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Although I go to school in Vermont, I'm from New York and will be voting in that election next month. The governor of New York is up for reelection this year, and that makes this a very important election. For this challenge I'll be examining incumbent governor Andrew Cuomo (Democrat) and running opponent Marc Molinaro (Republican), who had no opponents for the Republican spot in this election, so the voters have had no say on him yet.

Two issues that are really important to me are **the environment** and **education**. I'm going to be a teacher someday and educational decisions directly affect me. In addition, I want my students to live in a world that hasn't been ruined by pollution and other factors, so preserving the environment has mattered to me for a long time. I want to know that the candidate I vote for will share similar ideologies to me and stand for the things I believe strongly in. Let's examine the candidates' stances on these important issues.

Education:

Incumbent governor Andrew Cuomo has demonstrated his stance on education through his actions as governor thus far. He has spoken about the importance of parental presence in the classroom, because students often take the views of their parents and if the parents are active in the classroom, they may have a more positive view of schools and education that will be passed along to their children. He surely won support from teachers by proposing a tax credit for teachers, but there has been nothing to show for that in the almost three years since he proposed it. He also spoke about turning failing schools into charter schools, instead of giving failing schools the extra support they must need if they're failing. Speaking on charter schools, he wants to increase the number of students allowed in each charter school to allow more students to have a quality education.

Marc Molinaro is against increasing the number of charter schools in New York. He is also against the excessive testing and other issues surrounding the Common Core educational standards. Molinaro feels connected to the issue of education because his own children are in New York public schools right now and they are directly affected by legislation surrounding education. His engagement in his own former schools demonstrates that he really values education and keeping public education accessible.

Personally, I'm not in favor of more charter schools. I think there is definitely something wrong with education in New York and it's not the lack of charter schools. I don't think opening more schools will fix the curriculum and I think increasing the number of students in each school will only detract from what the teachers will get done, because no mention of hiring more teachers means that increasing the number of students in schools will increase class sizes and make it

harder for students to get the support they need in order to grow as learners. I think a tax credit for teachers is necessary because teachers are underpaid and undervalued, not just in New York but in society. I don't think the problem with the curriculum is the Common Core standards, but how they're being implemented all at once instead of a gradual change with lots of professional development to ensure the teachers understand how to teach to the new standards and to make sure they can support the students learning. I think that Common Core testing is too high stakes and there needs to be less of an emphasis on the results of these tests and a greater emphasis on student learning across the board. How do they perform in classes? What does their homework look like? Tests shouldn't be the main indication of learning.

The Environment:

Governor Cuomo has made some big talks about protecting our environment. He claims it's a very important issue facing us and he's completely correct about that. He has lead legislation to make fracking illegal and created the Governor's Clean Energy Standard, which is legislation designed to ensure 50% of New York's energy is renewable by 2030. However, sources claim that Cuomo has done little to support his big environmental talk and that a disappointingly small amount has been done to aid the environmental fight in New York, which is a shame due to the fact that it is a pretty large state population-wise.

A major environmental issue in New York is the pollution of the Hudson River, and Marc Molinaro is aware of this. He has been a supporter of cleaning up the river for a long time and he has stood against legislation to increase commercial shipping on the river. He understands the value of having access to clean water and that this river should be a good source of it, if it weren't for the pollution. His approach to protecting the environment is to work a little at a time instead of tackling everything at once.

I want every environmental action, big or small, to be taken seriously. I commend every effort that Molinaro and Cuomo have taken. I think 50% renewable energy by 2030 is a very low number but very attainable. It's a starting point, not an ending point. I wish there was more of an initiative for waste reduction, since places like New York City contribute an incredibly large amount of waste every day and compost bins are nonexistent there, recycling being present but so scarce. I think that should be a big focus for candidates who claim to be concerned about environmental issues.