

Nixon: Cuomo wears two masks

BY YANCEY ROY

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ALBANY — Actress Cynthia Nixon blasted Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo on Monday as “Andrew the Bully,” a “wannabe Republican” and a member of the “old boys club” ruling New York politics.

The former “Sex and the City” star, holding her first capital city news conference since declaring her bid for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination, said Cuomo has failed to clean up corruption as promised. She accused him of worsening the inequities in school funding.

And she said Cuomo should get an Oscar for playing a Democrat while tacitly supporting Republican control of the State Senate, which keeps progressive proposals blocked.

“It’s all scripted. He deserves an Oscar for his performance,” Nixon said, referring to state budget negotiations going on just blocks away. “In New York City, he puts on an entire Broadway show to parade around as a progressive Democrat leading the resistance. But in Albany, he is deftly handing power over to the party of Donald Trump.”

Cuomo’s campaign didn’t im-



Nixon, at an Albany news conference Monday, called Cuomo a member of the “old boys club.”

mediately comment. Previously, he has belittled her level of star status and has sought to counter her on education by noting that New York spends more per pupil than any other state does. He also has been in-

creasingly critical of Trump on a host of issues.

Nixon pilloried Cuomo’s leadership style and contended that New Yorkers are “sick of being bullied.”

“We’ve all seen it. Andrew

the Bully,” she said. “He bullies other elected officials. He bullies anyone who criticizes him. . . . It reminds me of the behavior we see from Donald Trump everyday.”

Nixon said the only way to

deal with a bully is to stand up and “send a message loud and clear that you will not be bullied.”

Nixon was in Albany to meet with liberal education advocates just as elected officials try to finalize the state budget.

She said she backed a proposal by the Democratic-led Assembly to boost education funding by \$1.5 billion, compared with Cuomo’s proposed \$769 million. (Newsday reported Sunday that lawmakers were close to a deal to raise aid by \$1 billion.)

She backed the property-tax cap, but she said the state needed to move away from property taxes as the main funding mechanism for schools. Nixon also said she backed the Assembly’s idea of raising taxes on those making \$5 million or more annually, something Cuomo opposes.

She bashed Cuomo on corruption, noting the governor’s former top aide, Joseph Percoco, was recently convicted in a bribery scheme.

But she declined to criticize New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, a friend of hers, whose name has been dragged into a Nassau County corruption trial.

Applications taken for state scholarship

BY KESHIA CLUKEY

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The application period for Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo’s Excelsior scholarship is now open for the 2018-19 school year, the governor’s office announced Monday.

The program, which began last fall, provides in-state tuition dollars to middle-class students attending the state’s public two- and four-year colleges and universities. Students must take 30 credits per year, remain on track for an on-time graduation and come from families earning up to \$110,000 annually — up from the \$100,000 in the program’s first year.

Current recipients do not need to reapply, according to a news release.

About 22,000 students were set to receive the scholarship in fall 2017, as long as they adhered to its requirements, the state announced in September.

The application period comes as most high school seniors are in their college decision-making process — likely making for a smoother rollout than last year.

The scholarship originally was approved as part of the 2017 state budget and due to its rushed rollout, the application period ended up taking place during summer months when most students are on break.

The application period for the 2018-19 school year will run through July 23. The application is available at hesc.ny.gov/excelsior.

TREATMENT GROUPS, DRUGMAKERS FIGHT OPIOID TAX

BY YANCEY ROY

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ALBANY — Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo’s push to tax opioid prescriptions is getting strong resistance from two distinct quarters: manufacturers and addiction-treatment advocates.

Advocates point out the governor’s budget doesn’t specifically channel all the money that would be raised from a charge of 2 cents per milligram into addiction services. Manufacturers say the charge eventually would be borne by patients and the state’s Medicaid program, despite Cuomo’s vow otherwise.

The factions are lobbying at the state Capitol to change or block the governor’s proposal as lawmakers are moving to finalize New York’s budget for the 2018-19 fiscal year.

Advocates are “dismayed” that just 20 percent of the estimated \$127 million generated by the tax would go to “pre-



Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo

vention, treatment, recovery and harm reduction” programs, John Coppola, head of the New York Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers, told legislators earlier this month. The group would support the tax — if it goes into a dedicated “lock box” for treatment, it said.

At the same time, the pharmaceuticals industry is touting a survey that says the costs would result in higher insurance and medical costs. The hike also could fall on the state’s Medic-

aid program, which covers some patients on opioids.

“Most, if not all, of the cost of the proposed opioid tax will be borne by consumers and, as a result, the proposed law is likely to have a number of unintended consequences,” said Lewis Davis, a Union College economics professor, co-author of the study.

Cuomo and lawmakers are supposed to adopt a state budget by Sunday, which is the constitutional deadline for a spending plan. But their practical deadline is even shorter because they are trying to finish by Friday — the start of lawmakers’ Easter-Passover holiday break.

Cuomo has blamed the pharmaceutical companies for fueling the opioid crisis and says they should pick up more of the costs of addiction treatment. His budget director has said manufacturers would “eat” the added cost of the tax.