

Nolan, Lafayette Named To Top Assembly Jobs

Assemblymember Catherine Nolan, Ridgewood, was appointed to the chairmanship of the powerful Assembly Education Committee last week, accomplishing what few of her Queens colleagues, past and present, have ever achieved.

On politics
By John Toscano



Assemblymember
Ivan Lafayette

Another Queens lawmaker, Assemblymember Ivan Lafayette (D-Jackson Heights), was also appointed to a high-level post—Deputy Speaker—by Speaker Sheldon Silver.

In accepting a position that makes her a major player in the state legislature, Nolan thanked Silver for his expression of confidence in her ability to handle the tough tasks ahead.

The 20-year Assembly veteran said she looked forward to “working with all of the schools, parents and students of our community to ensure that our children receive a quality education.”

Nolan takes on an awesome task in heading the education panel. The committee is primarily responsible for overseeing educational policies and programs affecting pre-kindergarten, elementary, secondary and adult education. Its jurisdiction extends to all aspects of the elementary and secondary education for the millions of school children attending both public and non-public schools. There are 704 school districts in the state, including the New York City district, the largest in the nation.

Nolan herself is a graduate of a public high school, Grover Cleveland H.S. in her home neighborhood of Ridgewood. Her son, Nicholas, attends a public elementary school, so she knows the territory.

The Queens lawmaker has moved up steadily in her Assembly career, having chaired some major committees over the years, including Labor and Banks. One of her duties is to serve as the Assemblymember of the MTA Capital Program Review Board, which scrutinizes every budget move made by the giant transportation agency.

In her new role, she will have to deal with every parent who has a child in the giant system, as well as the United Federation of Teachers, the powerful teachers’

union.

Commenting on his appointment as Deputy Speaker, Lafayette said he would be better able to work as top leadership to help address the very diverse needs of New York state. “Certainly, I will continue to focus my attention on my additional responsibilities as dean of the Queens delegation and a resident of New York City,” he said.

Lafayette, now in his 30th year in the Assembly, said that his job as Deputy Speaker, as discussed with Silver, will be for him to take the lead on certain higher profile issues in both the planning stages as well as action on the Assembly floor, according to Lafayette’s announcement.

The release also stated, “An immediate responsibility for Lafayette will be working with the city Department of Education to ensure effective partnership between the state and city in developing new school facilities and having access to additional state support for education operations.”

Lafayette said he had enjoyed performing the duties of the position he had previously held, that of Speaker Pro Tempore, which required him to preside over the Assembly. But, he said, “This new job gives me much more flexibility in allocating my time to deal with important matters as they arise.”

Lafayette said he will continue to serve as the senior member of the Banks, Transportation and Insurance committees, and will remain a senior member of the Ways and Means and Rules committees, the two most important committees through which the Democratic majority runs the Assembly.

RECEIVES COMMUNITY AWARD, TOO: Last Friday, Nolan received the inaugural Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Award from Goodwill Industries in

Astoria. Also cited with Nolan was Claudia Coger, a leader from the Two Coves community of Astoria. Both Nolan and Coger were cited for their “outstanding and dedicated support” of the Two Coves area.

DEMS EYE QUEENS’ GOP SENATORS: Democratic Party leaders in the state senate are targeting Republican Senators Frank Padavan and Serphin Maltese in this year’s elections to narrow the GOP majority’s edge in the senate. But the two lawmakers and GOP Senate Leader Joseph Bruno are ready for the challenge and confident that they can repel it.

Part of the Democrats’ hope is based on the top of the ticket, meaning Eliot Spitzer the party’s gubernatorial candidate, who has rung up big leads in straw polls against a variety of opponents. But that could change once the Republicans settle on a candidate and the campaigning starts.

There’s also a good chance that Spitzer will get a primary challenge from Nassau County Executive Thomas Suozzi and the bad feelings created could have an effect on Spitzer’s general election campaign if he survives the primary.

Queens Democrats have already signaled they want to take on Padavan. Party leaders hope to have Councilmember Tony Avella (D-Bayside) as their candidate. It appears this would have the makings of a close race since both Northeast Queens lawmakers enjoy very high constituent approval in the area.

At this point, however, Avella has not announced any plans to go forward with the race. If he declines, there does not appear to be a Padavan challenger to threaten the 34-year senate veteran.

In two recent elections, Padavan defeated Flushing attorney Rory Lancman and Morshed Alam of Jamaica Estates by comfortable margins. At present, both Lancman and Alam are among those hoping to get their party’s nomination to run for the seat being vacated by Assemblymember Brian McLaughlin at the end of the year.

Whoever becomes the candidate to run in McLaughlin’s place in the 25th Assembly District will have a very easy race in the Democrat-heavy Flushing area. Lancman and Alam and other hopefuls will likely concentrate their attention on winning the primary, rather



Assemblymember
Catherine Nolan

than taking on Padavan.

As for Maltese, who is an 18-year office holder, there have been no hint of any Democrats in his Western Queens district making any threatening noises to challenge him.

Although his district has a decided Democratic edge in registration, the experience has been that a Republican incumbent in such a district can hold on to the seat for many years, as Maltese has. He attributes his longevity in office to the high quality of district services dispensed by his district office staff.

MONSERRATE HOSTS: Councilmember Hiram Monserrate (D-Corona) last night hosted a novel Town Hall meeting that also included dinner for his panel guests and the community members who attended.

Starting at 6:30 p.m. at the First Baptist Church at Astoria Boulevard and 100th Street, representatives from several city departments and Monserrate made presentations on the upcoming city budget and certain issues.

City residents present then asked questions of the city agency reps.

The fun started as Kecia’s Soul Food Restaurant, Caribbean Flavor & American Restaurant, Dunkin Donuts and Pizza & Halal Chicken contributed to a succulent buffet.

MARKEY FUNDRAISER: Assemblymember Margaret Markey (D-Maspeth) will have Queens Democratic Leader Thomas Manton as chairman for her re-election campaign kick-off fundraiser on Thursday, February 16 at the Kaufman Astoria Studios Commissary 34-12 36th St., Astoria, from 6 to 8 p.m.

WEINER ‘LET MAYOR FILL MTA VACANCY’: Congressman Anthony Weiner, joined by Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, urged Governor George Pataki to let Mayor Michael Bloomberg fill a vacancy on the MTA board of directors created when Vice Chairman Edward Dunn retires, as has been announced.

In making the request to the governor, Weiner stated, “Straphangers in this city contend with subway strikes, service delays, fires and the constant threat of terror. The MTA should be more accountable to the people of New York City who provide the MTA with the vast majority of revenue and ridership. I urge Governor Pataki to seize this opportunity to leave a legacy of accountability at the MTA.”

Only four MTA board members are appointed by the mayor. Six are appointed by the governor, and one each by seven suburban counties.

Marshall Visits Aviation HS Annex At JFK



Borough President Helen Marshall looks on as students at the Aviation H.S. annex at John F. Kennedy International Airport get some hands-on experience. Marshall visited the annex, which the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey recently opened at JFK, on January 19.

Photo Dominick Totino