

Staten Island

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Cuomo in form at Q & A forum

By BILL FARRELL

Gov. Cuomo turned a scheduled two-hour Staten Island visit into a four-hour question-and-answer session at the College of Staten Island last week.

More than 350 Islanders showed up Thursday night to see, hear, and talk to the governor in one of six statewide public forums he has planned to discuss local problems and budget issues.

The session was moderated by Borough President Ralph Lamberti. Cuomo, accompanied by several state commissioners, listened to a wide variety of requests.

During the marathon session at the college's Sunnyside Campus, Cuomo had lengthy discussions with some of the designated speakers that lasted more than 15 minutes.

His first such exchange was with Margret Sklenar, who represented the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce and the Restaurant and Tavern Owners Association.

Sklenar was critical of the utility surcharges that are tied to mass transit and of the movement to raise the state drinking age.

The conversation eventually turned into a discussion about business people

getting forced to leave the state "while," Sklenar said, "there are a lot of people who get state money for different purposes."

"Who are these people?" Cuomo asked.

As the exchange continued, someone shouted from the audience, "Don't play us off each other, Governor!" Cuomo then explained that today's fiscal situation requires "We do get played off one another."

"We are long past the time when we could please everyone," he said. Cuomo then took a swipe at the Reagan Administration. "That's what they did in Washington. You wanted a tax cut. You got it. You wanted more missiles. You got it. Now we also have a \$200-million deficit."

Cuomo later had a long exchange with the college's Student Union president, Anthony Von Meyers, on tuition increases in state schools. Cuomo called a S.U.N.Y. education a "bargain," compared to other states.

Other issues discussed included a consolidated campus for the College of Staten Island, the proposed Navy homeport in Stapleton, the future of the Staten Island Developmental Center site, and other environmental and local issues.



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Gov. Cuomo as he fielded questions at the College of Staten Island.