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Bloomy's blooper: Speech ignores W.

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Mayor-elect Michael Bloomberg committed a little protocol blooper at a New York breakfast with President Bush yesterday — he forget to praise or even mention the president.

Bloomberg stood out because New York's other top officials — Mayor Giuliani, Gov. Pataki and Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik — all praised Bush to the skies when they spoke at the breakfast for veterans.

"The greatest president we've ever had," said an emotional Kerik, who was embraced by Bush as the president departed the breakfast at the 67th Street Armory.

Pataki, host of the pre-parade breakfast for vets and their families, hailed Bush's "inspired leadership," and Giuliani spoke of Bush's "strength and calm and purpose."

Bloomberg praised Giuliani — saying he only hoped to do "half as well" — but didn't mention either Pataki or Bush, two fellow Republicans, as normal political protocol calls for.

Bloomberg spokesman Ed Skyler later explained that the mayor-elect "was told that it was his role to introduce Commissioner Kerik, and he was trying to keep [his speech] short."

He noted the mayor-elect warmly praised Bush to the world on NBC's "Meet the Press" yesterday — and privately thanked him for making taped phone calls to Republicans and Conservative Party members before the election.

But Bloomberg's mini-gaffe produced some gentle tut-tutting from New York Republicans who like Bloomberg.

"It's nothing to do with ego and everything to do with protocol. He needs to understand that when he stands on a stage with the governor and president, he needs to mention them in a substantive and positive way," one said.

"After all, for New York to go forward, he needs their help. It's not going to hurt him now — people will cut him a lot of slack at the beginning. But this is something he needs to learn."

The little blooper didn't stop Bloomberg from having what he described as a very productive lunch later with Bush and Pataki to talk about the aid package to help New York rebuild.

Bloomberg emerged from lunch — salads and sandwiches in a Waldorf suite — saying he's convinced that Bush "is committed to helping New York as much as possible" and will "honor his commitment."

The mayor-elect added that Bush "understands just how important New York is to this whole country and as a symbol to the world."

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