on Dec. 20 that he wouldn't run for president. But since then, efforts have sprung up to get him into the race. On Sunday, several New York Democratic county chairmen met to plan a Cuomo favorite-son candidacy.

State Democratic Chairman John Marino, a longtime Cuomo adviser, said the aim was to "unite" the New York party, but others at the meeting said they hoped it would be a springboard to get Cuomo into the presidential race.

Cuomo said Monday that he had asked Marino "to inform the State Committee members and all others, that I gratefully and respectfully decline to be considered."

In addition to the favorite-son effort, a national draft-Cuomo effort has been started by Chicago-based political consultant Philip Krone, and Cuomo supporters in New Hampshire are trying to mount a write-in effort for that state's Feb. 18 primary.

Cuomo had warned for several weeks that his state was in danger of having its credit rating dropped because he was deadlocked with Republican legislators in resolving persistent budget problems.

Moody's Investors Service lowered the credit rating from "A" to "Baa1" on the state's tax-supported, long-term debt. The action affected two-thirds of the state's outstanding debt, but not the state's general obligation bonds, the main gauge of a state's fiscal health.

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