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Diverse Transition Team

Bloomberg taps advisers across spectrum of interests

By Jessica Kowal
STAFF WRITER

Moving forward with his transition, mayor-elect Michael Bloomberg yesterday announced a list of 56 leaders from the city's business, labor, charity, media and social-services communities who will help him choose people to fill top positions in City Hall.

Bloomberg, a Republican, and his transition chief, Nathan Leventhal, made an obvious effort to gather expertise across ideological and professional lines.

As he seeks advice on future commissioners, Bloomberg tapped advocates for the poor, for children, for immigrants, and for gays and lesbians, as well as real-estate moguls and banking chiefs. The transition committee also offers some surprise picks, such as Randi Weingarten of the United Federation of Teachers and Dennis Rivera of the health care workers' union.

Bloomberg said yesterday that he chose a transition team that would develop "a bigger list of names" for him to choose from.

"You want to have people that come up with names that would never have occurred to you before," Bloomberg said after lunching with state Sen. Majority Leader Joseph Bruno. "And a lot of people would like to come into city government that you never thought would be interested."

Weingarten, the Municipal Labor Committee chairman whose union endorsed three Democrats for mayor this year, praised Bloomberg for an effort to "create an inclusive administration and to create a fusion government."

"We're all used to the lines: Either you're with Rudy or you're opposed to Rudy," said Weingarten, who often battled with Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. Bloomberg is "a real breath of fresh air," she added.

Dennis Walcott, a prominent black New Yorker who heads the Urban League, described the transition team as "eclectic" in spanning the distance between the Community Service Society, a non-profit agency that helps poor families, and the Manhattan Institute, a conservative think tank.

The transition team includes prominent Giuliani supporters, such as Board of Education President Ninfa Segarra and former city Consumer Affairs Commissioner Alfred Cerullo III.

Bloomberg also tapped several prominent Hispanics who supported Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer's bid for City Hall. The team includes Ferrer's campaign treasurer, Das Velez, who endorsed Bloomberg after Mark Green defeated Ferrer in a bitter runoff.

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