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Candidates Have Their Own Woes

By Robert Polner
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The strands of doubt about Mark Green's status as the Democratic mayoral nominee have entangled his candidacy and gotten him off to a slow start against Republican rival Michael Bloomberg.

But some political experts say Green's difficulties are unlikely to make a difference Nov. 6, because Bloomberg, a wealthy newcomer to politics, faces too many hurdles of his own.

"It's not impossible to invent a scenario where Bloomberg can win, but it's hard to see how that can happen," said Jerry Skurnik, a political consultant who has worked for Democratic candidates.

Green's momentum coming out of the runoff a week ago has been thwarted by angry and disappointed supporters of Democratic challenger Fernando Ferrer.

ANALYSIS

On Sunday, Ferrer withdrew his runoff concession, seizing on vote-counting errors that winnowed Green's lead from 30,000 to 21,000. The Rev. Al Sharpton, a key Ferrer supporter, followed up with a federal lawsuit yesterday to overturn the election. And the influential Rep. Charles Rangel (D-Harlem) and health care union leader Dennis Rivera have accused Green of employing racial tactics against Ferrer while making their pique known by meeting with Bloomberg. The Bronx Democratic chairman, Roberto Ramirez, who helped guide Ferrer's campaign, is also fueling the outcry.

Whatever Green's difficulties in pulling together a united Democratic front, the challenges for Bloomberg appear greater, say some political observers.

This is a time when citizens are looking to government for security to an extent perhaps not seen since World War II. But Bloomberg is essentially boasting that he is a non-politician, a business leader with fresh perspective. Green, in comparison, is a two-term public advocate who previously was consumer affairs commissioner.

"Mark's been around government and Mike hasn't, and that's a problem for Bloomberg," said Norman Adler, a political consultant who has advised Republican candidates. "He can't claim experience he never had."

"Guess what?" countered Bloomberg spokesman Bill Cunningham. "Green's the one who has never managed budgets. Mark, what's the biggest budget he ever managed: $4 million, $10 million? Did he ever deal with the word 'billion' in his life? The mayoralty is a big job. Mark is totally unprepared for it."

But Green is leading all the polls. While Republicans Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Gov. George Pataki have not yet endorsed Bloomberg, Democratic Sens. Hillary Rodham Clinton and Charles Schumer have endorsed Green and will campaign for him. Former Gov. Mario Cuomo has taped a Green TV ad and former Mayor David Dinkins, another backer, had Green on his WLIB call-in show yesterday.

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