

Finally, Thompson Gets Into Rudy's Path To GOP Nomination

It has been about a month since Fred Thompson, a low-key Tennessean, entered the race for the Republican presidential nomination, bringing with him the hopes of the party's conservative wing of overtaking frontrunner Rudy Giuliani.

Although national polls immediately following Thompson's long-delayed entrance into the race showed him fairly close to Giuliani, his subdued style later gave indications that the former United States Senator was losing his initial surge against Giuliani and not making much impact overall in the GOP field.

However, there could be some change in that picture because of recent events. Thompson made his first appearance in a debate against the Republican hopefuls last night in Detroit, which will surely provide some evidence as to how he stacks up against Giuliani, Mitt Romney and Senator John McCain.

The *Gazette* went to press several hours before the candidates debated. We do, however, expect extensive coverage in the print and broadcast media, and local press to do major reporting on its impact.

Thompson, who has been playing the district attorney on the "Law and Order" television series, will get a more prominent New York City platform to pursue Giuliani on his home turf next Monday night, when he will be the featured speaker at the state Conservative Party fall dinner at the Sheraton Hotel and Towers in Manhattan.

This event may or may not have any impact on Thompson's chances against Giuliani in the national campaign for the Republican presidential nomination, but it surely could have a great bearing on Giuliani's chances of winning New York state and its electoral votes if, as expected, he faces off against Democratic Senator Hillary Clinton in the general election next year.

The latest Quinnipiac University poll shows Clinton leading Giuliani in New York State by a 48-to-41 count. If Thompson runs on the Conservative Party line in New York, he could easily siphon off enough Republican votes to assure a Clinton victory here.

It's still a long way for party tickets to be firmed up, but Conservative Party State Chairman Michael Long sounded last week like Thompson could appear on his party's ballot line.

Long, whose organization did not support Giuliani in any of his three races for mayor, stated in announcing Thompson's appearance at the dinner, "Thompson has a lion's share of support at the moment among New York Conservatives—we're very honored and pleased he will speak."

In other comments by Long affirming how favorably Thompson is regarded, he said that Thompson is closer to the ideals of the Conservatives, and that Thompson's positions are more aligned with Conservatives' opposition to Giuliani's sup-

port for abortion rights and gun control, among other issues.

Another old Giuliani foe, former U.S. Senator Alfonse D'Amato, has also emerged in Thompson's corner in the presidential squabbling. D'Amato, who helped defeat Giuliani in the 1989 mayoral race by aiding in organizing a primary challenge earlier that year, helped Thompson prepare for last night's debate by playing the role of New York City's ex-mayor in mock debates with

Thompson.

TABONE MOVES UP: Still on the subject of Giuliani, we heard from Vince Tabone, one of his most loyal and staunchest supporters in Queens last week. Tabone, at one time the driving force behind the Republican organization in Astoria/Long Island City who moved to Bayside several years ago is now a key player in the Queens Republican organization under the new county leader, Philip Ragusa.

Tabone, an attorney, became vice chairman of the county organization under Ragusa and last week was elected District Chairman in the 26th Assembly District, which is headed by Ragusa and Gloria Piekarski. Tabone succeeded Joseph Papillo as district chairman after Papillo resigned for

personal reasons. The 26th AD club is the largest in Eastern Queens.

Tabone played a key role in Giuliani's two mayoral victories and then served in the Giuliani and Bloomberg administrations in the citywide Economic Development Corporation, with primary responsibility for economic development in Queens. He is now in private practice and supporting the Giuliani campaign in Queens and New York State.

ADD PATERSON AS POSSIBLE HILLARY REPLACEMENT: There's already a long list of those interested in replacing Hillary Clinton as New York State's junior U.S. Senator if Clinton is elected president in 2009. Among them are Queens Congressmembers Carolyn Maloney and Gregory Meeks, Manhattan's Jerrold Nadler and Nita Lowey of Westchester.

Recently the name of Lieutenant Governor David Paterson was added to the list, and some say even state Attorney General Andrew Cuomo is being mentioned. Environmentalist Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s name is also being mentioned in Albany.

If Clinton does move into the White House, choosing her replacement will rest solely with Governor Eliot Spitzer. This raises the possibility that the man in Albany closest to the governor—Paterson—might have the inside track, especially because the Harlem Democrat is interested in the Washington appointment.

That would leave a lot of disappointed pols whose only option would be to run for

the job when it's up for election, but the incumbent—whoever he or she is—would have a huge advantage.

KATZ FUNDRAISER: City Councilmember Melinda Katz, who's eyeing the city comptroller job in the 2009 election when she'll be term limited out of her present position, will be given a fundraiser by Friends of Melinda Katz on Tuesday, October 23 in her home district at the Forest Hills Jewish Center, 106-06 Queens Blvd.

Others seeking the comptroller post are Councilmember David Weprin (D-Hollis) and possibly Councilmembers Simcha Felder and David Yassky, both from Brooklyn. Another possibility is Assemblymember James Brennan, also a Brooklyn Democrat.

LEGISLATIVE REVUE ON TAP: Almost every Queens lawmaker at every level of government will forget official duties the evening of November 17 and pick up a guitar or don tap shoes to take part in the annual Legislative Revue at Queens Theater in the Park in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park.

They'll be greeted by their colleagues in government, lobbyists, friends, families and anyone who loves a fun night. Festivities begin at 7:30 p.m. and end at the after-the-show cast and sponsor dessert extravaganza.

For ticket information call any lawmaker or Queens Theater In The Park. Sponsors are Con Edison, New York Hospital Queens, Flushing Savings Bank and Citibank, among others.

Vallone Tops Council Colleagues In Introducing Bills

BY JOHN TOSCANO

Among the 51 members of the New York City Council, whose job it is to pass the laws that control the conduct of the city's residents and improve their quality of life, the most prolific sponsor of proposed laws in the 2006 session is Councilmember Peter Vallone Jr., according to an analysis done by the Citizens Union government watchdog organization.

In an article in the October issue of the *Gotham Gazette*, the organization's monthly publication, Vallone (D-Astoria) led his colleagues by introducing 54 bills in the 21-month period from January 2006 to Sept. 10, 2007. Of those, 14 were passed by the Council.

Two other Queens councilmembers, David Weprin (D-Hollis) and James Gennaro (D-Fresh Meadows) followed Vallone in the listing of the top 10 bill sponsors.

Another Queens councilmember in the top 10 was Tony Avella (D-Bayside).

Weprin, chairman of the Finance Committee, introduced 48 bills and 20 were passed, the second highest in the top 10 listing.

Gennaro, chair of the Environmental Protection Committee, had 47 bills introduced and 13 passed; Avella had 39 introductions, of which four passed.

The highest number of passed bills (28) was achieved by Council Speaker Christine Quinn, who introduced 37 measures. Quinn has an advantage over her colleagues because as Speaker and leader of the legislative body, her name goes on the most important bills introduced and supported by the Democratic majority.

In the article, written by Courtney Gross, Vallone states that getting legislation to the council floor is a combination of good ideas, being aggressive in explaining a bill's values and cooperating with other members.

He also stated, "I think a lot of it has to do with the merit of the laws that are introduced."

This would explain why many of Vallone's bills get passed. Many of his proposals and approved bills deal with public safety issues, attempts to restrict graffiti, helping to develop anti-terror defenses and school safety issues. His position as Public Safety Committee chairman helps to move his legislation along, as does Weprin's position in his case.

Part of the advantage of being Finance chairman is that in many cases, Weprin has become the man the Bloomberg administration goes to, and asks to introduce the mayor's legislative proposals.

In the 21 months covered by the *Gotham Gazette* analysis, the mayor requested that Weprin present 11 out of his 48 introductions.

Vallone and Weprin also benefit from a favorable relationship with Quinn, since the Speaker controls the flow of legislation and she also controls the activities of the heavy (47-4) Democratic majority, which provides the votes to get bills passed.

But the reverse is also true. A councilmember sometimes disagrees with the Speaker's position on an important bill, as Avella has done on occasion.

Avella explains in the article, "There are members of the City Council that fall in line [behind Speaker Quinn] no matter what. If you're independent and you speak your mind [as Avella is and does] you get punished."

The Bayside lawmaker cites as an example his bill that would have required the replacement of damaged "STOP" signs within 48 hours. He says Quinn blocked the bill, though it eventually passed with Councilmember Joseph Addabbo Jr. (D-Ozone Park) as sponsor.

