

DAILY NEWS, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2001

Next mayor can pick up without a lapse on Jan. 1

The arguments for Rudy Giuliani remaining mayor beyond Dec. 31 don't hold water.

First, there is the "Rudy is indispensable" argument. Yes, the mayor has been like the Energizer Bunny: He's at the site of what was the World Trade Center, he's at funerals and memorial services, he's at ballgames and weddings, he was at the United Nations yesterday.

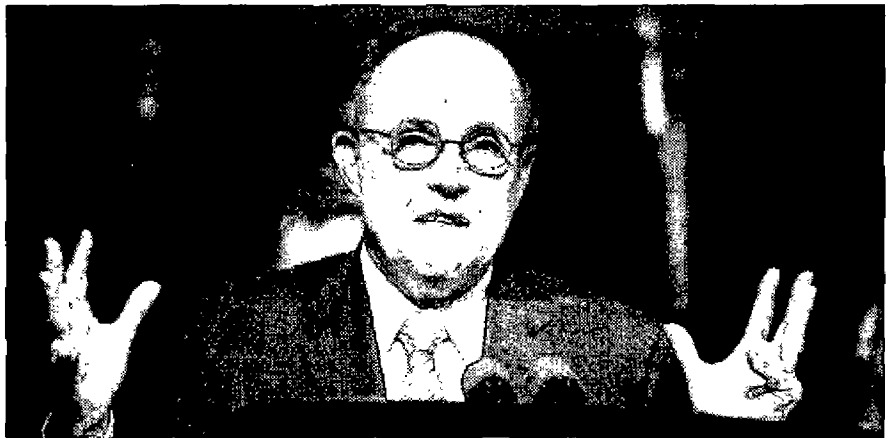
But truth be told, he is the front man for an operation that would work well no matter who holds the title of mayor. Firefighters, medical technicians, cops, volunteers — they would be at that site doing what they are doing so heroically no matter who was addressed as "Mr. Mayor."

There's this argument: An extraordinary time calls for extraordinary measures. But this city and nation have experienced great crises before and didn't cancel elections or ignore laws, such as the one that bars city officeholders from serving more than two consecutive terms.

Mark Green, Democrat, and Mike Bloomberg, Republican, are playing to poll numbers showing Giuliani is enormously popular now. Bloomberg doesn't surprise when he says he'd step aside for Giuliani; he is, after all, an acolyte. Green has shown himself more of a chameleon than even I thought possible by going along with extending Giuliani's term.

Only Fernando Ferrer, who competes with Green for the Democratic nomination, seems sure he could do the job from Day One, which, by the way, is not Jan. 1, but Nov. 7 — the day after the general election. "If I cannot address a crisis, and if I need to be an apprentice for Rudy," Ferrer said, "then why am I wasting the people's time with my candidacy? I am ready now."

Giuliani, in trying to make the case for an extension, has said: "I am concerned about the learning curve for these candi-



MICHAEL APPLETON

Giuliani is frontman for an operation that would go on no matter who's mayor.

dates." If he is, then he'll begin including the mayor-elect in briefings from the moment a victor is announced. He might even start now with all three candidates.

There is the argument that says we can't afford novices. Well, think about it. The only novice is Bloomberg, and if he's the victor, you can bet your bottom dollar he'll retain much of the Giuliani team, at least until he learns his way to the bathroom.

But Green has been around City Hall for 11 years, first as consumer affairs commissioner, then as public advocate. Ferrer is no stranger to City Hall, either. He was on the City Council and for the last 14 years has been the Bronx borough president.

With their experience, with nothing keeping the police and fire commissioners



from leaving office, with the permanent government of senior public officials — some elected, some not — financiers, media moguls, Realtors, academics, socialites, fixers, etc., there'll be no gap in the running of city government or even in the management of this crisis.

By the way, no one is banishing Giuliani from the city after Dec. 31. If he wants to help, he can. There is no dearth of suggestions of what role he might

play — everything from security chief to head of a commission to plan and oversee the rebuilding of lower Manhattan.

At the UN, the mayor asserted: "We do not let fear make our decisions for us." If we heed his words, then we shouldn't fear the transition from one elected mayor to another elected one. Nor should he.

E-mail: eshipp@edit.nydailynews.com

CITY_21MC100_011830512