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Political Memo

2 Parties Embrace New York And Look to '04 Conventions

By RICHARD L. BERKE

WASHINGTON, Nov. 28 — New York has long held a cherished, but narrow, role in national politics. It is where candidates go to raise money, only to quickly vanish. In the presidential campaign last fall, George W. Bush never stumped there because the state was a shoo-in for the Democrats. And Al Gore never stumped there because he did not have to.

But the terrorist attacks have sent the parties scurrying back to New York — and not just for cash.

In gestures of unity with the nation's most wounded city, prominent Democrats and Republicans are now mulling over holding their 2004 presidential conventions at Madison Square Garden. In the shorter term, 165 House members in both parties have sponsored a Congressional resolution for the House and Senate to convene a one-day joint session in New York City next year to underscore "the nation's solidarity with New Yorkers."

"I'm confident that the selection committee will give very serious consideration to New York," Karl Rove, President Bush's chief political adviser, said in an interview about prospects for the Republican convention. "The decision will probably be made sometime after the 2002 elections." Mayor-elect Michael R. Bloomberg raised the matter during a recent visit to the White House, Mr. Rove said, adding that Gov. George E. Pataki and Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani have intensified their appeals since Sept. 11.

There are less ambitious gestures as well. Tonight, Laura Bush, the first lady, appeared in New York to light the Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center. "This year, I particularly want to be there with New Yorkers," Mrs. Bush said. Next week, former President Clinton will be the marquee attraction at a Democratic Party event in Harlem to honor community leaders affected by the Sept. 11 calamity (and to be the draw at a fund-raising dinner that evening in the home of a wealthy donor).

The impulse in both parties to

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