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NEW YORK POST, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2001

RUDY WOULD BE

Voters say he'd be choice for mayor if he could run again

By DAVID SEIFMAN
City Hall Bureau Chief

Mayor Giuliani would coast to a third term in November — assuming he can overcome several major obstacles to get on the ballot, according to a survey of voters leaving polling booths yesterday.

The exit poll conducted by Edison Media Research in New Jersey showed that 40 percent of the 54% Democratic voters questioned would switch to Giuliani from the candidate they supported in the primary.

Judging by past elections, that would be more than enough to return Giuliani to City Hall for another four years.

"The number we always used for Democrats was 35 percent," said one former strategist for Giuliani.

"If we hit that number, we figured we were in, since we could depend on big numbers from Republicans and independents."

In fact, 81 percent of the 109 Republicans in yesterday's exit poll were ready to pull the lever again for Giuliani in November.

The midday survey also found that 16 percent of Republicans and 1 percent of Democrats wrote in a name instead of pulling a lever for one of five Democrats or two Republicans on the ballot.

Presumably it was Giuliani's name — even though he's not eligible to run or serve because of term limits.

One analyst was jolted when told of the 16 percent GOP write-in figure.

"That would be unbelievable," said Jerry Skurnik, a Democratic political consultant.

Skurnik said he's never heard of such a large number of write-ins in a citywide election and he questioned whether the relatively small sample might account for it.

But in any case, Skurnik said, "I don't think there's any doubt Rudy would win if he was on a ballot and the election was held today."

That wasn't the only good news in the poll for Giuliani, who has won plaudits from virtually every political corner for his handling of the World Trade Center terrorism crisis.

By a 2-to-1 margin — 68 to 32 percent — Democrats said they approved of the overall job Giuliani has done as mayor.

Among Republicans, the mayor's approval rating was in the stratosphere: 95 percent positive.

Seventy-two percent of Democrats and 74 percent of Republicans were "very confident" about the city's ability to fully recover from the terror attack that toppled the World Trade Center.

A significant number of voters — 15 percent of Democrats and 19 percent of Republicans — said none of the candidates on the primary ballot yesterday was "likely to provide the leadership that Mayor Giuliani has shown over the past two weeks."

Among Republicans who said their chief concern was voting for a leader "who would be strong in a crisis" an astounding 40 percent cast write-in votes.

Mayoral aides are maneuvering behind the scenes to try to change the term limits law which bars city officials from serving a third consecutive term.

But the reaction from legislative leaders who would have to enact the changes has ranged from cool to dismissive.

Rudy redux?



If Rudy were able to run for Mayor in November, would you vote for him or for the same candidate you voted for today?

RUDY 41%

SAME 59%

Source: Edison Media Research exit poll

Rudy's approval

What do you think of the job Rudy has done as Mayor?

APPROVE 68%

DISAPPROVE 32%

Source: Edison Media Research exit poll

A Silver lining for Hizzoner

By FREDRIC U. DICKER *State Editor*

ALBANY — Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver yesterday opened the door slightly to permitting Mayor Giuliani to run for re-election, saying for the first time that he'd at least consider such a plan.

Silver, a Manhattan Democrat who has insisted for weeks that he's against changing the rules, said he'd present a measure overriding the city's term-limits law to his party, which controls the Assembly.

"I might take such a proposal to the [Democratic] Conference and see what their thoughts are on it," Silver said.

Silver, however, quickly added that there was little likelihood that such a proposal would be backed, saying, "I don't think my conference would approve it.

"I would be very surprised if they were willing to change the [election] rules this late in the game," said Silver, calling the chances "a long shot at best."

Silver also said he was in no rush to call the Democratic-controlled Assembly to the state Capitol to consider a term-limit repeal, saying it may come up "the next time we're in Albany — whenever that will be."

Meanwhile, several of the state Senate's Republican majority said they're ready to back a measure lifting term limits, despite Majority Leader Joseph Bruno's insistence Monday that it was "too late" to take such an action.

"I think it is feasible," insisted Sen. Roy Goodman, a Manhattan Republican and close Giuliani political ally.

"We have the power, in my judgment, to override the referendum which created term limits and the power to alter the City Charter."

Westchester Republican Sen. Nicholas Spano said he was convinced that "if the voters of New York City could do it, they would elect him [Giuliani] by acclamation."

Spano said he would back legislation lifting term limits, but added that he doubted such a measure would pass.

Turnout could be record low

By KENNETH LOVETT
and KIRSTEN DANIS

They put up American flags, but they didn't come out to vote.

New York's voter turnout appeared to sink to a historic low yesterday — weighed down by lousy weather, an uninspiring mayoral race, a changed primary date and the distracting horror of the World Trade Center attack.

Election officials were estimating by the afternoon that only 12 to 15 percent — no more than 450,000 people — of the city's 3 million eligible primary voters would cast ballots.

"Barring an assiduous search of the records, I don't recall any other election that wasn't a school-board election where turnout was lower," Board of Elections Deputy Executive Director Joseph Gentili said.

The 1997 Democratic primary — until now, the benchmark for low turnout — saw 18 percent of voters come out.

Despite pleas from candidates that casting a ballot is the ultimate show of patriotism, voters stayed home even more than they did before the disaster.

About 25 percent of voters appeared to be coming out Sept. 11, when the primary was postponed hours after the attack.

New York Public Interest Research Group senior attorney Gene Russianoff said phones at the nonprofit's voter help line were noticeably quieter than they were two weeks ago.

"It's definitely a slower pace," Russianoff said.

The hot line had received just one call by the afternoon complaining about long lines at polling sites.

One Lower East Side voter said she showed up at her poll site at 6:30 a.m., a time when in past elections about 20 people have already voted. This time, she was the first one, and poll workers were glad to see her, she said.

Still, some parts of the city, such as Astoria, Queens, and parts of Staten Island, seemed to be pulling out more voters than they did two weeks ago, said political consultant Evan Stavisky, who was out canvassing sites for his 18 clients.

Poll inspector David Oltman, who was working at 45 Wall St., said he thought many voters were skipping the primary in favor of waiting to find out whether Mayor Giuliani can run for a third term in November.

Like many officials and poll workers, Oltman said he was frustrated with the abysmal turnout.

"In this time when the community is speaking about unity, this is a chance to actually do something. We would have liked to have seen more people," Oltman said.



A REAL SNOOZER: This poll worker has nothing but time on his hands at PS 6 on the Upper East Side yesterday. Rob Schoenbaum

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A SHOO-IN: POLL

Did you write in Rudy Giuliani's name on the primary ballot?



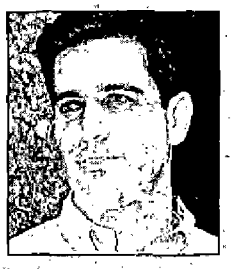
Isidore Bloch, 80, Midtown: "I'm on my way right now to vote Republican. I would like to see Giuliani get in . . . I like the way he's led the city through this tragedy and I will definitely vote for him if I get the chance."



Jayne Thorpe, 23, Upper East Side: "I think Rudy has a lot of things going on in his life, with his health and marital problems. I think he should be on [Mike] Bloomberg's board and I'm sure Bloomberg would be happy to have him."



Sarah Rosen, 31, Brooklyn: "I'm a registered Democrat. I'm not a big fan of Giuliani but I think he's done a great job recently. And although I feel safer for the moment with him in office, I would not write him in because I think changing the process right now would be wrong."



Alan Becker, 40, Bayside: "I was contemplating writing in Giuliani's name, but I don't think I'm going to do it. I'm going to wait until November and see if there's some sort of referendum."



Kerrie Brennan, 29, Astoria: "I voted for Mark Green. I don't trust Ferrer. I didn't hear about any kind of write-in campaign until after I voted, but I would have done it. Giuliani's done a great job."

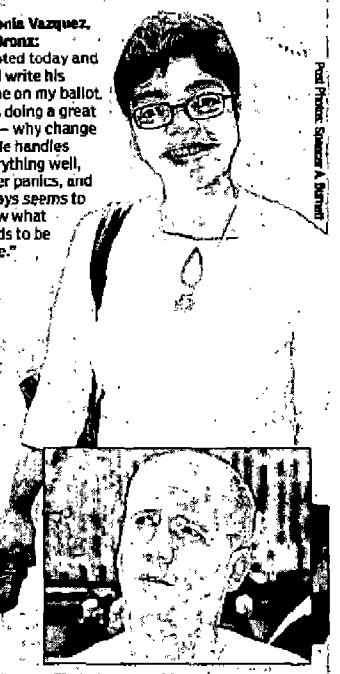


Anton George, 54, Brooklyn: "I won't be voting for Giuliani. I don't think it's right. If there's a law, you don't change it because of a tragedy."



Jeff Newbauer, 40, Gramercy Park: "I voted Democrat. I don't think writing in Rudy's name would have affected whether or not he's able to stay on. He doesn't need this kind of support in the primary, but I wouldn't mind if he stayed on."

Antonia Vazquez, 41, Bronx: "I voted today and I did write his name on my ballot. He's doing a great job — why change it? He handles everything well, never panics, and always seems to know what needs to be done."



Post Photos: Spencer A. Barnett

Billy Judge, 39, Midtown: "I would've voted for him but I didn't think you could do it. If the governor would extend his term, I'd be behind him, no question. I voted for Vallone."

— compiled by Joe Cunningham

Vote goes smoothly despite the turmoil

By KIRSTEN DANIS

The postponed primary went off without major glitches yesterday despite a record number of candidates, a bedridden elections chief and elections headquarters that had been shuttered for days after the terror attack.

"All things considered, the election is running smoothly," said Gene Russianoff, senior attorney for the New York Public Interest Research Group.

Writing in Mayor Giuliani's name, or anyone else's, was the biggest hassle for voters struggling with the complicated write-in ballot process for the first time.

Upper East Sider Wilma Sternberg was one of several voters who told The Post they ran into roadblocks when attempting to cast a write-in vote.

Sternberg said a worker at her site refused to let her write in a candidate until she said she planned to vote for Giuliani.

Board of Elections Deputy Executive Director Joseph Gentili said workers were trained over the summer — when no one expected a write-in campaign for Giuliani.

The Legislature approved write-in candidates for primary elections just this summer.

The Board of Elections had to grapple with some unexpected problems. Its offices were evacuated for days after the World Trade Center attack, and executive director Danny DeFrancesco was hospitalized two days with a heart problem.

Green's not worried? He'd better be



ANDREA PEYSER

WILL someone please remove all sharp objects from the reach of Mark Green?

Two weeks and one day ago, it all seemed so simple for the former leftist boy wonder, who's been in our faces since the time he started shaving — and now is eligible for membership in the American Association of Retired Persons.

At age 56, Green made a sharp turn to the political center, a move aimed at helping him go out a winner.

Going into the Democratic primary, he was still the purported front-runner. But the informal poll conducted on the streets suggests the curse on Green's head hasn't been lifted.

The best Green can hope is to become a pale imitation of the man in whose image he has reinvented himself: Rudolph Giuliani.

Relaxing at home yesterday afternoon, Green insisted he wasn't concerned about the ground swell of support for extending Giuliani's term.

"It will pass," Green told me. "It's a flurry.

"When there's a Democratic nominee and a presumptive next mayor, it will quiet the speculation [about a third term for Rudy] and focus the city on the new mayor and on our city's renewal."

Going into the defining night of his career, Green said, "I feel very calm and at ease. People ask, 'Oh my God, aren't you upset about how this has thrown the election off?' and I stare at them in disbelief.

"Upset? That's the surviving family of someone in the World Trade Center," he said.

The tragedy colors all conversation. And it will dominate the term of the next mayor.

For starters, with men in uniform having given their lives to save innocents, you can bet that police-community relations — Green's euphemism for "brutality" — will take a back seat.

"My two priorities," said Green," are safety and security first, and rebuilding New York a close second."

For some, yesterday marked the first time in two weeks they'd given serious thought to anything other than the World Trade Center.

Greg Manning called from the hospital where his critically injured wife was taken two weeks ago.

Where once he leaned toward Green, he now rejects the idea of changing mayors.

"The politicians who say it's 'too late' to change term limits are making statements worthy of our enemies," said Manning.

Here's what I did yesterday:

I voted for the Democratic mayoral candidate I found least objectionable.

Then, I wrote in "Rudolph Giuliani" for the office of Public Advocate — which is second in the line of succession.

With Rudy as advocate, if the new mayor should decide he's not up to the job, the new mayor could resign, handing the reins back to Giuliani.

It's worth a try.

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