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Poll: Voters Want Rudy to Run for Guv

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Albany — Gov. George Pataki is holding his large lead over potential Democratic challengers for next year's race, according to a statewide poll released yesterday, but more than half the voters surveyed said Rudolph Giuliani should enter the race.

The New York City mayor has said he will not run for governor if Pataki, a fellow Republican, seeks a third term next year as expected. But Giuliani hasn't ruled out a gubernatorial bid if Pataki does not run.

Fifty-seven percent of those surveyed by the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute, including 51 percent of Democratic voters, said Giuliani should run for governor, while 32 percent said he should not.

"He's so good at leading New York City, most voters say, that he should take a shot at leading New York State," said Maurice Carroll, director of the Hamden, Conn.-based institute.

The poll put Giuliani's approval rating at 89 percent. Approval ratings for the mayor, the governor and President George W. Bush have all soared among New Yorkers in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Pataki's approval rating was 78 percent in the new poll, while Bush's was at 82 percent.

At a City Hall news conference, Giuliani said, "I'm not running for governor. I'm voting for Governor Pataki."

In the possible matchups against Democrats, Pataki led former federal housing secretary Andrew Cuomo 57 percent to 25 percent. The governor led state Comptroller H. Carl McCall 56 percent to 24 percent.

In a possible Democratic primary, Cuomo led McCall 37 percent to 29 percent, but almost one-third of voters were undecided.

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