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Thanks, Herman

Herman Badillo's overwhelming loss in last week's Republican primary to Michael Bloomberg likely marks the end of what has been a lengthy and often inspiring electoral career in this city.

For more than three decades, first as a liberal Democrat and later — following a deeply felt ideological sea change — as a conservative Republican, Badillo sought to become mayor of New York City.

But despite winning other offices — he was elected Bronx borough president and later became the first Puerto Rican native in Congress — he never achieved his one true goal.

Historians can debate how different New York might be today if Herman Badillo had ever been elected mayor.

Beyond dispute, however, is that New Yorkers are better off for Herman Badillo's long presence in city affairs.

In the past few years alone, Badillo has left a lasting imprint on New York by virtue of spearheading the cause of academic reform at the City University.

Thanks to Badillo — who implemented the program of Mayor Giuliani and Gov. Pataki over heated opposition from an entrenched academic bureaucracy — CUNY is on the road to recovery.

It's not likely that Badillo will seek electoral office again. But that doesn't mean his public-career service is over — and we look forward to seeing him serve New York in other positions.

Though the voters may not have given him the recognition he wanted, all New Yorkers owe Herman Badillo a debt for his service to this city.

Thank you, Mr. Badillo.

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