NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

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Candidates Keeping Low Profile

Democracy is pretty sloppy on good days, but candidates for city office this year are trying to cope with a national calamity and one of the busiest elections in local history.

Candidates have largely taken a back seat to the human tragedy, but they do keep popping up in highly visible venues.

City Council Speaker Peter Vallone (D-Astoria) has been at several press conferences with Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, and his aides say he is acting in his capacity as the city's legislative leader, not as a candidate for mayor.

Another mayoral candidate, Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer, was spotted earlier this week accompanying labor leaders John Sweeney and Dennis Rivera to a memorial Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Betsy Gotbaum, a candidate for public advocate, said her campaign office at 50 West St. in lower Manhattan was wiped out by the terror attack.

"I don't know what to do. I don't want to campaign," she said yesterday. "I guess we'll start campaigning Monday. I don't know what to do."

She said she was working on a project to buy new ambulances for volunteer companies that lost their vehicles in the World Trade Center collapse. "I'm feeling useful again. That gives me a big boost."

POLS & POLITICS

The campaign staff of City Councilman Herbert Berman (D-Brooklyn), a candidate for comptroller, finally got back into their offices yesterday at 225 Broadway, just north of the scene.

The offices had been used as a triage center during the aftermath and they were a wreck, according to campaign spokeswoman Carolyn Daly.

"At this point, there is no campaign infrastructure," she said. "We can't find computers. We can't find mailing lists.

"The office certainly was put to good use as a triage center."

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Check the Postmark. Candidates keep sending out mailings, but designed to look like they were printed before the Trade Center attack.

One mailing to Queens Republicans this week has Michael Bloomberg promising to "build on Republican accomplishments" — a not-too-subtle reference to the stability for which Republican Mayor Rudolph Giuliani has gotten credit.

The glossy mailing shows Bloomberg talking to two police officers: one on a NYPD motorcycle, the other standing nearby.

A Vallone mailing that also started dropping in mailboxes this week pushed his plan to have the city pick up coverage for prescription drugs to senior citizens of moderate income.

Both mailings urged voters to cast their ballots in the Sept. 11th primary, which is now the Sept. 25th primary.

AP File Photo

On Aug. 22, candidate for public advocate Betsy Gotbaum talked with rivals, from left, Willie Colon, Scott Stringer and Steven DiBrienza after a debate. Not quite three weeks later, Gotbaum's office was wiped out in the terrorist attacks.

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'People Have Been Generous.' While fallout from the Trade Center attack might have an impact on some candidates, particularly those of South Asian ancestry, Jairam Thakral said it hasn't affected him.

Thakral, who came here from India in 1971, said there has been no change in attitude toward him in the eastern Queens City Council district, where he seeks to replace Sheldon Leffler.

"Certainly not," Thakral declared. "People have been generous. I stand outside my house. I have my American flag out — at half staff."

Since the Sept. 11 attacks, people from such countries as India and Pakistan, like those of Arab descent, have faced incidents of harassment and bias.

Thakral's latest mailing was done jointly with Vallone and Carol Gresser, candidate for Queens borough president.

It arrived in mailboxes before the attack. It has an artsy front that shows a portion of the Statue of Liberty with stars worked in and faint image of a flag.

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How Will They Call It? Pundits are going to have field day after the votes are tallied Tuesday. People who voted early in the day Sept. 11 will not have their vote counted. They will have to vote again.

What does that mean? "Jewish voters vote early and that was a vote for Peter Vallone," one political insider asserted yesterday.

That probably means that Jewish voters, who are thought to have a high turnout, will come out again Tuesday.

Another concern, several political observers said yesterday, was providing the usual police presence at polling places.

Every polling place normally has a uniformed officer highly visible from the time the polls open at 6 a.m. until they close at 9 p.m.

The police are stretched a bit thin these days, and they will have one more job to do Tuesday.

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