

# Can Giuliani Lead Republican Resurgence In Queens?

New York state Republican Party leaders joyously and enthusiastically welcomed Rudy Giuliani as their presidential candidate over the past week, pinning their hopes on "America's Mayor" to win the 2008 election and extend the GOP's lease on the White House.

But, win or lose in 2008, the party's strategists are banking on the popular two-term mayor to help the party retain control of the state senate at a minimum.

Beyond that, Queens GOP leader Philip Ragusa has dreams of possibly taking away an Assembly seat from the all-Democratic delegation in Albany or maybe another state senate seat in 2008.

Looking beyond that, Ragusa thinks his reinvigorated Northeast Queens organization might, with Giuliani's help, snap up that area's city council seat and possibly others in the borough.

"I'm sure he'll have coattails that our candidates can grab hold of," said the Whitestone accountant who recently succeeded state Senator Serphin Maltese as the Queens Republican chairman.

Ragusa recalled that Northeast Queens Republicans "gave Rudy the most votes in Queens in his losing and winning mayoral races—and we can easily duplicate that or improve on it with him running for president."

The priority for Ragusa would be to keep both Maltese and Padavan in office as part of the strategy to retain GOP control of the senate for Majority Leader Joseph Bruno.

Ragusa also acknowledged that he and party leaders are eyeing the 26th Assembly District seat, which was the last Assembly seat in Queens to be held by a Republican. Democratic Assemblymember Ann Margaret Carrozza presently holds the seat.

The new GOP county leadership recently held a candidates' school to try to generate some movement of new faces into the political arena. Ragusa is hopeful it will bear some fruit.

He also feels some renegade Dems might somehow fit into their plans to win some legislative seats. Ragusa mentioned that former state Senator Ada Smith surprised him by showing up at the candidates' school, but he was pleased very much by it.

Another similar surprise was that City Councilmember Hiram Monserrate attended the recent \$1,000-a-head senate Republican Campaign Committee fundraiser in Manhattan hosted by Bruno.

Monserrate lost a bitter Democratic primary against incumbent Democrat John Sabini (Jackson Heights) last year by a scant 249 votes. Surely, there's no love lost between Monserrate and the Queens Democratic organization, but what's not so clear is how the Republicans might capitalize on it.

Monserrate will be term limited in 2009, but he hasn't indicated yet whether he'll challenge Sabini again.

Be that as it may, it shows, as Ragusa said, "everything is in play" with Giuliani as the GOP presidential choice in New York state, giving hope for future changes and local legislative victories among Queens Republicans.

**MALONEY SEEKS HELP FOR VETS:** Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D-Queens/Manhattan) asked Secretary of

Veterans Affairs James Nicholson last week to provide health care for war veterans who helped out with the 9/11 Ground Zero cleanup and became ill as a result.

"The 9/11 healthcare crisis is an emergency on a national scale and it requires a federal response," Maloney wrote Nicholson. "The VA should officially recognize the service of sick and disabled World Trade Center veterans and give them the care they need."

## PADAVAN EYES 'PROLIFIC' RISE OF LOCAL BARS:

State Senator Frank Padavan (R-C, Bellerose), citing, "the public outcry" over the prolific rise of drinking and liquor establishments in residential communities, has filed a bill which would increase from 200 to 500 feet the distance a licensed liquor establishment must be from any school, church, synagogue or other place of worship.

Padavan said, "The continual increase of liquor establishments in our communities threatens our quality of life." His legislation would further regulate the growing bar industry, the Northeast Queens lawmaker said. The area consists predominantly of private homes.

**CUOMO NAILS STUDENT LOAN OFFICIALS:** New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo's investigation of the \$85 billion student loan industry nailed a Columbia University official last week. The official, the university's financial aid director, was alleged to have a conflict of interest with a major loan company, according to university documents turned over to Cuomo's office.

Also, in a similar case last week, a Johns Hopkins University financial aid director resigned under fire for allegedly receiving consulting fees from the same company, Student Loan Xpress.

**GOP CALLS GOV 'HYPOCRITE':** Continuing the warfare between Governor Eliot Spitzer and Republican Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno, the GOP leader last week called Spitzer a "hypocrite" because he wants to impose tough campaign finance rules on state legislators while he has not applied them to his own fundraising efforts.

In calling the governor a hypocrite, Bruno declared: "He has two sets of rules, one for himself and one for everybody else. It's a fraud."

A Spitzer spokesperson said the governor's fundraising actions did not contradict his proposed reforms.

Given Bruno's vociferous opposition to Spitzer's proposed reforms and his ability to block approval of them in the state senate, it seems the governor's attempts to get legislative approval for the changes will fail.

Meanwhile, on a separate issue, Spitzer was reported last week as floating a plan to close Aqueduct Racetrack in Ozone Park and conduct all racing downstate at Belmont Park.

Under Spitzer's plan, the Aqueduct property would be sold to developers who would build hotels and convention facilities there. At the same time, Belmont, which is mostly in Nassau County, would be winterized and have video lottery machines installed.

An outspoken critic of the plan is Assemblymember Audrey Pheffer (D) whose district includes Aqueduct. She has said the race-



track is important for the surrounding community.

**MARSHALL OKs JAMAICA REZONING:** A Bloomberg mayoral administration plan to rezone a large swath of Downtown Jamaica has received the blessing of Borough President Helen Marshall—with conditions.

The borough president wants any affordable housing under the plan to be built within the rezoned confines. She also wants parking faci-

ties included in new apartment towers.

The area slated for rezoning, presently zoned for manufacturing, is bounded by the Van Wyck Expressway, Hillside Avenue, Merrick Boulevard and Liberty Avenue. It includes Jamaica Avenue around the Long Island Rail Road terminal.

Apartment buildings as high as 25 stories would be allowed on Jamaica Avenue, structures lower in height on Hillside Avenue.

## Giuliani Embraced By Republicans Throughout The State

BY JOHN TOSCANO

Capping a two-day series of events endorsing him as the New York state Republican Party candidate for president, former Mayor Rudy Giuliani ended a state-wide triumphant tour at the Albany airport where he had still more endorsements heaped on him by GOP lawmakers.

Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno, the most powerful Republican public officeholder in the state, led the combined Assembly and senate GOP delegations and gave the grinning candidate a rousing welcome. Among the lawmakers were Queens' two state senators, Frank Padavan and Serphin Maltese. In interviews on Monday, both said that the hero of 9/11 was the best candidate the Republicans could put forward because of his tough anti-terror positions.

"The number one priority in this election is protecting our nation against terrorism, and Rudy will be the best choice to lead us in the future," Maltese (Middle Village) stated. "Our number one priority will be terror, not abortion or any other issue."

Padavan said Giuliani's main strength was that "he's committed to national security—he knows what the stakes are all about to achieve national security."

Padavan added, "He was good for New York City and he can make a good case nationally for being president."

Giuliani, a two-term mayor of New York City, would also give the Republicans their best chance to retain control of the senate, Maltese said.

"Governor Eliot Spitzer has made it clear he wants to take away our statewide power base," said Maltese, "but with Rudy's support we'll be able to hold on to it."

Giuliani was endorsed on Monday night by the Republican State Committee, led by Joseph Mondello. Expected support for Arizona Senator John McCain never developed, aside from several occasions when he received polite applause.

Mondello said Giuliani had 53 of the state's 62 county committees, with the prospect that all GOP leaders will come over to his side shortly.

Following receipt of the endorsement, Giuliani stated that it was best for the New York GOP to go into the presidential election with a realistic chance of winning. He said the party candidate's chances should not be written off, as in previous presidential and U.S. Senate elections.

The one discordant note to the Giuliani endorsement was that the party faction loyal to former Governor George Pataki was not part of the unity move organized by Mondello.

Also, Mayor Michael Bloomberg said he was remaining neutral in the Republican competition for the party's nomination.

