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# Green Takes On Ferrer Backers

## Hours after runoff, candidate begins rallying for more support

By Robert Polner
STAFF WRITER

Mark Green, operating with little sleep after securing the Democratic mayoral runoff, worked hard Friday to assuage crestfallen supporters of rival Democrat Fernando Ferrer and enlist their backing in the Nov. 6 general election.

Starting early Friday morning, as well as late the night before, Green made calls to such supporters of the Bronx borough president's campaign as city teachers union president Randi Weingarten, state Comptroller Carl McCall, and U.S. Rep. Gregory Meeks (D-Queens).

"He must have made 50 or 60 calls," said Green spokesman Joe DePlasco. "There's nothing unusual about that. It's what you do after a primary. You reach out to those who supported your opponent, and you ask them to join you for the sake of party unity."

But the new party standard-bearer's hectic day — which included his first news conference with Sens. Hillary Rodham Clinton and Charles Schumer — was conducted amid simmering racial resentment over Green's 11th-hour attack ad questioning Ferrer's capabilities.

The Green campaign has insisted that the ad's closing message — "Can We Afford to Take a Chance?" — was based on a newspaper editorial, which had depicted Ferrer's response to the World Trade Center attacks as somewhat vague and nearly irresponsible.

But many of Ferrer backers detected a coded message to elicit a white backlash. Whites in the end voted overwhelmingly for Green, tipping the balance for him, according to exit polls.

Some Ferrer supporters now want the borough president to ask his predominantly Latino and black followers to shun Green for the Republican mayoral candidate, Michael Bloomberg — the better to run against in 2005.

Ferrer, however, pledged in the final debate of the runoff last week to back the Democratic nominee if he lost. He was not commenting Friday.

"There's a strong sense that Mark Green made Al Sharpton into the Willie Horton of the runoff and played upon the fears of white New Yorkers that a Latino from the Bronx might not be competent to run the city," said Phillip Thompson, associate professor of political science at Columbia University.

Green downplayed talk of resentment Friday. At his appearance with the two senators, though, he praised Ferrer for running an "extraordinary, passionate, principled, inspiring race," and noted the Bronx borough president's history of working with Latino and black leaders of the city on such issues as education and health care.

Green said he hopes to meet with as many of Ferrer's supporters as possible, and added in answer to a question that he would also welcome the support of Sharpton, whom he described as "inarguably a leader."

Although Green now faces Bloomberg, he stayed away from mentioning him and seemed swept up instead by news of a local anthrax case and another suspicious letter received by a New York Times reporter — incidents that threw the nerve-jangled city he hopes to run on high alert, and had him talking frequently of these "perilous times."

*Staff writer Curtis L. Taylor contributed to this story*

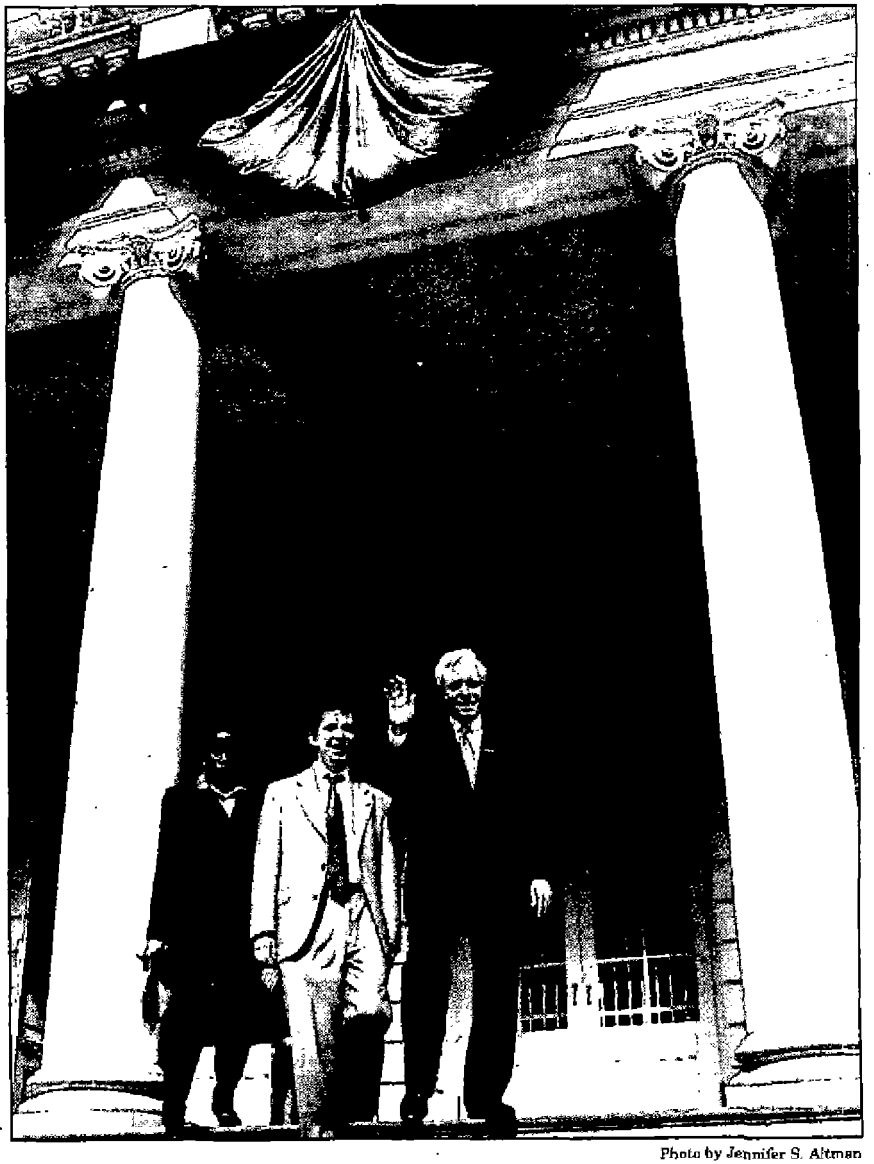

Photo by Jennifer S. Altman

**Democratic mayoral candidate Mark Green leaves City Hall after a council meeting Friday.**

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