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Judith Hope

Dems' state leader calls it quits

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With her party racked by infighting over Mark Green's collapse in the mayoral race, state Democratic Chairwoman Judith Hope announced her resignation yesterday.

Assemblyman Herman (Denny) Farrell, the party's popular Manhattan leader, will take her place when she leaves Dec. 3, Democratic leaders said.

Several supporters of Fernando Ferrer had wanted her out after being upset by her inability to stop what they viewed as racially divisive tactics used against him in the Democratic mayoral runoff that Green won.

The anger spilled over to Tuesday's election, when Ferrer and his backers sat on their hands, denying Green crucial support.

Hope also upset some party leaders Wednesday when she said either Andrew Cuomo or Carl McCall should drop out of the 2002 governor's race to spare the party another heated primary.

Still, several top Democrats maintained that Hope — who helped resurrect a party that was in political and financial tatters when she took over in 1994 — had enough support to remain if she wanted to. But they said she simply had had enough.

Hope wanted to leave last spring after Hillary Clinton's victory last year, but was asked to stay on, the Democrats said.

In a letter to party leaders released last night, Hope said, "After seven amazing and wonderful years, it is time for me to get some rest. So, I will move on and give someone else a chance at what it is surely one of the best political jobs in America."

Insiders described Farrell as having the right mix of credentials to be acceptable to the party's factions.

He endorsed McCall for governor, but was an early backer of Cuomo's father, Mario, in the 1982 governor's race. Farrell was one of Green's top supporters for mayor. But he is black, and is seen as being sensitive to the issues raised by Ferrer and his supporters.

"He will be a terrific leader. He will make sure there is a level playing field for all candidates," said Albany Mayor Jerry Jennings, an Andrew Cuomo supporter.

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