

New ethics panel pursuing charges against Cuomo over book deal, former governor suing in response

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Former Gov. Andrew Cuomo is suing New York's new ethics panel, which is pursuing ethics charges related to his pandemic-era book deal.

The new iteration of New York's ethics watchdog is pursuing ethics charges against Andrew Cuomo, leading the former governor to sue the panel in response.

The Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government (COELIG) is picking up ethics charges first levied by its predecessor panel, the Joint Commission on Public Ethics (JCOPE). The original charges allege Cuomo used false pretenses to secure permission to write his memoir "American Crisis", and later ordered state employees to work on the book.

Cuomo, who continues to maintain that senior employees appropriately indicated their work on their timesheets, filed a lawsuit in Albany County Supreme Court Tuesday asking courts to deem COELIG unconstitutional.

Cuomo's [lawsuit](#) argues that the structure of the new ethics panel removes powers allowed to the governor by the state constitution, specifically surrounding the process of appointing and removing members of COELIG.

"In this way, the Act recognizes (even as it transgresses) the dictates of separation of powers that inhere when one branch of government is subjected to the disciplinary authority of another," attorneys for Cuomo write in the complaint. "Indeed, in light of those separation of powers principles, a constitutional amendment was required to empower the Commission on Judicial Conduct, a body composed of a hybrid of executive, legislative, and judicial appointees, to impose disciplinary sanctions against members of the judiciary for ethics violations."

As remedy, Cuomo is asking courts to stop COELIG from continuing any investigative or enforcement actions.

“The lawsuit speaks for itself, but there’s clearly been politics behind all of this,” Rich Azzopardi, a spokesman for the former Governor, told WSKG.

A spokesperson for COELIG declined to comment on the pending litigation.

Last year, a [court ruled](#) that JCOPE did not allow Cuomo proper due process after it reversed the decision to approve his memoir and ordered him to return the proceeds from it. Still, the judge in that case left open the possibility for COELIG to pick the case back up. According to Cuomo’s complaint, COELIG staff has been in communication with his attorneys as early as September of last year.

According to the complaint, the matter is set to go before an adjudicatory hearing on June 12.