NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

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# Tomorrow's Election

New Yorkers go to the polls tomorrow to pick replacement candidates for virtually all of the city's elected leadership.

Some New Yorkers, that is.

The impediments to a fair city-wide exercise of the franchise posed by the Sept. 11 terror attack on the World Trade Center are formidable.

Much of lower Manhattan remains largely inaccessible to all but the most intrepid residents — effectively disenfranchising thousands.

Whether the Board of Elections is capable of getting polling places fully up and running elsewhere also is an open question — as is whether it can conduct an accurate tally when the polls close.

Perhaps more to the point, it may be asking a lot of New Yorkers to gather in groups for any purpose, given the trauma of the attack and its aftermath.

Yes, there is something to be said for not postponing the primary election in the face of terrorist violence; after all, it already has been put off once.

On balance, though, another two weeks would have allowed a least a semblance of normalcy to return — to say nothing of giving voters an opportunity to hear the candidates' views on how they would govern the post-Sept. 11 city.

As it is, not one person in a thousand has a clue as to what Mark Green, Freddy Ferrer, Peter Vallone and Alan Hevesi propose envision for the weeks, months and years ahead.

Understandably, they chose not fully to campaign in the wake of the attack.

And, in an act breathtaking in its arrogance, the Campaign Finance Board chose not to permit a campaign dialogue during the past two weeks.

Given all this, it would have been best had Gov. Pataki simply postponed the election.

We would have preferred that he had done so in the context of a discussion of further changes in both the City Charter and the state Election Law that would have permitted Mayor Giuliani to remain in office for awhile.

That is, long enough to guide the city through a reasonable post-Sept. 11 transition. New York City has been, and will continue to be, profoundly changed by the attack.

But Pataki chose otherwise.

In this context, we continue to believe that City Council Speaker Peter Vallone is — by virtue of experience and temperament — best equipped of the four Democratic candidates to become mayor.

He is a man of principle, which always counts for a lot — and which may be critical during the downtown reconstruction, and as the battle against terrorism proceeds.

For there is no guarantee that the Sept. 11 attacks are the last that New York City — and the nation — will be called upon to absorb.

Such is the nature of war.

Those New Yorkers who are eligible to vote Tuesday need to think long and hard about what they need in a mayor — and to pick accordingly.

It matters.

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