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Rudy must go, but let's not lose him

The growing drive to amend the City Charter and allow Rudy Giuliani to run for a third term is honorable and understandable. In the crisis that began at 8:48 a.m. on Sept. 11, the mayor has been extraordinary.

But a campaign for a third term for Giuliani would be terrible *for the city, for its people and* for Giuliani himself.

One reason that his performance was so widely applauded was that it was absolutely free of politics. He was running the city government, not running for office. This was what he had been elected to do, of course, but even in his own mind, he must have been delighted by the absence of politics. In certain rare circumstances, a lame duck has immense power.



And so Giuliani did not have to worry about the appearance of things, about the marginal political advantage of taking one action instead of another. That freedom from politics allowed Giuliani to summon his better angels, to draw on the tough decency that was always there, buried under various masks.

The events of Sept. 11, after all, were an assault on all of us, no matter what political party might have a claim on our passions. We joined each other without asking for political, racial or ethnic identity cards. But from the moment that Giuliani announces his availability, every one of his actions will be suspect, even those innocent of politics.

History sets precedent

We have no tradition of canceling elections, or altering the election laws, in a time of crisis. Abraham Lincoln ruled against such a move during the Civil War. In 1944, Franklin D. Roosevelt had to run for reelection. Winston Churchill, whose name has been invoked frequently by Mayor Giuliani, had *to run for office in July 1945.* London and other British cities were badly wounded. Adolf Hitler had been defeated, but the war in the Pacific was in its last, most brutal stage. Churchill, to everyone's surprise, was voted out of office. Democracy endured. And the military victory was won.

Giuliani should not force everything that he has done since Sept. 11 into the wretched trap of partisan wrangling. He should take the lead, urging that our primaries take place, followed by the election of a new mayor. He should insist that in a city this tenacious, no man is indispensable. He should probably make an "if elected, I will not serve" statement, closing the doors to all unsettling speculation.

Four years from now, Giuliani can run again, if he so chooses. Remember: The vile true believers who have struck us this blow do not have elections. Their primaries wind up with bodies on the floor. We can express our invincible faith in a democratic system — with all its flaws — by lining up to vote.

Draft picks

No matter who ends up as our new mayor, he would be a fool not to draft Giuliani as a coordinator of the recovery effort for at least three months, and possibly more. The new mayor must try to keep Police *Commissioner Bernard Kerik* and Fire Commissioner Thomas Von Essen as symbols of New York continuity.

But all moves that might hobble the next elected mayor should be very carefully subjected to debate and discussion. I have before me a draft of an amendment to the city's Charter that would create a Lower Manhattan/Financial District Redevelopment Commission. It comes from the office of City Council Speaker Peter Vallone, *and it has the very best intentions.* But consider this paragraph:

"The commission shall consist of seven members that shall be appointed by the mayor, which shall include members of the financial services industry, the real estate industry, the construction industry and organized labor. The mayor shall appoint the chair of the commission. Members shall be appointed for a term of five years."

Obviously, something like this commission must be formed. The city that emerges from our common calamity must be subjected to intense thought by intelligent human beings. But if members of the commission, including its chairman or women, are all appointed by Giuliani, the next mayor will be frozen out of the process. The new mayor might have better candidates or want to work with other people. The imposition of Giuliani's commission members on the next mayor would plant the seeds of future division.

A job for Rudy

At this moment in the post-Sept. 11 era, all appointments must be provisional, all amendments to our Charter subjected to careful debate. Even if the process is clumsy. And I believe that among the possible chiefs of this commission, the leading candidate should be Giuliani himself.

Even those who were not Giuliani fans on Sept. 10 will honor him *for the rest of his life* for his behavior during our days of wrath. His place in our city's history is now engraved in *stone. With his actions, his* language, his intelligence, he has written a splendid chapter in his personal history — and in the turbulent narrative of the city. We honor him because he honored us.

But with immense respect for those who disagree, I believe he will honor us even more by refusing the offered scepter and giving way to the process that chose him eight years ago. In that simple act, he can express *his faith in all of us.*



JOHN ROCA/ DAILY NEWS

LEADER **Mayor Giuliani at news conference about Trade Center attack yesterday.**

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