

Dems Ahead Of Schedule In Giving Thanks

Thanksgiving 2006 started a couple of weeks ago for the Democratic Party as they feasted on this year's election victories, which should keep them happy through Christmas and beyond.

The question is: will anything filter down to John Q. Public that will give him something to be thankful for tomorrow besides the traditional Thanksgiving Day turkey fest.

On the national level, the Democrats took control of both the House and Senate and there's some hope that they'll take some action to spread some tax relief down to middle- and low-income taxpayers who have been frozen out of



the tax bonanza the Bush Administration has presented to upper income groups the past several years.

The Democrats are already talking about increasing the minimum wage, easing the burden for student loan holders and taking steps to decrease prescription drug prices, all welcome actions.

In New York state, Governor-elect Eliot Spitzer was given a mandate by the voters to bring reforms to Albany, including cutting the waste in Medicaid. With these savings, Spitzer can keep his campaign promise not to raise taxes—in fact, he should look for ways to reduce real estate taxes and ease that burden for millions of property owners.

Spitzer can also help the bottom line for millions of constituents by enacting a health insurance program to protect millions who have no coverage in this state. Similarly, he should attack economic stagnation upstate and create more jobs or improve the workers' compensation program.

Spitzer sounded one optimistic note about a week ago when he announced he's already looking to reduce costs in the operation of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority so there'll be no need for fares and toll hikes. Let's hope he follows through on this.

COUNCIL PAY RAISE MOVES ALONG: Despite objections from some quarters, the City Council has voted itself a 25 percent pay raise, increasing the 51 members' annual salaries from \$90,000 to \$112,500. The salary increase also applies to the mayor, comptroller,

Public Advocate and the borough presidents and district attorneys.

The council voted for the raise after a three-member mayoral commission recommended it. Mayor Michael Bloomberg said he will sign it into law, although he criticized aspects of the councilmembers' salaries.

Councilmembers Tony Avella (D-Bayside) and Hiram Monserrate (D-Corona) voted against the increase. Avella, who also voted against previous raises, said it was "inherently unethical" for the council to raise its own salary.

Monserrate's reaction was to call on the mayor to convene a Charter Revision Commission to recommend a ballot measure that would have the city's voters approve or disapprove any future recommendation for a salary increase.

Monserrate said it was clear that the process, which allows councilmembers to vote to increase their own salary "needs to be changed".

Other critics of the move, including the mayor, called for an end to the practice of giving councilmembers "lulus", or stipends for acting as committee chairmen. The extra money ranges from \$4,000 to \$28,500.

More opponents called for councilmembers to be barred from holding paying jobs in addition to their council work.

CLINTON BEATS RUDY IN LATEST NYS POLL: In the first poll since U.S. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton's overwhelming reelection as the junior senator from New York and former Mayor Rudy Giuliani's first step into the 2008 presidential field, Clinton easily trumped Giuliani in a statewide poll.

The poll, conducted from November 8 to 14 by Siena College, had Clinton ahead of Giuliani, 53 to 39 percent.

The survey was a sharp turnaround in Clinton's favor from a previous Siena poll in which Giuliani edged Clinton, 48 percent to 42 percent, last August.

In the poll results issued last week, Clinton also bested another Republican hopeful, U.S. Senator John McCain of Arizona, by 55 percent to 36 percent among New York state voters.

Clinton also was a big favorite among Democratic voters to be the party's presidential candidate, receiving 48 percent of the vote and leaving other Democratic wannabees far behind. Freshman U.S. Senator Barack Obama did best among also-rans with 15 percent. Those trailing were former Vice President Al Gore, John Edwards and U.S. Senator John Kerry.

CROWLEY, WEINER DUKE IT OUT:

Would you believe that with all the prosperity that flowed to the Democrats as they won control of the House on election day there would be a skirmish between Queens Congressmembers Joseph Crowley and Anthony Weiner over filling a leadership position?

When the Dems got down to the business of selecting the House Majority leader last Friday—that's the Number 2 post next to the Speaker job—Speaker Nancy Pelosi backed Congressman John Murtha, but there was lots of support for Congressman Steny Hoyer, also.

Crowley (Queens/The Bronx), the Chief Deputy Whip, supported Hoyer, but Weiner (Queens/Brooklyn) backed Pelosi's choice, Murtha, a noted anti-war lawmaker.

In the end, Crowley's guy Hoyer, of Maryland, who was born in New York, won handily, 149-86.

Crowley pointed out that the Pelosi, Hoyer team had led the effort that won Democratic control of Congress and there was no real reason to break it up now.

"It is fitting that they will continue as leaders in the next Congress," Crowley declared.

Meanwhile, not only was Weiner being loyal to Pelosi in backing Pennsylvania's Murtha; he was also supporting Murtha for his call to pull troops out of Iraq.

Surprisingly, Weiner broke with Crowley, who is also the Queens Democratic Party leader, on this issue. We wonder if it will have any

repercussions in the future if Weiner decides to run for New York City mayor in 2009.

SMITH EXPECTED TO WIN SENATE POST: State Senator Malcolm Smith (D-Jamaica) was elected the state senate Minority Leader on Monday succeeding David Paterson who was recently elected lieutenant governor.

The Minority Leader's post doesn't hold much power, but Democrats in Albany are hoping that in the first two years of his term, Spitzer can build support around the state that will help Democrats to win control of the state senate in 2008. That's also the year of the next presidential election and if U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton is the Democratic candidate, that will also help Dems to win control of the state senate.

PADAVAN URGES CITY COUNCIL TO ACT: Earlier this year, the state legislature passed and Governor George Pataki signed into law a bill allowing the council to eliminate the sales tax on home heating fuels to save New Yorkers money.

However, the council failed to take action and state Senator Frank Padavan (R-C, Bellerose) can't understand why.

"The council's unwillingness to provide relief to all those New Yorkers who so desperately need it is baffling to me," Padavan said in a release. "Eliminating the tax on home heating oils is not the ultimate answer to solving the fuel crisis in our country, but it is most definitely a step in the right direction."

Meng Welcomes New Inspector



From l. to r.: Sandra Ung, Esq., Chief of Staff; Grace Meng, Esq.; Inspector Whelan, Assemblyman Meng and Detective Ki Soo Kim.

Assemblyman Meng (D-Flushing) welcomed Inspector Matthew Whelan, new commandar of the 109th precinct.

He was accompanied by Detective Ki Soo Kim of the 109th Precinct's Community Affairs as they visited Assemblyman Meng in his District Office. Assemblyman Meng stated, "We are happy to welcome Inspector Whelan to his new position and look forward to working together on behalf of the community. We also thank Inspector Thomas Cea for his service to the Flushing community."

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