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McCall Hits Pataki Record

Blames governor for upstate economic woes

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Intensifying his Democratic campaign for governor, state Comptroller H. Carl McCall today plans to invoke upstate New York's economic troubles as a primary exhibit representing why Gov. George Pataki does not deserve a third term.

In excerpts of remarks McCall is scheduled to deliver first in Manhattan and then around the state, the comptroller also charges that Pataki "has lacked the focus and the interest to link New York's intellectual capital with our financial capital" in all areas of New York.

"If Governor Pataki could not improve the upstate economy during an economic boom, how can we count on him to improve and rebuild an entire state economy in an economic downturn?" McCall says in the excerpts provided yesterday by his campaign.

He ridicules Pataki's effort to bring casinos to western New York as "a single roll of the dice" after "almost eight years of total silence."

As the comptroller competes for the Democratic nomination against former federal housing secretary Andrew Cuomo, McCall appears to be adopting and expanding on a political strategy used by the last two successful statewide Democratic campaigns for U.S. Senate: to blame Republicans for upstate's perpetual woes.

"Political ambition makes people say a lot of unfortunate things, and that's just sad," Pataki spokesman Joseph Conway said. "New Yorkers trust Governor Pataki because he has provided real leadership in both good times and bad."

Pataki's challengers will have a more difficult time faulting his stewardship downstate, in part because of the economic recovery in New York City and Long Island from the recession of a decade ago. In addition, critiques of downstate's current economic problems are complicated by the economic damage wrought by the terrorist destruction of the World Trade Center.

The Pataki administration has long insisted that its policies have helped upstate, which, like other manufacturing-based economies, suffered disproportionately with the decline of that segment over the past few decades. Pataki contends business and personal income tax cuts he imposed statewide helped New York rebound from the slump in the early 1990s.

Assemb. Sam Hoyt (D-Buffalo), a Cuomo supporter to whom the campaign referred reporters, said of McCall: "I'm not seeing the new ideas, the new faces, the new energy. If you look at Andrew Cuomo, his youth, energy and intelligence and his drive, that combined is a very attractive candidacy as far as I'm concerned."

A former banking executive who has been the state's financial auditor since 1993, McCall is touting his record investing the state's huge pension fund, along with his business experience, as preparation for "getting the most out of our limited resources by forging new partnerships between business, government and labor to rebuild our entire state's economy."

McCall says he will roll out more specific plans between now and the election next November, but a number of the ideas included in the speech's excerpts are ones for which Pataki also has taken credit.

For instance, McCall is pledging to tap "the ingenuity of our universities," something Pataki proposed in January. McCall also says he would underwrite high-tech businesses, which Pataki has been attempting for years.



AP File Photo
State Comptroller H. Carl McCall

McCall also is promising to end Albany's 17-year tradition of late budgets. Pataki too pledged to bring the budget in on time when he was first running for governor in 1994. It has yet to happen.

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