

The Ithaca JOURNAL

Candidate Cuomo drives into Ithaca

Leading Democrat for governor doesn't commit on hydrofracking

By Stacey Shackford • sshackford@gannett.com • August 19, 2010, 3:40 pm

New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo received a warm welcome to [Ithaca](#) Thursday, embraced by about 200 gas drilling protesters who surrounded the Women's Community Building as he rallied a capacity crowd inside about his plans for Albany reform.

There were cheers when his RV pulled into the parking lot, 45 minutes late, with the Cuomo [behind the wheel](#) and his three daughters in the back.

It was the first stop of the day, but one of many in his "[Drive](#) for a New NY" tour. Part vacation, part gubernatorial campaign, Cuomo joked that he spent the drive down from Geneva trying to explain the history and ethics of Ithaca, where "people like to question authority."

"And then we pulled into town and it was all said for me," Cuomo said.

The message from the protesters was clear: don't allow hydraulic fracturing here; ditch the draft environmental impact study and start again.

Those who did manage to squeeze their way inside and swarm the candidate as he left the stage were no doubt disappointed by his response: "I understand your fears, but I want to get the studies, get the facts. Until we know exactly what's happening, we don't do anything."

Most of his 15-minutes at the podium were devoted to pushing his reform agenda.



SIMON WHEELER / Staff Photo New York State Attorney General Andrew Cuomo speaks Thursday at midday in the Women's Community Building in Ithaca as he campaigns to be elected governor. (Staff)

He vowed to clean up the ethical mess in Albany, get the state's fiscal house in order and regain the trust of its people.

Cuomo said he opposed raising taxes, both on property and income, arguing that the state must deal with its spending rather than rely on raising revenue.

He said he would start by downsizing, both internally and throughout the state, as a proponent of municipal mergers and consolidation.

"There's around 1,000 state agencies now -- we think. No one is really sure. When you don't even know how many agencies you have, you have too many agencies," Cuomo said.

A leader in several major reform movements, including women's suffrage and workers' rights, New York must "raise the progressive beacon once again," Cuomo said.

He tried to appeal to area activists to funnel their enthusiasm and desire for change into his campaign.

"You want to know when things are going to change? They are going to change when the people of this state demand change," Cuomo said. "You know this better in Ithaca than anyone: Activism counts. We need to mobilize, we need to make people get engaged. Politicians respond to the people; it's political Darwinism. The politicians will follow if the people speak. I will do my part but I need you to do your part."