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Trump commits to helping blue states fight the coronavirus — if their governors are nice to him

The president prefers to be surrounded by sycophants.

By Aaron Rupar | @atrupar | Mar 25, 2020, 2:00pm EDT



New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo speaks during a news conference on Tuesday. | Eduardo Munoz Alvarez/Getty Images

President Donald Trump says he's willing to help blue-state governors who are struggling to contain coronavirus outbreaks — but only if they're willing to stop criticizing him in exchange.

"It's a two-way street," Trump told Fox News on Tuesday. "They have to treat us well, also. They can't say, 'Oh, gee, we should get this, we should get that.'"

Trump's comments came as Andrew Cuomo — the Democratic governor of New York, the state currently at the heart of America's coronavirus outbreak — **pleaded with Trump to do more** to provide his state (and others) with medical gear and ventilators. Trump's line

seems to be that Cuomo isn't in a position to make demands unless he refrains from criticizing the federal government (and, by extension, him).



Josh Marshall

@joshtpm

On Governors asking for help, Trump says, "It's a two way street they have to treat us well too." (realized i had wrong clip before)



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When Trump isn't attacking Democratic governors — already this month he's described Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer as "**failing**," **accused** Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker of "blaming the Federal Government for [his] own shortcomings," and smeared Washington Gov. Jay Inslee as "**a snake**" — the president has been insisting that it's up to them to procure the supplies they need to prevent their hospitals from being overwhelmed.

"They have to get that gear themselves," Trump told Fox News on Tuesday, referring to Democratic governors, adding that "they shouldn't be hitting us." (It's worth noting that Trump hasn't criticized Republican governors for their coronavirus responses.)

But telling the states to fend for themselves isn't really viable insofar as Trump's goal is to save lives, not score political points.

On Tuesday, the Washington Post **detailed** how a “mad scramble for masks, gowns and ventilators is pitting states against each other and driving up prices.” For that reason, governors like Cuomo and health care officials are begging Trump to take a more active approach in procuring equipment, whether it be on the open market or as a result of forcing private companies to do it with **the Defense Production Act** he’s been so reluctant to use. (During a news conference on Tuesday, Cuomo said he can’t “for the life of me understand the reluctance to use the Defense Production Act,” adding that the ventilators he’s demanding from the federal government “will make the difference between life and death, literally” for coronavirus patients in New York.)

Cuomo seems to understand the game Trump is playing. On Monday, the Post **reported** that the governor is “avoiding criticism of President Trump and the federal government’s response to the outbreak in a bid to get what he wants.” Along those lines, even as he was criticizing the federal government’s response on Tuesday, Cuomo refrained from taking aim directly at the president.

Yet even Cuomo’s indirect criticisms were enough to rankle Trump. He subsequently told Fox News that he “watched Governor Cuomo” during his news conference on Tuesday and noted that “he was complaining.”

“He was talking about the ventilator — he should’ve ordered the ventilators,” Trump added.



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Replies to @atruper

"He's supposed to be buying his own ventilators" -- Trump is now attacking Andrew Cuomo for saying the federal government should do more to provide New York with needed medical gear

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Later, with a smirk on his face, Trump — apparently still perturbed by Cuomo's comments — went as far as to try blaming the governor for the number of coronavirus cases in his state.



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"Do you blame the governor for that?" -- with a smug smirk on his face, Trump tries to pin blame for New York's coronavirus outbreak on Gov. Cuomo because he allowed people to travel from Asia back to New York City during the holidays

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

WORLD CASES

TOTAL CONFIRMED

407,485

LAST 24 HRS
▲ 32,027

TOTAL DEATHS

18,226

LAST 24 HRS
▲ 1,815

SOURCE: WHO, CDC, ECDC, NHC

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CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

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20,268.43

▲ 1676.50 9.02%

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Trump's equivocation about providing federal help to blue states reveals how he views the world in transactional terms. He doesn't think of himself as obligated to do anything for people he doesn't view as part of his team — unless he gets something in return, like investigating the Bidens (in the case of the Ukraine scandal that led to his impeachment) or refraining from criticizing his government (in the case of Cuomo).

That might be a viable way of thinking in the rough-and-tumble world of New York real estate, but it's a bad fit for roles of authority where you're supposedly duty-bound to help everyone, not just your supporters. But even with American lives on the line, this particular president can't seem to help himself.

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