

# Paterson Faces Many & Varied Pressures In Choosing Clinton's Successor In Senate



President-elect Barack Obama's choice of U.S. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton for Secretary of State will probably turn out to be a far easier chore than Governor David Paterson's job of selecting someone to replace Clinton as New York State's junior senator.

Complicating Paterson's choice is pressure from various constituencies—black, Hispanic and upstate, all of which also highlight the political aspect that will enter into Paterson's pick. Paterson must also be concerned that the choice he makes to serve through 2009 and 2010 must have sufficient clout as a candidate to win the special election in November 2010. The winner will serve out the final two years of Clinton's term.

According to past practice, Clinton's nomination by Obama will not go to the Senate for confirmation until Obama is sworn in next January 20. Clinton has also said she will continue to serve in her present position until she's confirmed by her colleagues as Secretary of State.

Paterson is aware of these key dates. He said on Monday, "I expect to announce Senator Clinton's replacement when the position becomes officially vacant"—which means by the end of the confirmation process.

Bearing all this in mind, the latest list of possible replacements we know of consists of New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo, Congressmembers Carolyn Maloney, Gregory Meeks and Nydia Velazquez, all from the New York City delegation, Congressmember Steven Israel from Long Island and Nassau County Executive Thomas Suozzi.

Upstate Congressmembers being mentioned as possible choices are Louise Slaughter and Kirsten Gillibrand, and Brian Higgins. Also from upstate is Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown, who is black.

Drawing some interest from outside of the legislative circle are cousins Caroline Kennedy and Robert Kennedy Jr.

Cuomo has been mentioned most prominently of those listed. He has held a federal cabinet position, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development in Bill Clinton's

administration. Cuomo has also so distinguished himself in his present post that he could be a rival to Paterson in the 2010 gubernatorial election, which might give Paterson a good reason to offer Cuomo the open senate seat.

Maloney has established herself as a powerful lawmaker during her 16 years in Congress; Velazquez' Hispanic background makes her a contender and Meeks is a leading black congressmember. Ethnicity also puts Buffalo's Mayor Brown in consideration.

As for Velazquez, one political pundit has made the point that Paterson might be persuaded to select her for Clinton's job in order to win Hispanic support in the state senate for Senator Malcolm Smith, who is black.

Two Hispanic Democratic senators who have been threatening to bolt to the Republican side, rather than join with their Democratic colleagues to make Smith the Majority Leader, have complained that there are no Hispanics in statewide or otherwise prominent positions. Paterson's selection of Velazquez as the new U.S. Senator can shore up Smith's position and give Democrats their long-sought majority control of the state senate.

**CROWLEY: MUMBAI IS WAKE-UP CALL:** The Mumbai terror attack in India last week, which took the lives of 174 people and wounded many more, "serves as a wake-up call to the global community", Congressmember Joseph Crowley declared.

While first extending his prayers and condolences to the people of Mumbai, their friends and families, many of whom live in

the Jackson Heights portion of his district, Crowley (D-Queens/The Bronx) said the terrorist attack showed terrorism is not a threat to the West alone. "This horrific event serves as a wake-up call to the global community. We need to come together to fight terrorism at its root—poverty and autocratic rule. We need to expand international anti-terrorism cooperation, humanitarian efforts and the promotion of democracy worldwide," he declared.

In his statement, issued on Thanksgiving Day, Crowley said, "Today, as we give thanks for our blessings, we must also take a moment to remember Mumbai."

**WEINER BLASTS CITY FOR BASEBALL PERKS:** Lashing out at the Bloomberg administration for its efforts to secure a luxury box at the new Yankee Stadium, Congressmember Anthony Weiner (D-Queens/Brooklyn) stated: "It is wrong for city officials to trade tax breaks for luxury perks at a baseball stadium. During these challenging economic times, the city should have the Yankees repay the city for the value of these luxury boxes or auction them off. If city officials want to catch a game, they should purchase tickets, just like every other New Yorker."

In October, Weiner, co-chair of the Bipartisan Congressional Caucus on the Middle Class, released an analysis of luxury box perks at the new Yankee and Mets stadiums and found that the \$1.3 million the city could retrieve from selling the luxury box would hire 29 new teachers, 30 more cops, 36 more firefighters and build one new Little League field.

**GIOIA: LET'S CELEBRATE OBAMA'S INAUGURATION:** Councilmember Eric Gioia (D-Long Island

City), envisioning a spectacular way for all of New York City to celebrate President-elect Barack Obama's historic swearing-in as president of the United States and his giving his inaugural address, has proposed to Mayor Michael Bloomberg that jumbotron-style television screens be erected in Central Park or another suitable location "so that New Yorkers can come together and share in this historic moment".

The city has a long tradition of celebrating exceptional achievements, Gioia said, and certainly Obama's election and swearing-in fall into that category so the mayor should make it happen, Gioia said.

**REPORT SEMINERIO LOOKING FOR PLEA DEAL:** Assemblymember Anthony Seminerio, who's facing a possible 20 years in prison for allegedly engaging in an influence peddling scheme that enriched him by half a million dollars, would like to make a plea deal with federal prosecutors because, his lawyer says, he's too sick to go to jail.

According to a *Daily News* story last week, tough sentencing guidelines for elected officials who are found guilty in a trial or who plead guilty are making it difficult for Seminerio to avoid going to jail for a long time. Seminerio, 73 and a 30-year Assembly veteran, has not been indicted yet, but his attorney has held preliminary talks regarding a possible plea deal.

Seminerio is due to appear in court on the charges next Wednesday. His attorney said the Richmond Hill/Ozone Park lawmaker has been offered "something to plead to, but it would open him up to those sentencing guidelines". The talks will go on, but it doesn't appear there's an easy way out for Seminerio at this point.

## Holder, Product Of East Elmhurst, Nominated By Obama For AG

Eric Holder, who grew up in East Elmhurst, was nominated by President-elect Barack Obama to serve as Attorney General in his cabinet. However, Holder may have a rough time getting approved by the Senate judiciary committee.

Holder, who would be the first African-American to hold the powerful attorney general post, had served for a time as a deputy attorney general in the administration of President Bill Clinton. In 2001, he played a role in Clinton's controversial pardon of billionaire financier Marc Rich, who had fled the country rather than face federal tax evasion charges.

Supporters of Holder, 57, and now in private practice in Washington, portray him as having a minor part in Clinton's pardoning of Rich. Some sources, though, say the record in the case shows he was fairly deeply involved.

Ultimately, Holder's recommendation to the White House was "neutral leaning toward favorable", according to a *New York Times* story yesterday. That helped to ensure that Clinton signed the pardon papers.

Although Obama's aides ran the Holder appointment by Republicans on the Judiciary Committee before Obama decided to go forward with the nomination, some strong objections to his nomination appear to have arisen among some Republican senators who control the committee.

However, Holder's supporters point out that he had an unblemished record, except for the Rich episode, and that issue alone should not be enough for the Republicans to block the nomination.

The nomination will not go to the Judiciary Committee until after Obama is sworn in as president on January 20. Between now and then, there likely will be some further talks between the Obama team and the Republicans, but no action will be taken on the nomination until after Inauguration Day.—**John Toscano**

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