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# Opinion | The Cuomo Covid Coverup

*The Editorial Board*

5-6 minutes



**New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo in January.**

Photo: Hans Pennink/Associated Press

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Three months ago New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo was awarded an Emmy for “his leadership during the Covid-19 pandemic and his masterful use of TV to inform and calm people around the world.” Turns out the Emmys had the right actor—but the wrong performance. Increasingly it looks like Mr. Cuomo’s real act was to keep people from finding out how many people in his state’s nursing homes died from Covid-19.

On Thursday the New York Post reported that Melissa DeRosa, the Governor’s top aide, [admitted](#) to Democratic leaders that the state had deliberately kept the true numbers from them. In a Wednesday conference call, Ms. DeRosa told Democrats the Cuomo administration rejected a legislative request for the figures last August because Donald Trump was tweeting that “we killed everyone in nursing homes” and was directing “the Department of Justice to do an investigation into us.”

As Ms. DeRosa put it, “Basically, we froze.” The administration wasn’t sure, she said, if any information it released to state lawmakers or the Department of Justice “was going to be used against us” or “if there was going to be an investigation.”

Nursing home deaths are a sensitive issue for Mr. Cuomo because of a March 25 health department directive that barred these homes from rejecting people because they had Covid-19. The Associated Press reports that 9,056 recovering patients were sent into nursing homes after the directive, more than 40% higher than what the state had previously reported.

In January state Attorney General Letitia James released a [report](#) on an investigation into complaints about how the nursing homes handled Covid-19. Two findings stand out. First, that “a larger number of nursing home residents died from COVID-19 than” the official data reflected. Second, that the March 25 directive “requiring the admission of COVID-19 patients into nursing homes may have put residents at increased risk of harm in some facilities and may have obscured the data available to assess that risk.”

Perhaps many decisions that look bad today were made in good faith at the time. But coming as it does after the attorney general’s report, Ms. DeRosa’s admission that the Cuomo administration hid nursing home deaths smacks of a coverup. Meanwhile, the people of New York, especially those who lost loved ones in nursing homes to the pandemic, still lack an honest accounting of what went wrong and why.

Mr. Cuomo dominates New York state politics, and he dismisses critics and punishes opponents without challenge. Republicans are a rump minority in the Legislature in what has become a one-party state, like California and Illinois.

That leaves the task of accountability to others. The questions now are whether Democrats in Albany have what it takes to do their jobs and hold hearings on the coverup, whether state and federal prosecutors will investigate and prosecute if called for, and whether the media that so cheered Mr. Cuomo through his Covid-19 press conferences will hold him to the same standard they held Mr. Trump?

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WSJ Opinion: The Progressive Push to Redefine 'Our Democracy'

Wonder Land: When progressives single out threats to "our democracy," what they mean is their democracy. Images: Everett Collection/AFP/Getty Images Composite: Mark Kelly

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