

GOVERNOR OF NEW YORK KATHY HOCHUL

AUGUST 2021

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INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

When Kathy Hochul is sworn in as Governor of New York, she will become the first woman to hold that position in the history of the Empire State. The lieutenant governor's job in New York is largely ceremonial, without a specific portfolio or platform of its own. As a result, Hochul is rising to one of the nation's most powerful governorships as a largely unknown entity.

Hochul spent much of her time since taking office in 2015 traveling from one end of the state to the other – sometimes within the span of a single day – which enabled her to forge a wide range of relationships with business and political leaders, local government officials, advocates and more. But to everyday New Yorkers outside her home base of Western New York she remains something of a cipher, and those who are familiar with her most likely know her because of her quiet role in the outgoing administration. In addition to not being well known, New York hasn't had a true upstate governor since the 1920s, which adds additional challenges for Hochul as she seeks to make herself a household name prior to the 2022 election in which she has made clear she will run to retain her new post.

Hochul's public persona is the antithesis of that of her soon-to-be-former boss, Governor Andrew Cuomo, which is to say she is charming, courteous and above all, nice. However, she is no pushover and should not be underestimated by the would-be challengers lining up to take her on next year. Consider that she publicly outfoxed Cuomo when he tried to push her off the ballot in 2018 and survived tumultuous political seas by adapting her positions to suit her changing constituencies as she moved up the political food chain. She also has a strong work ethic, seemingly endless well of energy, and a proven ability to forge alliances across party lines.

Those skills will be immediately put to the test. Hochul will assume control over New York at a pivotal moment in its history. The state not only needs to recover from the twin public health and economic emergencies brought on by COVID-19, but it also needs to restore political order following the chaos and confusion of Governor Cuomo's resignation amid multiple scandals. The Democratic Party, of which Hochul is now leader, is also fractured and divided, with a surging left-wing constituency of Democratic Socialists vying for more power and influence. A growing number of liberal state lawmakers will set the agenda for the 2022 legislative session in Albany on key issues related to health care, tax policy, and climate change. Hochul will need to balance the influential progressive wing of her party against more traditional, business-oriented centrist Democrats that count her as one of their own – all while managing not to alienate either side.

This report represents a survey of the policy positions Hochul has held over the course of her public life on a number of core issues that will be in play in 2022 and beyond. These include COVID-19 response and recovery, housing and development, energy, climate change, health care, cannabis, criminal justice and policing, immigration, education, jobs and small businesses, taxes and regulation, and infrastructure and transportation. It covers her evolution on some issues as well as her recent public statements and should serve as a comprehensive overview of her current positions as well as those she is likely to take as Governor.

The positions, statements, and biographical information detailed below was obtained from Hochul's past campaign websites, social media accounts, news articles, and other sources.



Kathy Hochul

ELECTORAL HISTORY: Lieutenant Governor of New York (2015-Present); US Representative from New York's 26th District (2011-2013); County Clerk of Erie County (2007-2011); Member of Hamburg Town Board (1994-2007)

PROFESSIONAL HISTORY: M&T Bank Corporation (Vice President of Government Relations, 2013-2014); Office of the Erie County Clerk (Deputy Clerk, 2003-2007); Lobbyist (1991-N/A); Office of US Senator Patrick Moynihan (Aide, 1986-1988); Office of US Representative John LaFalce (Aide, 1984-1986); Law Firm (Attorney, 1983-1984)

CHARITABLE/CIVIC/VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE: Kathleen Mary House (Co-Founder); Village Action Coalition (Co-Founder); Governor's Task Force on Heroin & Opioid Addiction (Chair); New York State Workforce Investment Board (Chair); Regional Economic Development Councils (Chair); New York State Women's Suffrage 100th Anniversary Commemoration Commission (Chair); Immaculata Academy (Member of Board of Trustees)

EDUCATION: Catholic University of America (JD, 1983); Syracuse University (BA-Political Science, 1980); Hamburg High School (Diploma, 1976)

ON THE ISSUES

COVID-19 RESPONSE: Hochul has **argued** that lieutenant governors "have a unique platform to advocate for communities and bring innovative solutions to their state capitols" and that the pandemic has "only amplified their role in fighting" COVID-19. However, while she has been a public face for New York's response to the pandemic, she has **reportedly** played a limited role in setting or directing state policy regarding COVID-19 response, reopening decisions, and the vaccination distribution process.

Hochul has **pledged** to make addressing the COVID-19 pandemic her top priority when she takes office and **believes** the post-pandemic economic recovery "will depend on helping women re-enter the workforce, accessible child care, and workforce training." Hochul **wants** to get pandemic relief aid out faster to those who need it, including undocumented workers who thus far have been unable to receive federal benefits. She has also pushed for more aid to businesses hit hard by the pandemic, often **highlighting** New York's COVID-19 Pandemic Recovery Grant Program and **encouraging** New Yorkers to support local restaurants and other small businesses to "help them get back on their feet."

She has **said** no New Yorker who has faced financial hardship or been displaced because of the pandemic should be forced out of his or her home and has **pledged** to work with the Legislature to "strengthen the eviction moratorium legislation" and "get the funding available to those in need as soon as possible."

She **believes** COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective, and frequently **encourages people**, particularly the **young**, to **get vaccinated**. She has **not ruled out** the possibility of a statewide vaccine mandate for indoor activities. Hochul said she would **work** with New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio as well as the incoming mayor (widely expected to be Democratic nominee Eric Adams) to develop a strategy to **increase** the vaccination rate.

She **supports** mask mandates for children in schools. However, Hochul **does not believe** she has the power to require school employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19 before returning to work, arguing it is an authority only the legislature could bestow on the governor. Earlier this year, she **advocated** for the passage of the Medical Supplies Act, which would prioritize domestic production of personal protective equipment. Hochul has said she is willing to work with legislative leaders "to take whatever action" she needs to protect people.



HOUSING/DEVELOPMENT: Hochul **believes** everyone “deserves the dignity of a secure home,” particularly those struggling with addiction and mental health challenges, and has **highlighted** the Cuomo administration’s “strategy to create more affordable housing to revitalize communities across New York.” Throughout her tenure as lieutenant governor, Hochul has presided over the ribbon-cutting ceremonies of numerous supportive and affordable housing projects, including ones specifically built to help the homeless, women, seniors, and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

ENERGY: Hochul is a **proponent** of electric vehicles and **supported** the state’s Clean Transportation Prizes Initiative, which she said would help boost clean energy and reduce air pollution in disadvantaged communities. She has often **touted** several other Cuomo administration clean energy initiatives, including its **investments** in clean energy workforce development and training programs on SUNY campuses throughout the state, and has **highlighted** the state’s efforts to increase energy efficiency and energy storage.

During her time in Congress, she supported investments in renewable alternatives and **sponsored** legislation to provide US manufacturers with tax breaks for energy efficiency upgrades. Hochul also **cosponsored** the SEAM Act, which would **allocate** \$5 billion in grants or tax credits to manufacturers of goods used in alternative energy products.

In the past, Hochul has **advocated** for an “all of the above” energy strategy to make the US more energy independent. Despite her opposition to “Big Oil” and **support for ending** tax breaks and giveaways for fossil fuel companies, she advocated for expanding domestic energy production while in Congress. Hochul voted for the Strategic Energy Production Act of 2012, which would **require** the federal government to develop a plan to increase the amount of acreage leased for oil and gas development, as well as the PIONEERS Act, which would **expand** offshore drilling. She also voted for the North American-Made Energy Security Act, which would **expedite** federal approval of the Keystone XL Pipeline, and **supported** efforts to require oil companies to expand oil exploration on federal lands they had leased but not yet developed.

Notably, according to her **2020 Financial Disclosure Statement**, Hochul has **not personally divested** from fossil fuels.

CLIMATE CHANGE: Hochul **believes** climate change is a “threat” that can no longer be ignored and has **criticized** the Trump administration for failing to properly address the climate crisis at the federal level. She **praised** President Biden for rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement and **said** his administration’s efforts to cut carbon emissions would “help heal the environment & lead our country into a more sustainable future for the next generation.”

She has **promoted** New York’s collaboration with the federal government to expand offshore wind energy, saying it would “create jobs and advance our green economy for a cleaner, more sustainable future.” Hochul has also **advocated** for the Environmental Bond Act to fund improvements that would preserve and restore New York’s natural resources and fight climate change, and **supported** the state’s **Green New Deal**, which would put New York State on a path to “economy-wide carbon neutrality” by 2040.

HEALTHCARE: Hochul **believes** health care is a “basic human right” and has been a staunch **advocate** for women’s reproductive health and **defender** of a woman’s right to choose. As lieutenant governor, Hochul has taken an active role in the Cuomo administration’s efforts to combat the opioid epidemic and **co-chairs** New York’s Heroin & Opioid Task Force.

Hochul has **called** Medicare and Medicaid “crucial lifelines for seniors and low income families,” and has **opposed** efforts to privatize Social Security. In Congress, she introduced legislation to strengthen Medicare by cracking down on waste, fraud, and abuse. She also **worked** to leverage the purchasing power of prescription drugs to negotiate lower prices for Medicare recipients.

While Hochul supported the Affordable Care Act, she has called the bill “far from perfect” and was “concerned about the high cost of implementing the law” during her time in Congress. She **blamed** support of the legislation for her 2012 reelection loss, suggesting her vote **against repealing** the ACA lost her key votes in the more conservative parts of her district. In April 2021, Hochul said supporting the ACA “was a very painful moral dilemma,” **stating**, “I voted 43 times for health care and against my district. And subsequently, they all voted once, against me, and I lost my seat in Congress.”



CANNABIS: Hochul **celebrated** the legalization of adult-use cannabis in New York, **arguing** it would create jobs, boost New York's economy, and **begin** "righting the wrongs of an unjust system" that **targeted** communities of color. She has also **supported** the Cuomo administration's efforts to remove regulatory barriers hindering the legal cannabis industry and has criticized the federal government for "ignor[ing] the reality of the benefits of medical marijuana and industrial hemp."

CRIMINAL JUSTICE & POLICING: Hochul has **claimed** there are "systemic problems" in policing nationwide and **said** it is time to "rethink our criminal justice system." She has **argued** Black Americans "shouldn't have to worry about losing their lives while driving home, sitting in their cars, or lying in bed." Hochul **believes** it's "on all of us to recognize, step up and confront the systemic racism, inequalities and injustices in our society," but also **acknowledges** that "reform is always tough" and "always resisted."

She supported the Cuomo administration's efforts to reform New York's bail system that eliminated cash bail for several misdemeanors and non-violent felonies, **arguing** it was necessary to create a more equitable criminal justice system. However, she acknowledged that there may need to be adjustments to the law. Hochul also **supported** the repeal of the state's "walking while trans" ban, an anti-loitering law that critics **said** police used to harass and arrest law-abiding trans people, in particular.

IMMIGRATION: Hochul has **said** New York is "proud to be a state that is home to immigrants from around the world." She **supports** the Dream Act "1000%" and **applauded** the US Supreme Court's June 2020 decision upholding the DACA program. In 2018, she **condemned** the Trump administration's child separation policy along the Southern border and said New York would provide the funding and resources needed to "care for these children as we fight to reunite them with their families."

Notably, while serving as Erie County Clerk in 2007, Hochul **opposed** then-Governor Eliot Spitzer's proposal to grant driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants. She even reportedly told a local news station she would **call the sheriff** to arrest any undocumented immigrants who attempted to apply for licenses at the offices she oversaw. During her 2011 and 2012 congressional races, she **touted** her opposition to driver's licenses for the undocumented. However, while running for lieutenant governor in 2014, Hochul **said** she no longer felt that way. In 2018, Hochul defended her flip-flop on the issue, **arguing**, "That was 11 years ago, and there were very few people saying that was the right policy at the time." In a May 2019 **op-ed**, Hochul **said** she supported the Green Light Law, which would ultimately allow undocumented immigrants to apply for New York driver's licenses, claiming the law would make "New York state a safer place for all New Yorkers."

During her time in Congress, she **co-sponsored** a number of bills that sought to improve the H-2A non-immigrant visa program, including the **Access to Agricultural Labor Act of 2011**, the **Family Farm Relief Act of 2012**, and the **H-2A Improvement Act**.

EDUCATION: Hochul has **said** education is a human right and that every American **deserves** an "affordable, quality education." She **believes** community college and technical and career training are "clear pathways to the middle class," and she has **fought** to make SUNY and CUNY schools tuition-free for all middle-class families.

In a May 2015 **op-ed**, Hochul argued that "all schools – public, charter, parochial, private – deserve our support." She endorsed the **Parental Choice in Education Act**, which would provide \$150 million in tax breaks to parents paying private-school tuition and taxpayers donating money to private and public schools across New York. Hochul said the bill would "ensure that every student and their family are supported in some way by the state, no matter where they go to school." She also challenged the view that the Cuomo administration's property tax cap hurt the state's public school system, arguing that it actually "encouraged districts to be fiscally responsible." Randi Weingarten, the former president of New York City's United Federation of Teachers who had campaigned for Hochul during her 2014 race for lieutenant governor, said she regretted supporting Hochul in part because of the Cuomo administration's education reform efforts. In August 2021, The New York Post **accused** Hochul of "join[ing] Gov. Andrew Cuomo in the fight against unions that opposed public charter schools."

While in Congress, Hochul supported strengthening Pell Grants and other federal student aid programs and **voted** for the Interest Rate Reduction Act, which would **help stop** student loan interest rates from doubling from 3.4% to 6.8%. Hochul also **supported** legislation to help align worker training opportunities with advanced manufacturing firms, including the **Workforce-Ready Educate America Act**, which would **encourage** partnerships between employers and educational institutions by providing employers a \$1,000 tax credit per student participating in a qualified technical trainings and skills partnering program.



JOBS & SMALL BUSINESSES: Hochul has **touted** her family's business background and argued that "government doesn't create jobs – businesses do." However, she believes government can "help to create the conditions for economic growth by ensuring a level playing field and creating incentives to encourage private enterprise."

She **supports** a \$15 minimum wage, **equal pay**, and **Paid Family Leave**, as well as the **expanded child tax credit** pushed by the Biden administration to provide additional aid to families during the COVID-19 pandemic. She also **supports** the Return-to-Work Tax Credit Program that provides \$35 million in grants to New York restaurants to help get employees back to work.

While serving in Congress, Hochul **advocated** for a comprehensive package "to help rebuild our manufacturing base and create jobs." She was a "**strong supporter**" of the "Make It in America" agenda and introduced the **Build It In America Act of 2012**, which would provide tax credits for manufacturers whose domestic production exceeded 50% of gross receipts. She also **opposed** "any trade deal that suppresses wages, cuts benefits, and sends American jobs to other countries," including the US-Panama, US-Columbia, and US-South Korea Free Trade Agreements, and **co-sponsored** the **Bring Jobs Home Act**, which would provide tax credits to businesses that relocated to the US.

Hochul also fought for expanded training opportunities for American workers. She **introduced** the **Workforce-Ready Educate America Act**, which would encourage partnerships between local employers and educational institutions to ensure students have the marketable skills needed to find jobs. According to her campaign website, she **secured** a "record increase of workforce development funding" while serving as Chair of the Regional Economic Development Councils.

TAXES & REGULATION: Hochul has **called** for an end to "overburdensome regulations" and **advocated** for a "common sense regulatory structure" that protects workers' health and safety without creating unnecessary burdens for small business owners. In 2012, she **commended** the Cuomo administration's decision to ease regulations on dairy farmers.

Hochul **opposed** the Trump administration's Tax Cuts & Jobs Act, **citing** its "massive tax cut for the very wealthiest at the expense of middle class New Yorkers" and the new limits on SALT deductions. She also said she was worried the "fragile Upstate economy could be devastated" by the "negative consequences directly targeted at our State."

While in Congress, Hochul crossed party lines to pass small business tax cuts and voted for a bipartisan plan to extend the payroll tax cut for the middle-class. She also **called** for the permanent extension of the middle-class tax cuts enacted during the Bush administration. During her 2012 re-election campaign, Hochul **supported** closing tax loopholes "that reward corporations for shipping jobs overseas" and allowing the Bush-era tax cuts to expire for those making \$500,000 a year.

INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORTATION: Hochul has **argued** that infrastructure projects will help "supercharge" New York's economy and help the state recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. She **supported** the American Jobs Act, which would **provide** millions of dollars to repair New York's roads and bridges.

Hochul has been a longtime advocate for New York motorists. While serving in local government, she **fought** to remove toll booths from the New York State Thruway and was once **referred** to as a "stop-the-tolls pioneer" by The Buffalo News.

One of the main transportation projects left unfinished by the outgoing administration is Governor Cuomo's plan for **congestion pricing**, which would charge fees to drive in Manhattan. While Hochul has supported congestion pricing previously, she has not said whether she intends to support it as governor. According to a spokesperson, "the pace and timing is something [Hochul] will need to evaluate further given the constantly changing impact of COVID-19 on commuters."

While in Congress, Hochul **fought** to secure funding for her district's infrastructure needs, including upgrading the freight rail system, repairing rural bridges, and improving water and wastewater infrastructure. She also **fought** for **increased funding** for New York's airports, including the Niagara Falls International Airport, which was located in her district.



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