NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

NEWSDAY, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2001

A Vote

City's primaries, delayed by attack, to be held today

By Pete Bowles, Robert Polner and Bobby Cuza
STAFF WRITERS

Despite the gloom that has enveloped the city for two weeks, voters were scheduled to return to the polls today for an all-but-forgotten mayoral primary that was sidetracked by the Sept. 11 World Trade Center attack.

Turnout is expected to be weak in what some observers have called one of the most important votes in city history.

"I think it's going to be real low — perhaps the lowest we've ever seen in a mayoral primary, including 1997," said Jerry Skurnik, a Manhattan political consultant. "It's just not the most important thing on people's minds right now."

On their minds, of course, is the deadly crash of two hijacked airplanes into the Twin Towers — a day few can forget. The grisly reminder could still be seen yesterday at Ground Zero, where 3,000 rescue and recovery workers continued to pick through the debris.

Officials said the number of missing remained at 6,453. The number of dead was reported at 276, with 206 bodies positively identified. As of yesterday evening, 7,162 truckloads of debris with a total weight of 106,838 tons had been removed to a Staten Island landfill.

At Ground Zero, Port Authority employees did their part to buoy spirits by hoisting a towering, 60-by-90-foot American flag over the facade of PS/IS 89, overlooking West Street and the hundreds of workers the road carries in and out of the disaster zone.

The enormous flag, which weighs about 500 pounds, hung from a tower of the George Washington Bridge until it was replaced in 1988. Bridge maintenance workers brought it out of retirement to honor their lost Port Authority colleagues, 150 of whom are among the missing and presumed dead.

"They felt purposeless," said Gerard Del Tufo, the bridge's physical plant manager. "Everybody wanted to come down here and dig through the rubble and look for their friends."

Unable to aid in the rescue effort, they patched up the old flag (two stars were missing) and raised it during a ceremony attended by hundreds of Port Authority staff and city police officers.

"The idea is that it'll help to inspire all the rescue workers, give 'em a little boost in the arm," Del Tufo said. "It's been two weeks. Guys have been working 12-hour shifts. They're exhausted. And hopefully, this'll give 'em a little more inspiration to keep working hard."

While the grim work continued at the site, cleanup crews also tended to buildings outside the immediate danger zone yesterday. Chambers Street was closed between Hudson and Greenwich Streets for nearly four hours while workers spray-cleaned the facades of buildings.

Some viewed the disruption as just another bump in the road of their daily lives. "After seeing a plane crash into the World Trade Center," said computer programmer Robert Wilson as he waited to be allowed back inside his design company, "this is kind of small potatoes."

One rescue worker, Dallas Lipp, a firefighter from Maryland, called yesterday just a typical day. "We're moving lots of stuff but not finding a lot of people," he said.

The Holland Tunnel remained closed except for emergency vehicles. Service on the C subway line, which had been suspended since the attacks, resumed between 168th Street in Manhattan and Euclid Avenue in Brooklyn. It bypassed Chambers Street, just north of the disaster zone.

In another development, the Internal Revenue Service set up a toll-free telephone number for taxpayers unable to meet federal tax obligations because of the disaster. People with tax issues related to the attacks were asked to call 866-562-5227.

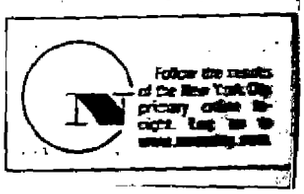
As for today's election, election observers said the turnout could be as poor as the 1997 Democratic primary, when a scant 408,000, or 18 percent of those eligible, voted. In that vote, former Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger eked out a victory only to lose that November to Republican Rudolph Giuliani.

Some analysts said participation could reach 25 percent today, a more typical result, given the bumper crop of political offices up for grabs. The offices include comptroller, public advocate and two-thirds of the seats in the City Council.

What could also boost turnout is the fact that Giuliani and Gov. George Pataki trained attention on the primary in recent days, with the mayor's aides hinting he is looking for some way to stay on past the end of his term, which finishes Dec. 31.

A supporter of the city's term-limits law, Giuliani yesterday declined to rule out possibly trying to seek a third term, prompting a jumble of legal and political questions at a time when he has never been more popular.

"We were heading to a 20 or 25 percent turnout in the original primary, based on the first few hours of voting on Sept. 11, so it's not unreasonable to expect core voters to turn out again in those percentages," said the New York Public Interest Research Group's Gene Russianoff. "That's my hope."



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for the Future

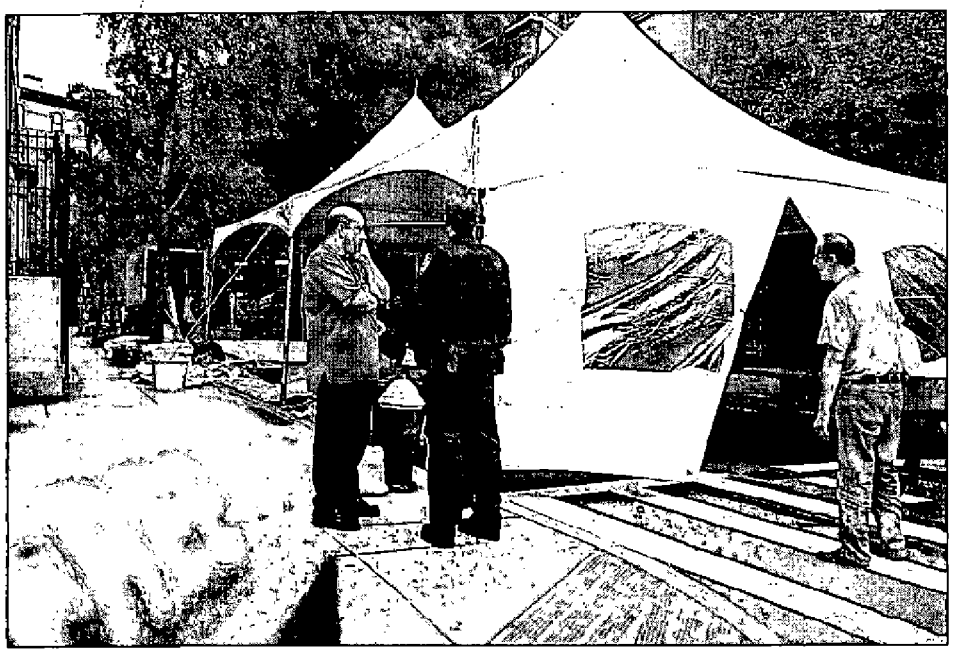


Photo by Robert Mecea

Above, officials prepare a makeshift polling place yesterday outside PS 3 in Manhattan. At right, workers remove the flag-draped remains of a victim from a temporary morgue near the World Trade Center.



AP Photo

At the Primaries

Who Can Vote

You can vote in today's primary election if you had registered to vote by Aug. 17 and are enrolled in a political party that is holding a primary.

If you do not know whether you can vote in the primary election, call the city Board of Elections' toll-free voter assistance number, 866-VOTE-NYC. People who are hearing-impaired should call 212-487-5496.

Where to Vote

Vote at your local polling place. Polls are open from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. If you do not know where to vote, call 866-VOTE-NYC. If poll workers tell you that you are not registered, you may demand to vote on a paper affidavit ballot, and the Board of the Elections will decide later whether it will count.

Where to Get Additional Help

The New York Public Interest Research Group will staff a hotline from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. today. Call 212-854-9900.

Other sources of help: The New York Immigration Hotline, 800-566-7636, will provide voter assistance in 16 languages. Asian Americans for Equality will offer help at 2 Pike St. in Chinatown and 40-34 Main St., Second Floor, in Flushing. Also offering help by phone are the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund at 800-328-2322 or 212-739-7579; Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund at 212-966-5932; federal Department of Justice, 800-253-3931; state attorney general's office, 212-416-8250; and the NAACP, 800-221-7822.

Registering to Vote

It's too late to register for today's primary election, but you have until Oct. 12 to register for the Nov. 6 general election. Check the Web site www.vote.nyc.ny.us or call the city Board of Elections.

The original Sept. 11 primary was suspended within hours of the Trade Center attack. All votes that were cast, except absentee ballots, must be recast in order to count.

For today, seven polling sites in the World Trade area, on the Lower East Side and in Greenwich Village have been relocated.

The Board of Elections, meanwhile, has relied on newspaper ads and telephone calls from Republican and Democratic district leaders to remind 30,000 poll workers of their rescheduled assignments.

Voting booths will be open from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Since the primary's derailment, the four major Democrats and two Republican candidates have called off all campaigning, canceling ads, mailings and appearances, and are relying on smaller get-out-the-vote telephone operations.

Their most common pitch is that terrorism should not be allowed to derail a democratic election.

The Democratic hopefuls are Council Speaker Peter Vallone, Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer, Comptroller Alan Hevesi and Public Advocate Mark Green. The Republican candidates are Michael Bloomberg and Herman Badillo.

Staff writers Joshua Robin, Stephanie Saul, Curtis L. Taylor and Chau Lam contributed to this story.

7 Polling Sites Relocated

By Stephanie Saul
STAFF WRITER

Scrambling to go forward with today's rescheduled primary elections despite the destruction of the World Trade Center area, the city Board of Elections has gone so far as to erect a tent as a polling place.

The tent, on Grove Street between Hudson and Bedford streets in Greenwich Village, will serve as the polling site for voters who normally vote at PS 3 on Hudson Street.

The terrorist attack forced the relocation of seven polling sites. Some of the buildings that housed those sites in the aborted Sept. 11 primary are now condemned. Others were in schools that have additional students from closed schools, and the Board of Education decided those schools were too crowded to accommodate an election. Some voters have been notified of the changes by mail. Poll workers will greet other voters today to redirect them.

Voters slated for 1 World Financial Center, along with voters originally assigned to closed schools IS 89 and PS 234, will vote at the Surrogate's Court building at 31 Chambers St. The High School for Leadership and Public Service at 90 Trinity Place also has been closed and voters assigned there are to report to a residential building at 45 Wall St.

Three polling places have been moved to avoid disrupting schools in Greenwich Village and on the Lower East Side *crowded with overflow students.*

In addition to the reassignment of voters at PS 3 to the Grove Street tent, voters assigned to PS 41 who live east of Seventh Avenue will vote a block away at the Jefferson Market Library at 465 Sixth Ave. and West 10th St.

Voters originally assigned to PS 41 who live west of Seventh Avenue will vote at the Lesbian & Gay Community Center at 208 W. 13th St.

Voters assigned to PS 131 will vote at PS 130 at 143 Baxter St.

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