

Wives in Short Supply Among New York's Newly Elected Pols

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Governor-elect Andrew Cuomo, Attorney General-elect Eric Schneiderman and Comptroller Tom DiNapoli are all unwed.

DNAinfo Reporter/Producer

MANHATTAN — New York's newly crowned leaders have something more in common than their party: they're all single — or at least unmarried — men.

Unlike the stereotypical politician of old, with a supportive wife and gaggle of smiling kids, New York has elected a crop of bachelors to lead the state.

Like Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Governor-elect Andrew Cuomo is a divorced dad with a long-term live-in girlfriend who has a vibrant career of her own. Attorney General-elect Eric Schneiderman is divorced and currently single, while Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli has never been married and has no kids.

The coincidence is "unusual," said Anthony Joseph Eksterowicz, a political science professor at James Madison University who has written extensively about First Wives.

"There's always somebody that has a wife," Eksterowicz said.

New York University urban policy Professor Mitchell Moss, a former Bloomberg advisor, said he's not surprised by the fact. While being married was once a requirement for public office, he said attitudes have changed.

"I think there's been a norm breakthrough," he said.

City College women's studies Professor Joyce Gelb said that being single is now no longer a serious hindrance when it comes to running for public office.

"I think it's always a good campaign ploy to show your big happy family, but I think it's become much less relevant," she said.

Nonetheless, there are perks and drawbacks to being unhitched in office.

On the positive side, no spouse means no risk of an adultery scandal that could derail a career — or not, considering the state's recent history.

Former Gov. Eliot Spitzer was forced to step down after news broke that had been a frequent client of a high-end escort ring, while Gov. David Paterson has [admitted to numerous trysts](#), including an affair with one woman on the state's payroll.

Former Mayor Rudy Giuliani also survived a cheating scandal, which included [allegations that he'd used city money](#) to protect his lover and travel to see her.

Single status can also be a good fit with political life, said Hunter College Political Science Chair Ken Sherrill, who studies gender and politics.

"You're on the road. You're working from early morning to late at night. Other people constantly feel they have a claim on you. It's difficult," he said.

But without a first wife or husband, an official also loses an important partner, especially in the Governor's Mansion, where wives have traditionally served a key supportive role and taken on causes.

Michelle Paterson, for instance, used her background in health care to [spearhead fitness and healthy food initiatives](#) in state schools, while Spitzer's wife, Silda Wall Spitzer, founded [Children for Children](#), a kids' volunteering organization.

Cuomo's girlfriend, Food Network star Sandra Lee, stood dutifully by his side while he voted near their Mt. Kisco home and applauded behind him as he made his victory speech later that night.

But like Bloomberg's long-term partner, Diana Taylor, Lee will have no official role in his administration, spokesman Josh Vlasto [told the Daily News](#).

"Sandra would never expect any taxpayer dollar to support the contributions she makes nor would she want to burden the state in any way," he told the paper.

Vlasto declined to comment further on Lee's role to DNAinfo.

Mayor Bloomberg has run Gracie Mansion without a traditional first spouse — a concept he has long dismissed.

"The concept of 'corporate wife' or 'first spouse' really turns me off," Bloomberg [wrote in his book](#),

"Bloomberg by Bloomberg."

"No one actually needs to know the inner workings of their spouse's place of employment, nor should he or she have a ceremonial role in representing the company, or even our government," he wrote.

Eksterowicz said that if Lee does decide against First Lady duties, Cuomo will need to find someone to fill that role.

"Someone is going to have to step up and become a surrogate," he said.

Gelb said she thinks Cuomo's children or his mother, former First Lady Matilda, could take the lead.

The administration could also consider hiring a social secretary to assume some of those duties, Eksterowicz said.

Either way, "We're in uncharted waters here," he said.

But for Moss, what's more surprising than the fact that so many of New York's Albany-bound officials are unmarried, is that they're all are men.

While Connecticut, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Michigan, and many other states have had female governors, New York has not.

"When will a woman be elected here?" Moss asked. "It's just shocking."