

Content courtesy of *CBS New York*



Experts: Despite Zephyr Teachout's Primary Showing, Andrew Cuomo Shouldn't Panic

September 10, 2014 4:03 PM



Gov. Andrew Cuomo votes in the Democratic primary at the Presbyterian Church of Mount Kisco, N.Y.,

on Sept. 9, 2014. (credit: Gov. Andrew Cuomo's Office)

Gov. Andrew Cuomo moved a step closer to re-election Tuesday by winning his Democratic primary, but it was closer than many expected.

With 98 percent of the precincts reporting Wednesday, Cuomo had 59.9 percent of the vote, while challenger Zephyr Teachout, a virtual unknown, picked up 33.1 percent.

Doug Muzzio, who teaches public affairs at Baruch College, told WCBS 880's Peter Haskell people shouldn't read too much into Teachout's showing "because you're in a primary election, where you've got a very, very low turnout, where activists tend to have a disproportionate share of the electorate."

Unofficial election results show Tuesday's turnout was just under 10 percent, low even for a gubernatorial primary.

Muzzio did, however, say Cuomo's support was "a bit of an embarrassment."



"I mean, here he is \$35 million in the bank, poll numbers high against a candidate who's got no money," Muzzio said.

Cuomo spent much of the primary campaign snubbing Teachout, a Fordham law professor, refusing to debate and even turning away from her when she approached him at a recent parade in New York City. His campaign unsuccessfully sought to kick her off the ballot by challenging her residency. The tactics only served to embolden Teachout.

"I think he thought if he ignored me, I would not exist," Teachout told WCBS 880 on Wednesday. "But I think, as we saw through yesterday's results, that maybe it's that it's a new social media era. Maybe 20 years ago, just ignoring, I wouldn't exist. But we had so many people who were paying attention.

"I hope the lesson that many people take from this is you can't ignore voters," she added. "You can't ignore debates."

Cuomo, however, issued a statement congratulating Teachout and Tim Wu — who lost to the governor's running mate, Kathy Hochul, in the Democratic primary for lieutenant governor — for "running a spirited campaign, engaging in the democratic process, and having the courage to make their voices heard."

Cuomo now faces Republican Rob Astorino, the Westchester County executive, in November's general election.

"I think you saw a repudiation (of Cuomo) by his own party last night," Astorino told Talk 1300 Radio on Wednesday. "There is no passion whatsoever for Andrew Cuomo."

Green Party candidate Howie Hawkins said disaffected Democrats should support him in the November election. Hawkins finished third in the 2010 race.

"We will work to win the vote of all the principled progressives who invested their hopes in the Teachout campaign," he said.

While some wonder if Teachout's showing should serve as a warning to the governor in the general election, political expert Gerald Benjamin of SUNY New Paltz said he doesn't think so.

"He's not at risk because those voters (who supported Teachout) either stay home or vote for him," he said.

Cuomo remains ahead of Astorino in fundraising, and polls give him a 2-to-1 lead.. While Cuomo's centrism may have caused him problems with primary voters, it's more likely to appeal to more moderate general election voters.

Former Gov. David Paterson, now the chairman of the state Democratic Committee, sought to minimize the significance of the primary while playing up Cuomo's work to pass same-sex marriage and gun control measures.

"Gov. Cuomo's record is one we as a party can be proud of because he had the courage to make the right decisions, even if they came with some political cost," he said.