

# Unshackle won't endorse Cuomo or Paladino

The Business Review - by Adam Sichko

Date: Friday, October 22, 2010, 9:01am EDT

The Unshackle Upstate business lobby has endorsed Republican **Harry Wilson** for state comptroller—but it has decided to sit out the race for governor of New York.

The Rochester-based lobby was unable to achieve consensus among its five board members as to whether to back Democrat **Andrew Cuomo** or Republican **Carl Paladino**. Polls show Cuomo with sizable leads over Paladino, a wealthy real estate developer from Buffalo.

The lobby's rules require unanimous agreement before an endorsement can be made.

Unshackle Upstate has directed the bulk of its energy and efforts toward endorsing and campaigning for Republicans to regain their former majority in the state Senate. The endorsement in the comptroller's race, made Oct. 21, is the only statewide race Unshackle will get involved with, said executive director **Brian Sampson**.

"Nobody should read anything into the fact that we didn't do an endorsement," Sampson said in an interview. "We think that with the combination of candidates we've supported for Senate and Assembly seats, plus Harry, will give us the strength we need to get spending under control."

Unshackle is among a group of business lobbies that have been more politically active this year than ever before, making endorsements and campaigning against other candidates.

Business lobbies have kept Paladino at arm's length throughout most of the campaign, even though he comes from the private sector and has lifelong ties to upstate.

Paladino's tough talk echoes the cynicism about state government prevalent among many in the western and central New York business community. But the lobbies are wary of the headline-grabbing statements Paladino has made throughout the campaign (less-inflammatory ones include taking a "baseball bat" to the Capitol and accusing legislative leaders of being criminals).

"People are cheering about his (Paladino's) agenda, because most folks feel they really do want to go in there with an axe and a shotgun. But can you really accomplish anything using those tools?" asked **Sandra Parker**, an Unshackle board member. Parker runs the [Rochester Business Alliance](#), a business lobby that endorsed Cuomo.

[The Business Council of New York State Inc.](#), representing many major corporations, endorsed Cuomo earlier this month. Paladino's campaign dismissed the endorsement as "asking the Boston Strangler for a neck massage."

Sampson said one complicating factor was that both campaigns have lieutenant governor candidates from upstate. He said Cuomo and Paladino have proposed financial plans that align to Unshackle's platforms.

Unshackle will have volunteers doing door-to-door campaigning this weekend on behalf of certain Senate and Assembly candidates.

"We firmly believe it's the legislative body that is going to ultimately have to make the tough calls," Sampson said.