NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

THE NEW YORK POST, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2001

Voting on the Edge Of Civic Breakdown



GUESS what, everybody? There's a primary election tomorrow here in New York City for almost every office in the city — with the mayor's office right at the top there.

Face it, New York. Face it, America. Barring radical political intervention from the state legislature and the governor in Albany, Rudy Giuliani is not going to be mayor of New York come Jan. 1.

Yes, I know. I know this is craziness. I know that New York City needs Rudy Giuliani more than ever — and that the nation does as well, given how important the orderly and sound reconstruction of New York City will be to the American spirit over the next couple of years.

I know that it's madness to change almost every office holder in New York City at *the same moment*, thus turning the city over to elected officials who are going to be spending the first couple of months just finding out where the bathrooms are.

It was a horrible idea even when peace and prosperity were a given. Now it's a calamitous reality.

But the voters of New York City chose term limits. So now they're going to get what they wanted. With a vengeance.


Unworried? Pataki.

Nobody knows what's going to happen tomorrow. But here's my prediction:

Chaos. Madness. Confusion.

We have no real assurance that the vote-tallying will be orderly, since the Board of Elections has been paralyzed by the terror attack. The system depends on police computers as well, which are involved in other and more pressing needs.

And will there be enough police officers available at polling places to ensure that there isn't massive voter fraud?

And that matters, believe me. On Sept. 11, when the first primary was canceled, political experts were expecting a disastrously low turnout — around 30 percent of registered Democrats (around 600,000 people, down from an originally projected 800,000) and about 25 percent of registered Republicans (some 100,000).

Tomorrow, Sept. 25, turnout is almost certainly going to be lower. The candidates haven't been campaigning. There have been no TV commercials on the air.

Nobody knows there's a primary tomorrow, and worse yet, nobody *cares*. And the candidates (aside from Michael Bloomberg and his magic checkbook) have *no money to spend on get-out-the-vote efforts*.

Not to mention the fact that there's only one polling place for everybody who lives in or around the frozen zone. That means every voter who lived in Battery Park City has to trek to 200 Varick St. Do you really expect anybody to do that? This removes many thousands of potential voters from the voting pool.

The decision to go ahead with the primary was a political one, made by *the governor. It was not a logistical* one. It seems that, because things went OK at the stock exchanges, the governor assumed that the primary would go okay as well.

Maybe he'll be proved right. I hope so. But if things do go wrong, it will be the first real blow to civic order in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks — and it will have been entirely avoidable simply by postponing the primary for another week.

Now. Who will be the next mayor?

I can tell you who won't be the next mayor. Freddy Ferrer won't. The cop-bashing and divisive rhetoric that dominated his campaign now seem to have been spoken in a different century.

Nor will Michael Bloomberg. Voters will not elect a political novice to manage the city during its most perilous days.

That means it will be Mark Green, or Peter Vallone, or Alan Hevesi.

Okay, you can panic now.

■

The "Prayer for America" memorial service yesterday at Yankee Stadium was everything that Friday night's celebrity telethon (shown on all broadcast networks) was not — an expression both *of grief and national* purpose.

E-mail: podhoretz@nypost.com

CITY_21MC100_011829948

NYC-WTC_000412586