

Spitzer Takes Page Out Of Bloomberg's 'Get Bruno' Book

If recent history is any indication, in his war with state Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno, Governor Eliot Spitzer could be assured of some success, judging by Mayor Michael Bloomberg's short campaign of threats against Bruno and his senate Republican majority early in the 2006 Albany session.

The mayor at that time was hellbent on securing billions of dollars in school aid for New York City and claimed that the senate Republican majority had not been supportive of New York City school aid.

To really get Bruno's attention, the mayor singled out Senator Serphin Maltese of Middle Village, one of two Queens senate Republicans, as a re-election target. To emphasize the point, billionaire Bloomberg promised he would use his personal funds to back a candidate against Maltese.

The ploy worked. Bruno sat down with the mayor at a peace parley in Manhattan where he promised that the senate GOP members would support the mayor's school funding plan. The threat against Maltese was lifted.

In the present situation, Spitzer and Bruno, who have had fierce clashes since Spitzer took office in January, got into a major tangle as the session ended. The focus of battle was an impasse over Spitzer campaign financing reform, which Bruno flat out opposed.

The issue was unresolved when the legislative session ended recently and several other important pieces of legislation, including Bloomberg's congestion pricing plan, were also not acted on. It all served to fuel the fire between the governor and the powerful senate leader. Without missing a beat as the legislative session ended, Spitzer set out on a campaign designed to discredit Bruno and the Republican majority for abruptly ending their work for the year without acting on important

legislation.

Spitzer set out on a round of visits to Republican strongholds upstate and on Long Island with the express intention of weakening Republican senate incumbents and trying to set them up for strong challenges in the 2008 elections.

In New York City, the governor, backed by the senate Democratic Minority Leader Senator Malcolm Smith, has set his sights on defeating Queens' two Republican senators, Maltese and Frank Padavan, in next year's elections.

In this regard, stories have been leaked that Spitzer's plan is to try to convince Patrolman's Benevolent Association President Patrick J. Lynch to challenge Padavan for the Northeast Queens seat that Padavan (R-C, Bellerose) has held for 35 consecutive years since 1972.

A spokesman for the PBA said that Lynch got a chuckle out of the reports, but there was no truth to them.

Lynch, 43, grew up in Bayside, which is in Padavan's district, and still lives there. For several years, Queens Democrats have eyed Padavan's seat, but several challengers have failed in attempts to unseat the popular and powerful lawmaker in recent years.

Democratic leaders tried to get City Councilmember Tony Avella, a Bayside Democrat, to run against Padavan last year, but Avella decided against it. Now Avella's name has surfaced again as a possible opponent, as has that of Councilmember James Gennaro, who represents a mid-Queens district. Both Avella and Gennaro will end their council careers at the end of 2009 because of term limits.

Presently, no opponent has been mentioned to take on Maltese, who survived an unexpected scare in last year's election as he eked out a victory against Joseph Baldeo of

Ozone Park.

Meanwhile, Spitzer's campaign of attacks against Bruno continues. The latest foray by the governor is a reported charge that Bruno used state aircraft for political trips to New York City. Reportedly, state Inspector General Kristine Haman is looking into the charge.

Spitzer has drawn some flack on trips into Republican strongholds on Long Island and upstate, but shows no sign of calling it quits. Neither is there any sign that Bruno is ready to cave in and agree to approve Spitzer's pet project, campaign finance reform.

This is where Mayor Bloomberg's successful campaign against Bruno last year and Spitzer's current battle differ. However, that could change in the future.

WEINER IN WICKED CLASH: Congressman Anthony Weiner (D-Queens, Brooklyn) was sporting a black eye last week in Washington, compliments of Democratic colleague Jim Marshall (D-Georgia). But it didn't have anything to do with any clash over legislation or policy.

Weiner got the shiner when he and Marshall ran into each other—literally and at breakneck speed—on the baseball diamond at the annual Democrats-vs.-Republicans game nine days ago under the lights at RFK Stadium.

Weiner, wearing a Mets jersey bearing his name, was playing center field in the seventh inning when someone blasted a long fly ball to left center field. Weiner gave chase, got within feet of the ball, dove for it and collided with Marshall, the left fielder.

Weiner lost all chance of making a great catch as Marshall spiked him in the leg with one foot and kicked him in the face with the other, giving him the black eye. Marshall was unhurt.

Worse still, the Republicans won the game, 5-2, their seventh straight victory, thanks to nine errors recorded by the hapless Dems.

For the Brooklyn-born Weiner, summing

up the annual game came easy: "Wait 'til next year," he sighed, to be expected from a life-long Dodgers fan.

PROGRESSIVE DEMS AWARDS: The Queens County Progressive Democratic Club (QCPDC) recently held its annual awards dinner. The Rising Star Award was presented to state Senate Minority Leader Malcolm Smith (D-Jamaica); the Labor Leader of the Year Award to Anthony Speelman, Executive VP UFCW Local 1500; the Community Service Award to Jerry Iannece; Activist of the Year Awards to Albert Baldeo and Grace Meng. The QCPDC resulted from the merger of the Eastern Queens Democratic Club and the New American Organization of New York.

WEPRIN, GENNARO PERSIST: Councilmembers James Gennaro (Fresh Meadows) and David Weprin (Hollis), both Democrats, reported last week they're still trying to change how the New York City Water Board disposes of the funds it collects from property owners each year.

This year, the board is expected to collect a total of about \$155 million. Seventy-five million of that will go into the city's general fund unless Weprin and Gennaro are successful in changing the 20-year-old agreement and can direct that the \$75 million be used to offset an 11.5 percent water rate increase imposed on homeowners this year.

MONSERRATE SEEKS CHANGE: Councilmember Hiram Monserrate (D-Corona) is urging Schools Chancellor Joel Klein to petition the federal courts to revise or eliminate a 1974 federal court order which covers admissions to Magnet schools in New York City.

Monserrate said that under the 1974 court order, admissions are based on quotas, an "antiquated and outdated" system that disenfranchises "communities of color".

The lawmaker called for the action by Klein on behalf of Nikita Rau, a student at I.S. 239, the Mark Twain school, and other students denied access to Magnet schools.



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