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Candidates keep it quiet just hours before primary

By ROBERT HARDT Jr., TOM TOPOUSIS and KIRSTEN DANIS

Yesterday may have been the quietest day before an election in city history.

While polls for the postponed Democratic and Republican primaries open at 6 a.m. today, only one of the half-dozen mayoral candidates hit the campaign trail hard in the wake of the World Trade Center attack.

Fernando Ferrer made seven campaign stops across The Bronx, leaving his home borough only once for a tour of the predominantly Latino section of Washington Heights.

Picking up where he left off on Sept. 10 — the day before the terrorist attack — Ferrer was joined by the Rev. Al Sharpton and Aldofo Carrión, who is running for Bronx borough president.

"What happened on Sept. 11 hurt all of us. I'm still hurting," Ferrer told two dozen senior citizens at a lunchroom on University Avenue.

Ferrer's campaign stops reflected his need to get a strong turnout among Latino voters — a key voting bloc that is even more important to Ferrer than it was two weeks ago.

The weather today is expected to be cloudy and rainy, the National Weather Service said yesterday.

Showers and thunderstorms are expected through late morning, with skies staying gray for the rest of the day and high temperatures in the mid-70s, said meteorologist George Klein.

The gloomy weather could curb voter turnout, which is already expected to be low.

Polling booths are open 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Call the Board of Elections (866) VOTE-NYC to find out if your polling site is open.

Campaign Finance Board Web site: www.cfb.nyc.ny.us

New York Public Interest Research Group information number: (212) 854-9900

New York Immigration Hotline (provides voter info in 16 languages): (800) 566-7636

Mark Green — who was tied in the polls with Ferrer before Sept. 11 — had one campaign appearance, where he urged people to vote.

"If voters vote, American wins and New York wins," said Green outside Brooklyn Borough Hall, where he was joined by former Mayor David Dinkins and former top cop Bill Bratton.

"Please voters, you decide — without any coaxing from me — who is the leader who can best unite and then rebuild New York," Green said.

City Council Speaker Peter Vallone and Alan Hevesi attended the mayor's daily World Trade Center briefing in the morning, but then stayed out of the way of cameras.

"We're in mourning. We haven't identified who's living and who's dead and I think campaigning is inappropriate," said Hevesi, who has been the most low-key candidate since the attack.

Vallone urged voters to cast their ballots as a show of patriotism.

"Why did these people die? They died so we can live in freedom, so we can vote," Vallone said.

"I'd like you to vote for me but I don't care who you vote for. Come out and vote," he said.

Meanwhile, even Mayor Giuliani — who has not wanted to talk politics — got involved in the primary race, taping a phone message for Democratic comptroller candidate Herb Berman.

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