

Crowley Succeeds Manton As Queens Democratic Leader

BY JOHN TOSCANO

Congressmember Joseph Crowley, who succeeded the late Thomas Manton in Congress, was elected unanimously last week by the Queens Democratic Party's executive committee to succeed Manton as the Democratic county leader in the borough.

Addressing the 72-member committee after it voted him in at the early Friday morning meeting at party headquarters in Forest Hills, Crowley pledged to lead the organization in the same direction that Manton had taken it during almost 30 years at its helm.

Crowley declared, "Following Tom will be easy. He had his eyes on everything and had everything under control. Under him we prospered at the polls and we became an influence as never before in matters throughout the city. It's a great day to be a Democrat in Queens."

The first order of business, he said in an interview afterward, will be to help elect Democrats throughout the state and in Queens.

"We're at the height of the election process and we've got to help our state ticket get elected in what will be one of the most important elections in many years," he said.

With Eliot Spitzer topping the ticket as the party gubernatorial candidate, the Democrats are heavy favorites to recapture the state house in Albany after 12 years under the rule of George Pataki and the Republican Party.

In addition, Crowley said the local organization will help bring in the rest of the statewide ticket of David A. Paterson as lieutenant governor, Alan Hevesi as state comptroller, Andrew Cuomo as attorney general and re-elect United States Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton.

At the local level, every member of the Queens congressional delegation, including Crowley, is up for re-election as is every state senator and Assemblymember.

"As hard as we will be working to assure a victory for Mr. Spitzer and the rest of his ticket, we will also be helping every Democratic incumbent to return to Albany," he said.

One change which Crowley intends to make, however, is in the election of state Supreme Court justices. Presently, justices are nominated at judicial conventions, with the party leadership having a major say in selecting convention delegates.

A federal court ruled recently that this process must be changed to give non-party-connected hopefuls a fair chance to be considered. The court called for independent screening panels to have a major influence in the nominating process.

Against this background, Crowley said following his election that he plans to change the judgeship election process by substituting independent screening panels to nominate judges. He said the new process would probably be in place before next year's elections.

If there are any judgeship elections this year on November 7, the candidates will be chosen by the current judicial convention method.

Crowley, 44, got his start in politics working in the campaigns of his late uncle, Walter



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Crowley, who was a City Councilmember from Woodside.

Following his graduation from Queens College, Crowley won a seat in the state Assembly in 1986 and served in Albany until 1998.

Toward the end of that year, Manton decided to retire from Congress and Crowley was selected to run in his place and won. He was elected to serve a Queens/Bronx district and is presently seeking re-election to a fifth term. His district includes the Queens neighborhoods of Sunnyside, Woodside, Jackson Heights, Maspeth, Elmhurst, East Elmhurst and College Point.

He also serves as a local Democratic leader from his home area of Woodside.

In January 2003, Crowley was selected to serve in the Democratic leadership in Congress in the prestigious position of Chief Deputy Whip, making him the highest ranking New York member in the minority leadership.

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