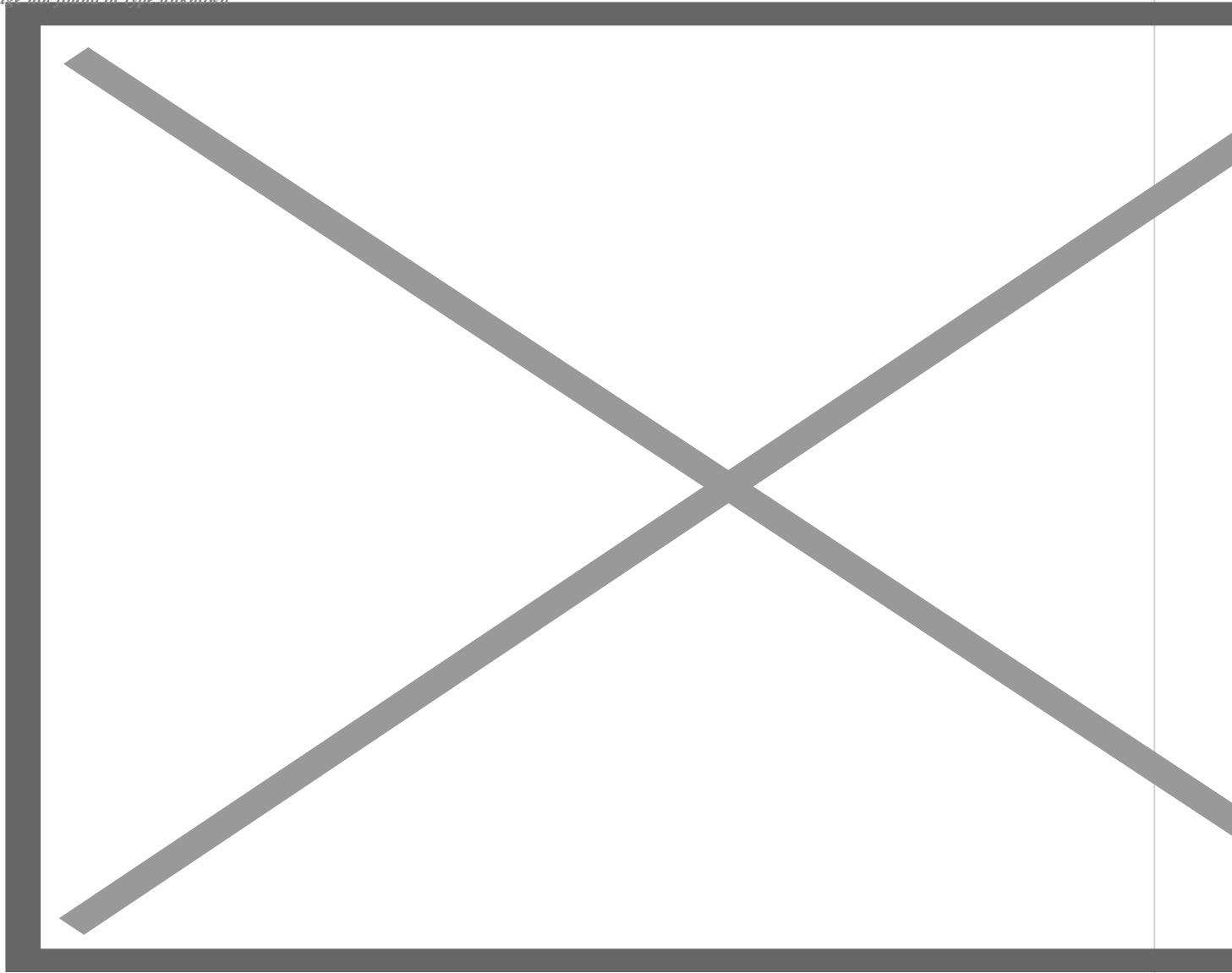


New York governor resigns over sexual harassment scandal

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Albany, August 10 (RHC)-- New York Governor Andrew Cuomo has resigned one week after an investigation concluded he sexually harassed 11 women. His shocking announcement came minutes

after his lawyer again flatly denied claims that he had sexually harassed anyone during the Democrat's three terms in office.

Andrew Cuomo said Tuesday he will resign effective in two weeks because of a sexual harassment scandal that has crippled his administration, saying he did not want to distract the state from important work to be done.

The announcement came in a livestream from his Manhattan office came minutes after his lawyer again flatly denied claims that he had sexually harassed anyone during his three terms in office. Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul will replace Cuomo, a fellow Democrat, and become the Empire State's first female governor.

Cuomo's resignation comes one week after a damning report issued by the state Attorney General's office found he had sexually harassed at least 11 current and former staffers, including a state police trooper assigned to his protective detail and women outside of government.

It also comes as at least five district attorney's offices around the state have begun probes of possible crimes by Cuomo against some of the women. The 63-year-old governor said he was motivated to step down to avoid months of distraction for the state, which is continuing to deal with the COVID pandemic, from an all-but-certain impeachment over the allegations.

"Given the circumstances, the best way I can help now is if I step aside and let government get back to government," Cuomo said. "And therefore that is what I'll do, because I work for you, and doing the right thing, is doing the right thing for you."

While continuing to deny some of the more serious claims, Cuomo conceded he had offended some of his accusers with what he considered friendly or incidental physical contact and comments that were normal for men of his generation.

"In my mind, I have never crossed the line with anyone," he said. "But I didn't realize the extent to which the line has been redrawn."

A week ago Tuesday, Attorney General Letitia James, herself a Democrat, said Cuomo had broken state and federal laws with his conduct, which she asserted included unwanted touching and remarks that made the women feel uncomfortable.

In a CBS News interview that aired Monday, Cuomo executive assistant Brittany Commisso described how the governor had groped her breast in one incident, and then rubbed her rear end during another encounter in the Executive Mansion in Albany after he suggested they take a selfie photo together.

"What he did to me was a crime. He broke the law," Commisso said.

In a statement after Cuomo's announcement, James said: "Today closes a sad chapter for all of New York, but it's an important step towards justice." "I thank Governor Cuomo for his contributions to our state. The ascension of our Lieutenant Governor, Kathy Hochul, will help New York enter a new day," James added.

"We must continue to build on the progress already made and improve the lives of New Yorkers in every corner of the state. I know our state is in good hands with Lieutenant Governor Hochul at the helm, and I look forward to continuing to work with her."

Cuomo's decision to quit follows calls for his resignation from a wave of fellow Democrats, including Biden and members of the state's congressional delegation — among them, Sens. Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand — and members of New York's legislature.

On Sunday, Cuomo's top aide, Melissa DeRosa, who had been accused in the AG's report of being a key figure in an effort to smear one of the governor's most prominent accusers, resigned.

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