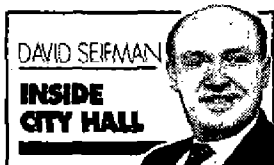


# Voice of the speaker still a puzzle



**T**HE runoff election on Thursday that determines the Democratic nominee for mayor could also seal the deal on the next speaker of the City Council — the second most important post in city government.

The speaker, who approves the city budget and oversees all legislation, is selected by a vote of the 51 council members.

The next mayor will be the most important player in the behind-the-scenes power scramble.

"Whoever the next mayor is will have enormous impact," said one insider involved in the maneuvering.

If Fernando Ferrer wins, Angel Rodriguez (D-Brooklyn) will probably have a tougher time assuming the speaker's post.

"Are we going to have a Latino mayor and a Latino speaker?" wondered the insider.

On the other hand, Mark Green would presumably want to align himself with a black or Latino speaker — even though many of the

minorities in contention are backing Ferrer.

Another bloc to be reckoned with in the political chess game are the 13 returning council members — a minority, since most of the council members are newly elected — who've agreed informally not to back a newcomer as their next leader.

"I don't know if it'll hold," said one of the veterans. "But the situation the city is in speaks to the need of having someone with experience."

One of those veterans, Tracy Boyland (Brooklyn), was holding court in the Brooklyn Marriott this week trying to round up votes.

Others in the speaker's mix include: Gifford Miller (Manhattan), Phil Reed (Manhattan), Bill Perkins (Manhattan) and newcomers David Weprin and Melinda Katz of Queens, as well as Al Vann and Bill DeBlasio of Brooklyn.

Employees of a firm hired to monitor the cleanup of the World Trade Center contributed thousands of dollars to Mayor Giuliani's aborted U.S. Senate campaign last year.

Campaign-finance records show that 51 individuals at PriceWaterhouse-Coopers gave \$35,000 to Giuliani's campaign coffers. Investigation Commis-

sioner Edward Kuriansky announced Thursday that PriceWaterhouse was one of four companies selected to oversee contractors removing more than a million tons of rubble.

Kuriansky said the firms were hired based on their expertise.

"All four of the monitoring firms are run by former state or federal prosecutors with exceptional reputations," he said.

A mayoral aide said the selections are left to officials in the Law Department and Department of Investigation.

"The mayor has nothing to do with this," said the aide.

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