

DAILY NEWS, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2001

Give us chance to keep Rudy

Great news: Rudy's rethinking.

After earlier dismissing any suggestion that the law be changed so he could remain in office after his term expires in January, the mayor told CNN's Larry King on Tuesday night that he "doesn't know" whether he'd run again if the term-limit statute forcing him to step aside was repealed.

"I don't know what the right thing to do is," Giuliani said. "I do not know."

Well, I know — and I think tens of thousands of other New Yorkers know, too.

It's already a cliché, but the world has changed forever — and in New York, the new world demands that we have the choice of giving Rudy a third term.



MICHAEL KRAMER

Whatever one's quarrels with the mayor — and many including me have had plenty — the capacity for greatness that Giuliani has shown in the aftermath of last week's demonic catastrophe is exactly what the city needs.

The mayor's job description has changed. New York has to rebuild and guard against similar atrocities in the future. No one could fill that role better than Giuliani.

For several days, Rudy said he would work hard to prepare his successor to rise to the incredible challenges the next mayor will face — and he surely would.

But why should he have to if there's another way.

This doesn't mean that I doubt the ability of a new mayor to perform well. Whoever he is, he'll have ample help (the best among us should volunteer to serve in his administration), the goodwill of every New Yorker and, if he's smart, Rudy's advice and counsel.

Time to be Trumanesque

The experience of Harry Truman proves that even those previously considered inadequate can govern superbly when, as Truman said following Franklin Delano Roosevelt's death, "the moon and the stars" fall on them.

But Rudy's not FDR. He's alive and vibrant and up to the task. Having him fade away when we most need him — and when we can fashion a way to keep him — would be folly.

The road is clear.

The state Legislature should repeat the term-limit law for the mayoralty only.

Term limits can be continued for every other office — but the asymmetrical system that would result is not unknown. The President, for example, is restricted to two terms while members of Congress can

serve forever — and similar bifurcated arrangements exist in many states.

When extending the mayor's term was suggested, Giuliani and those eager to succeed him unanimously panned the idea as a perversion of democracy.

I agree. Extending Rudy's term would abridge the electoral process and hand the terror-

ists another victory.

What I'm suggesting, though, is different — a scheme to allow New Yorkers to reelect Rudy.

The postponed primary could still take place on its new date, Tuesday, the 25th — and a runoff, if necessary, could follow on Oct. 11.

But on Election Day in November, there should be a chance to vote for Giuliani.

Perhaps a way can be contrived to have him on the ballot. Perhaps voters could simply write in his name.

Making it possible

But those are merely mechanical and logistical hurdles.

The point is to democratically expand our choices to permit the possibility of returning Giuliani to City Hall.

This Sunday, the six mayoral candidates will appear on television in a WNBC-TV special. It won't be another debate. Each man will have nine minutes to make a statement — and each should seize that opportunity to support this idea, or some other geared to the same goal.

As the candidates speak, I urge voters to carefully note who supports this idea and who doesn't. Those who do should be remembered fondly if and when they choose to run again; those who don't should see their political careers ended.

In one way or another, all the candidates have said that no one is a Republican or a Democrat these days. Rather, they've said, we are all Americans and New Yorkers.

The simple way for them to give content to those expressions is to embrace the idea of expanding our choice for mayor.

E-mail: mikramer@edit.nydailynews

Mayor's not



GROTESQUE Guardsman stands silhouetted in the night against outline of fence and the illuminated, twisted shards of the fallen twin towers.

MIKE ALBANO/DAILY NEWS

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DAILY NEWS, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2001

likely to get extra term

Law limits tenure

By JOE MAHONEY and MICHAEL R. BLOOD
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITERS

Despite growing sentiment that Mayor Giuliani be allowed to stay on in City Hall, prospects for his continued tenure appeared remote yesterday.

The Legislature would have to take the extraordinary step of lifting the city's term-limits law and postponing the mayoral election — and Albany insiders said they saw virtually no chance it would do so.

"I think the election will proceed as scheduled," said David Sidikman (D-Plainview), chairman of the Assembly Elections committee. "I don't see any of these rumors coming to fruition."

Since last week's terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, support has grown for Giuliani, who has been widely praised for his management and compassion, to stay on as mayor.

Even former Mayor Ed Koch, a frequent adversary, pointed out that voters could mount a write-in campaign for the mayor in Tuesday's primary.

But term-limits law bars Giuliani from taking office even if he wins.

The intrigue has been driven in part by Giuliani, who has made conflicting statements about whether he would consider remaining at the helm in City Hall.

On Monday, Giuliani said he should leave Dec. 31, as required by term-limits law, but in later interviews appeared to leave the door open to a call to stay.

"Those are things to think about and discuss, but it almost doesn't seem right to be talking about that right now," Giuliani told reporters yesterday.

Legal experts say it would take intervention by the Legislature and Gov. Pataki to keep Giuliani in office.

Bills would have to be rushed through be-

fore Tuesday's primary to override the term-limits law and suspend the election — radical steps by any measure.

Pataki said little yesterday to give the impression he would pressure the Legislature on Giuliani's behalf.

"We are still focused simply on the relief effort and the effort to try to deal with the immediate problems," Pataki said. "We'll be talking with the mayor and other people" about the status of the mayoral election.

Asked later to clarify whether he was considering postponing the primary, he said, "When I made that decision [to reschedule the primary for Tuesday], I didn't make a unilateral decision. I discussed it with the political leaders of the parties and the potential candidates. As we go forward, we'll continue that type of discussion."

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver has said repeatedly that the election should take place as scheduled.

Albany insiders said he was not about to upset an election that recent polls suggest will end with a Democrat taking over the mayor's office after eight years of Republican rule.

The talk of an extended term for Giuliani has created a growing sense of impatience in mayoral campaigns, which have been pushed into near-anonymity since the Trade Center fell.



MICHAEL APPLETON

Mayor Giuliani bows head during yesterday's meeting with French President Jacques Chirac at Pier 94. There's been talk the mayor should continue in office for awhile. But chances of that happening seem unlikely.

Hearing ordered on pushing back primary

By SCOTT SHIFFRIL
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

A federal judge ordered a hearing today to decide whether to postpone Tuesday's primary election and the Nov. 6 general election.

Brooklyn Federal Judge Leo Glasser will consider a lawsuit filed by nine City Council candidates and five voters that asked that the primary — already pushed back two weeks from Sept. 11 — be delayed at least until Oct. 9.

"The New York City election process is still in utter chaos," according to the suit, which claims the election would vio-

late the Voting Rights Act and the First and 14th amendments to the Constitution.

The Board of Elections is just blocks from the World Trade Center and has been hit hard by the disaster.

The board's deputy director, Joseph Gentili, said he doesn't think the board will have preliminary results of most races — including the mayoral contest — until the weekend following the vote.

The board's computers were not yet fully functional as of yesterday, and officials do not expect to have the help of the central police computers, which

are used for tabulating preliminary results.

"The police came down and told us that they cannot do it," Gentili said. "The computer lines that would send the results are out. The lines themselves physically no longer exist."

The board also doesn't have access to the names of all registered voters and is using a telephone tree to contact 30,000 poll workers.

Still, Gentili, who would not comment on the suit, vowed that the election will go off with few hitches.

"The effect of this [disaster]

is huge, of course, but we are absolutely going to get it done," he said.

The suit notes that the city is still grieving from its loss.

There are more than 140 Council candidates, as well as six candidates for mayor and seven for public advocate, leading most analysts to predict at least one runoff.

None of the mayoral candidates would comment on the case, but a spokesman for state Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, who is also named in the suit, said the state will fight it.

"We believe this matter to be without merit," said Marc Moullette. "The rescheduling of the

primary election and possible runoff was conducted by the city and the state in a constitutional manner."

The Legislature passed a law last Thursday rescheduling the election for next Tuesday and any possible runoffs two weeks later.

At the time, public advocate candidate Norman Siegel urged Gov. Pataki to push back the election further, but the governor ignored him.

Siegel's attorney, Paul Wooten, filed the suit, but Siegel disavowed any connection to it.

"I'm still troubled whether the Board of Elections can conduct this election," Siegel said. "But once it's been set, to unset it now could create further confusion."

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