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## Andrew Cuomo, liberal hero?

By Adam Serwer

How progressive is New York Governor Andrew Cuomo?

Cuomo is getting a lot of praise from liberals for his leadership in getting marriage equality legislation passed. It's certainly a monumental accomplishment—one that will immeasurably improve the lives of New Yorkers. His success has also boosted speculation about a presidential run in 2016. Equality Matters' Richard Socarides [told Politico](#) that Cuomo's success on marriage equality establishes him as the most important progressive leader of our party, setting him up very well for 2016."

The irony of Cuomo as a progressive champion, though, is that until recently he was being praised most enthusiastically by conservatives. Liberals in New York were furious over his budget deal, which [included](#) property tax caps but cut funding for Medicaid and public education. Cuomo deserves credit even from liberals for taking on the prison guards' union in the quest to close unneeded prison facilities. But overall, Democrats in Albany felt that he was too willing to slash public spending, rather than raise taxes, and until recently, the best place to find gushing praise for Cuomo was from conservative writers at National Review.

"Looking for a tax-cutting, budget-slashing, fiscally conservative governor? How about Andrew Cuomo?" [wrote](#) the Cato Institute's Michael Tanner back in February.

"Cuomo's performance thus far has advanced the cause of limited government in the Empire State far more than did his past three predecessors," [enthused](#) Deroy Murdock in April.

Cuomo in 2016? Reihan Salam can get down with that. "Imagine a presidential election pitting a budget-cutting Democratic governor against a budget-cutting Republican governor," Salam [wrote](#). "That would be, in my view, an excellent outcome for fiscal conservatives."

Cuomo's success in paring down New York's budget and winning fights against public workers has a sort of Nixon-to-China element to it. As a Democrat, he can take on elements of the Democratic coalition without earning the kind of ire reserved for Republican governors like Scott Walker or Chris Christie.

As Eric Alterman [wrote](#) shortly after marriage equality bill passed, Cuomo is "a perfect symbol of the transition of American liberalism from an ideology focused on the standing of working people to one based on issues of social and cultural freedom that do not

interfere with anyone's ability to make money hand over fist without paying too much of it in taxes.”

I don't know if liberalism as a whole is really undergoing that transition. The Democratic Party has always been a fragile coalition of competing interests, and it's certainly not a new phenomenon for working people to get shafted in the process. But Alterman's critique does seem to apply to Cuomo. It would be hard to characterize Cuomo's overall record as progressive, at least as we've come to understand what that word means.

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