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Green and Ferrer face two frantic weeks before the runoff — all in Giuliani's shadow.

It won't get any easier for Public Advocate Mark Green and Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer, who led the Democrats in Tuesday's New York City mayoral primary.

Never mind that they have only two weeks to redefine their mayoral campaigns before next month's runoff election. Or that they have to convince voters of their ability to restore order after the Sept. 11 terrorist attack *and* address other crucial matters such as improving public education.

What's even worse is the prospect of doing it all while tiptoeing around term-limited Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who refuses to squelch the ill-considered clamoring for his mayoralty to go beyond its legal end, Dec. 31. There are enough distractions as it is.

Without some fancy and unprecedented legal footwork by lawmakers, Giuliani can't legally seek a third term because of the city's term-limit law, which voters approved twice — overwhelmingly. His admirers can't have it both ways, although their frustration is a prime example of a reason why term-limit laws are bad public policy. Giuliani isn't universally loved, no matter how deftly he has handled the city's efforts to recover from the World Trade Center attack. But without term limits he could have legally run again.

If it's any consolation, term limits produced some groundbreaking results in Tuesday's primary — particularly in Queens. Democratic Councilwoman Helen Marshall is now favored in the Nov. 6 election to become the borough's first black president, after a surprisingly easy win over former Board of Education President Carol Gresser and Councilman Sheldon Leffler.

In Flushing, Democrat John Liu apparently squeaked by Ethel Chen, making him a favorite to become the City Council's first Asian-American member. There's no Republican candidate in East Elmhurst, so Hiram Monserrate, who won Marshall's seat, will be the Council's first Hispanic member representing a Queens district.

Of course, Green and Ferrer have work to do before either can get to November against Republican Michael Bloomberg. Each Democrat needs to make a clearer case for why he is best fit to replace Giuliani in this time of fear and uncertainty. Hurry, please.

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