

Pay-to-play Hochul's keeping up the worst Cuomo tradition

By Post Editorial Board



Gov. Kathy Hochul has kept some Andrew Cuomo-era traditions in place, including the act of pay-to-play. Spencer Platt/Getty Images

Gov. Kathy Hochul continues to embrace and extend the worst traditions of her disgraced predecessor Andrew Cuomo.

This week brought news that a Medicaid services firm owned by Russ Maxwell and wife Morgan McDole has [garnered](#) eight state contracts worth a whopping \$403.7 million. And the couple are big-time donors to Hochul (and Cuomo).

Sure looks like a classic example of pay to play, Albany style: State rules,

insanely, don't forbid or cap fat contributions to the governor from those bidding on state contracts her minions oversee. (New York City caps donations from bidding firms and contractors at \$400.)

Notably, Maxwell's campaign giving was markedly light until 2012, when he kicked \$25,000 to Cuomo and soon saw his firm win contracts or have them renewed. Maxwell's given Hochul more than \$32,000 since 2018. McDole, more than \$52,000 just over the past year (plus \$20,000 to the state Democratic Party).

All this echoes the ugly story around Hochul's COVID "emergency power" suspension of some state purchasing laws, which let the state pay another medical firm (whose CEO's family had given nearly \$300,000 to her campaign) a stunning \$637 million for testing devices.



Russ Maxwell is a donor to Hochul and has been a donor to Cuomo in the past.

That kind of return on an investment is only possible in the Empire State.

Hochul's made plenty of shady moves around campaign cash: failing to properly attribute corporate donations and possibly fast-tracking a liquor license for a campaign donor. And don't forget the fact that her husband just happens to be a senior executive at the firm likely to keep the concession contract at Hochul's massive Bills-stadium boondoggle.

Not to mention the insane rush for a Penn Station deal that *doesn't* upgrade

the station, but *does* serve the mega-development dreams of Hochul megadonor Steven Roth.

The gov's vow to bring a new era of transparency to Albany has long lain in tatters. The only thing that's transparent *here* is Hochul's slimy eagerness to please her powerful donors.