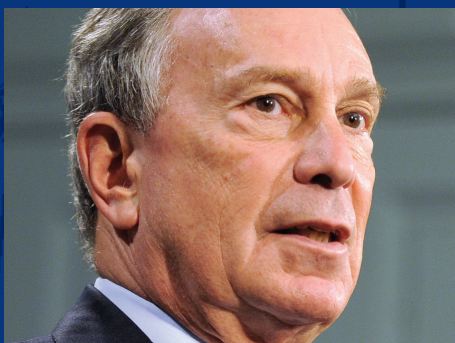


**CENTER FOR NEW YORK CITY AFFAIRS
THE NEW SCHOOL**



THE RACE FOR MAYOR & COMPTROLLER

Campaign Roundtable 2009

Tuesday, December 8, 2009

**THE RACE FOR COMPTROLLER AND MAYOR:
CAMPAIGN ROUNDTABLE 2009**
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support of the Dyson Foundation

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AND COMPTROLLER:
2009 Campaign Roundtable
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CENTER FOR NEW YORK CITY AFFAIRS
THE NEW SCHOOL

The Center for New York City Affairs is dedicated to advancing innovative public policies that strengthen neighborhoods, support families and reduce urban poverty. Our tools include rigorous analysis; skillful journalistic research; candid public dialogue with stakeholders, and strategic planning with government officials, nonprofit practitioners and community residents.

Andrew White, *Director*
www.centernyc.org

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FROM THE DEAN

The study of urban policy and management is, in some respects, the study of decision making. Here at Milano The New School for Management and Urban Policy, we strive to prepare our students for careers in social change. That means they must gain a solid understanding of how and why decisions are made—and the political context in which leaders must operate.

Political campaigns are extraordinary laboratories in which to study the tremendous ramifications of decisions, both large and small, strategic and impulsive. In the campaign roundtables organized each election cycle by the Center for New York City Affairs at Milano, we have the opportunity to explore in detail the many choices candidates and their teams make that ultimately spell the difference between electoral success and failure.

At Milano, we believe each election is a chance to deepen our understanding of the political process and gain insight into the interplay of politics, public policy and society. The importance of issues, their contextualization, the voices which dominate media coverage and public debate—all these factors provide us with a current snapshot of political values and methods. And they help us understand the ways in which political concerns are likely to shape public policy during the upcoming four years.

For the participants from campaigns, the roundtable is a chance to set the record straight, to learn what their opponents were thinking, and to reflect on what they might have been done differently. For journalists, it is an opportunity to understand how their work is perceived from inside the campaigns—and the ways in which the news media are not simply observers, but also influential political actors.

These roundtables offer a candid, inside glimpse into the strategies, intrigues, and opportunities that make up political campaigns in New York. It is through programs such as these that we strive to provide our students with the knowledge and resources to become leaders, and to achieve a better world.

—Lisa Servon
Dean, Milano The New School for
Management and Urban Policy

FOREWORD

Each election presents an opportunity for us to learn more about our city and the forces that shape politics and government. That's what Milano The New School for Management and Urban Policy is all about: training public leaders to have a profound understanding of cities—and especially New York City—and to use that knowledge as they seek to make a difference in the world. A comprehensive study of urban policy requires a solid understanding of the roles of politics and the news media, both in policymaking and in the daily lives of city residents.

On Tuesday, December 8, 2009, The Center for New York City Affairs at Milano hosted the latest in our post-election campaign roundtable series. *The Race for Mayor and Comptroller* is the continuation of a series that we inaugurated at Milano a few years ago when I was serving as dean and that will continue next year with a series of roundtable discussions on the upcoming New York State elections. This year, we focused on the races for mayor and city comptroller. The in-depth discussions transcribed in this book include insight and reflection from top staff and strategists from each of the major campaigns, as well as prominent journalists covering New York City politics. The entire program was made possible thanks to the generous support of the Dyson Foundation.

The conversations included here provide valuable perspectives on the races that could only come from people involved in the campaigns day in and day out. There were many factors at play as election year 2009 rolled forward to November, and in our roundtables we sought to understand many of them: The impact of the term limits roll-back; the role of money in the campaigns; the economic recession and its impact on public attitudes; the low primary and election day voter turnout.

As I discussed in my opening remarks at the event, you cannot have good policy without good politics, and vice versa. This election, like so many others, demonstrated the importance of strategic campaign planning in determining the outcomes of elections. During the roundtable on the comptroller's race, we heard about the crafting of a compelling personal and professional story by the eventual winner, John Liu. We learned that stressing a candidate's qualifications for the job of comptroller, often cited as the second most powerful citywide elected official, is simply not sufficient to win the voters' support. The roundtable participants also explored why policy proposals played only a small role in the comptroller's race, and how difficult it can be to craft a compelling message around the arcane issues that dominate the comptroller's job description. Candidate David Weprin's staff referenced his attempts at public forums to discuss asset allocation

with a crowd that was much more interested in discussing term limits.

During the roundtable on the mayoral race, we also learned how important it is to control the narrative that dominates media coverage and public discussion about the race. The assumption that Mayor Michael Bloomberg's victory was inevitable was such a dominant narrative that many people were surprised when the final vote count was close—and yet that narrative itself may have helped suppress voter turnout beyond the candidate's intent. That narrative also helped to clear the field of another possible contender, Anthony Weiner. The narrative of inevitability of Bloomberg's re-election also reduced competition and hampered competing campaigns' ability to raise campaign funds. The mayor's campaign team also spoke of their candidate's reluctance to present costly new policy proposals at a time of increasing fiscal austerity—a situation that may have contributed to the lack of policy substance in this year's campaigns.

After the elections in 2005, New Yorkers assumed a new mayor would run and be elected in 2009. Because of the city's term limits law at the time, the 2009 race for mayor and many other elected positions would have been open races for vacated seats. However, on October 23, 2008, the New York City Council voted 29 to 22 to extend term limits, allowing Mayor Bloomberg to seek re-election and reverse the results of two earlier voter referenda. The extension of term limits completely changed the landscape for all elections in the 2009 season.

Both roundtables opened with a question about the term limits extension, the public reaction and how that shaped the campaigns. In the race for comptroller, the change in term limits gave all the candidates an opportunity to remain in their existing positions—in this case, they were all members of the City Council. John Liu's campaign representatives spoke of the courageous choices all four candidates made in leaving their council seats to run for comptroller.

Melinda Katz's staffers pointed out that the public reaction to term limits helped position John Liu as the anti-Bloomberg candidate, because he had come out strongly against the change in the law. Yet David Yassky's campaign staff said their early polling told them that while voters were angered by the term

limits roll-back, it was not likely to be a decisive factor in the race. These early decisions set each candidate on a very different path. All of the campaigns also agreed that had Bill Thompson run for another term as comptroller, none of their candidates would have chosen to run for the seat.

Of course, the term limits extension had a far greater effect on the mayoral race, utterly transforming the expected field. Thompson's campaign team explained how they decided to conserve resources for the run-up to the general election against a self-financed billionaire incumbent. A top Bloomberg strategist revealed that the campaign team thought all along that the race would be closer than the public—and the news media—apparently believed.

In the forward to our publication on the 2005 campaign roundtable, I wrote that due to the city's term limits law, the citizens of New York City would be electing a new mayor on November 3, 2009. Dare I predict that on November 5, 2013, the citizens of New York City will elect a new mayor? Bill Thompson has already declared his intent to run, and speculation about other potential candidates has already begun.

Yet as always, the coming four years will present difficult and unpredictable challenges to our recently elected comptroller and our long-serving mayor as they face budget shortfalls, high unemployment and a housing market in flux. The Center for New York City Affairs and Milano remain committed to promoting a greater understanding of politics, elections and public policy, both for our students and for the public. No one can predict with any assurance where the political eyes and ears of New York City will be focused four years from now. But the Center and Milano will be providing insight along the way.

What follows is a transcript of the 2009 comptroller and mayoral campaign roundtables, slightly edited for comprehension. Those of us around the table and in the room found the conversation informative, useful and thought-provoking. We hope that you do too.

—Fred Hochberg

PROGRAM

8:00–8:30 a.m.

Continental breakfast

8:30–8:45 a.m.

Welcome remarks

Dean Lisa Servon

Fred Hochberg

8:45–10:00 a.m.

Roundtable I: The Race for Comptroller

10:00–10:15 a.m.

Break

10:15 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Roundtable II: The Race for Mayor

ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS

MODERATOR

Sam Roberts, *The New York Times*

CAMPAIGN REPRESENTATIVES

Tony Avella for Mayor

James Trimarco

Bloomberg for Mayor 2009

Karen Persichilli Keogh

Basil Smikle

Bradley Tusk

Howard Wolfson

Melinda Katz for New York

Ryan Toohey

Jonathon Trichter

John Liu for Comptroller

Jorge Fanjul

Josh Gold

Chung Seto

Kevin Wardally

New Yorkers for Bill Thompson

Eduardo Castell

L. Joy Mitchell

Roberto Ramirez

Nathan Smith

Doc Sweitzer

David Weprin 2009

Robert Olivari

David Yassky for NYC Comptroller

Danny Kanner

James Katz

Cathy Mitchell Toren

ROUNDTABLE I: THE RACE FOR COMPTROLLER

WHO'S WHO

Moderator

Sam Roberts

Campaign Representatives

Melinda Katz for New York

Ryan Toohey, General Consultant

Jonathan Trichter, Campaign Manager

John Liu for Comptroller

Jorge Fanjul, Field coordinator

Josh Gold, Director of Voter contact

Chung Seto, Campaign Strategist

Kevin Wardally, Senior Advisor

David Weprin 2009

Robert Olivari

David Yassky for NYC Comptroller

Danny Kanner, Communications Director

James Katz, Field Director

Cathy Mitchell Toren, Campaign Manager

MS. LISA SERVON: I am Lisa Servon, dean of Milano The New School for Management and Urban Policy, and also The New School for General Studies. I'd like to start by thanking the underwriters of this program, Rob Dyson and the Dyson Foundation.

Rob was not able to attend today, but he has made this program possible, so I extend my thanks. And, of course, thanks again to Fred Hochberg, my predecessor as dean at Milano, and Andrew White, director of the Center for New York City Affairs, for inaugurating the tradition of our campaign roundtables here and carrying them on to this new election cycle. This isn't the first and it will not be the last, which is a good thing.

Thanks, of course, also to our moderator, Sam Roberts, for facilitating this discussion.

One of the reasons that I see this as such a terrific program is that elections are a teaching moment. They obviously determine who's going to hold the most important offices in our city, and they give our city's voters the opportunity to help make that determination.

So what kind of a teaching moment are elections? Well, we can learn things like who turns out, who do they vote for, and why. Why are those turnouts and voter preferences different from what they were in past elections?

Milano Dean Lisa Servon welcomes participants and the audience to The New School.

The answers to these questions tell us a lot about who lives here, who votes here, what they care about, who we are as a city, and—we had a little conversation starting last night—the role of the media in all of this as well, and about why we have the officeholders and the policies that we do.

And Milano, I think, is the right place for this conversation to take place because Milano is the destination for learning about the politics of our city and our state. So thank you, Fred and Andrew and Sam, for making this series a part of the Milano education and for convening today's conversations.

The Center for New York City Affairs at Milano organized this event as part of its larger mission, which is to promote policy innovation and public understanding of the political process in New York and its neighborhoods. The Center's work includes applied policy research on public education, human services, and immigration.

The Center's combination of policy research, journalism, and exploration of the role of politics in local and state government policy represents a critically important aspect of this school, and the center employs a lot of our students, which is also a really terrific thing.

Milano has a special commitment to the field of politics and advocacy through a number of courses for master's and doctoral students on lobbying, media, community organizing, strategic communications, and campaign development.





Fred Hochberg, former dean of Milano, opens the day's discussion.

So now I'd like to turn the podium over to Fred Hochberg, again, my predecessor as dean of Milano who is now president of the Export-Import Bank, and who I had the pleasure to work with for five years as a faculty member. Thanks, Fred.

[Applause]

MR. FRED HOCHBERG: Well good morning. It was odd walking in at quarter to eight, up the stairs into a building I'd spent five years in, and more. So I'm happy and thrilled to be back, and want to thank Lisa and Andrew and The New School for continuing this program because I think it very much anchors politics and policy.

Particularly now that I've been working in Washington for six months, sometimes you can lose sight of the intersection between politics and policy. You're not going to really have good policy without good politics and vice versa.

When I was here at The New School, and we had people who wanted to study policy but hate politics, it really never made sense to me, and hopefully at the end of today, as with each time we do these programs, the absurdity of that comment about loving policy but hating politics will become even more clear.

This program got its start, frankly, I was inspired when I was up at the Kennedy School in 2000 and witnessed a very similar program for the 2000 race—the very very long presidential race between Al Gore and George Bush.

We hosted the first two sessions we did with Mark Halperin, and I'm thrilled that my good friend and whom I've known for many years, Sam Roberts, is going to moderate today.

Milano students include current and future policymakers, nonprofit leaders, labor and community activists, legislative staffers, and private-sector executives. They work for government, in organizations with social missions, and in private firms.

What I can say that Milano students and faculty, I think, hold in common is a desire to make positive change in the world and to change the world by studying it.

The Milano education, the combination of policy and practice, prepares our alumni to be especially effective in the urban-policy arena, which is the topic of today's conversation.

CAMPAIGN TIMELINE: COMPTROLLER'S RACE

HOW THE RACE WAS PORTRAYED IN THE NEW YORK PRESS

May 30th, 2007

The New York Sun reports that potential candidates jockeying for the 2009 comptroller's race include City Councilmember Simcha Felder; Councilmember John Liu; Finance Commissioner Martha Stark; Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrion; Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer; former Councilmember Eva Moskowitz, and three already-declared candidates: Councilmember

David Weprin; Councilmember Melinda Katz; and state Assemblyman James Brennan.

David Birdsell, dean of Baruch College's School of Public Affairs, blames term limits for the expanding field. "There are going to be lots of people chasing very few positions," he says. "You can well assume these are going to be very crowded races."

September 25th, 2007

Councilmember Yassky announces his candidacy for comptroller, joining an already crowded field that includes Weprin and Katz.

July 10th, 2008

The New York Times reports that Councilmember Katz, chair of the land use committee, requested approval from the Campaign Finance Board to continue collecting "big donations" for her 2009 run from real estate interests, despite new restrictions imposed by the Council that take effect in December 2008. Her opponents, Yassky and Weprin, denounce the request.

I did take a quick look at what we said in 2005, and interestingly, what we did say in 2005 was that the likeliest, strongest candidate for mayor was going to be Anthony Weiner, the person on the ballot.

So what I think we will hopefully learn today is that we have better insight in the unpredictability of races, the unpredictability of when you start a race throughout the race. And clearly what happened in the election last month will have an impact on the governor's race next year and will lay out some of the groundwork for the mayoral race, believe it or not, in 2013 as well.

So I look forward to a spirited conversation. I thank all of the campaign individuals and journalists who are joining us. Most importantly, I thank you for your candor because through doing this people who run future campaigns and citizens get a better sense and understanding, and it takes some of the mystery out of politics. So thank you for joining us.

I've been told to ask you to put BlackBerrys away, particularly if you're at the table with a microphone so it doesn't pick up, because we're going to be recording this so that we can publish it, as we have in the past. So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Sam Roberts.

MR. SAM ROBERTS: Thank you very much. Thank you, Fred, and thank you, Lisa Servon. Thank you, Andrew White. Thank you all for coming. I think it's enormously gracious of you to show up today and go through this exercise that I think is helpful to all of us. And candor, as Fred said, is what we're really looking for more than anything.

Four years ago when Mark Halperin inaugurated the first of these mayoral forums, he paraphrased President Kennedy. He said there's more knowledge about New York City politics at this table with the possible exception of when Hank Morris dines alone.

Well, as it turns out, without prejudging the case, maybe that's a lesson in humility for the rest of us. The New School has given all of us—the panelists, colleagues, the press, and other observers—a great opportunity today. We can speak frankly about each other and to each other, face to face. We can listen to

the other side of the story—something that doesn't always happen—and like it or not, we can learn from our mistakes so the next time we can make different ones.

And we can leave, as the two other earlier forums did, a historical record on which the public can render its own judgment about how well officeholders, office seekers, political consultants, and journalists functioned in New York City in 2009, and whether democracy was any better for it.

I'm officially the moderator today, but I don't see my role as necessarily promoting moderation. As Mark did, I reserve the right to interrupt, but only if people are bloviating. Please be civil, but be yourselves.

I'd like to leave here with a better understanding today of your job and of mine, with answers to some of the questions that have bothered me during this campaign, starting with some fundamental ones.

In all the campaigns, of course, what was the decision of the mayor and the council to overturn the voters' will on term limits. Why did the mayor run again? What's his third-term vision? Could anyone have beaten a \$100 million campaign, plus more in politically-beneficial philanthropy, or even made it a fair fight?

How terrified was the mayor's team that they would spend \$100 million and lose and therefore never get a job in this town again, perhaps. And was a Bloomberg victory really inevitable? And how did that affect all of the other campaigns?

There are bios of all the participants in the packet you should have received when you came in, so I don't want to spend time going through that. Most of you know who the panelists are, and, again, we're very pleased to have them.

The discussion is being audiotaped for, as I say, a future record, which will be published. We will also take questions which you could write on those little blue cards you should have gotten when you came in. And we will try to get to as many of them as possible. Either

August 17th 2008

The Daily News reports that four announced or likely candidates for comptroller, Yassky, Weprin, Liu and Katz, have all received substantial campaign contributions from "corporate giants with millions of city pension dollars invested in their stock."

October 23rd, 2008

The City Council votes, 29 to 22, to amend the city's term-limits law and allow Mayor Michael Bloomberg and several council members to seek re-election to a third term. The legislation reverses the results of two earlier referenda. Councilmembers Katz and Yassky support the legislation while Weprin and Liu oppose it.

March 11th, 2009

The Queens Courier reports: "City Councilmember John Liu, who originally flirted with running for Public Advocate, sang a different tune over the weekend when he officially announced he was joining fellow Queens Councilmembers David Weprin and Melinda Katz and Brooklyn Councilmember David Yassky in a bid to succeed current Comptroller Bill Thompson in November's election."

April 20, 2009

First press coverage of the Republican candidacy of Joe Mendola, a chief compliance officer and legal counsel for Magna Securities Corporation, for city comptroller. He is a former Democrat and resident of Greenwich Village.

I will read them or ask you to. We want to keep as much as possible to within the time schedule we've laid out for ourselves.

And forgive me if I look at my BlackBerry at all, it's only to find out what the time is. I'm not messaging anyone at all, I promise. So let's start with the comptroller's race, and again, thank you all for coming. And let me start off by asking what was the impact of term limits on the decision to run for which office?

OUTSIDE POLITICAL FORCES SET THE STAGE: TERM LIMITS

Whoever wants to weigh in. Kevin?

MR. KEVIN WARDALLY: Thanks, Sam. I think the term limits, of course, weighed heavily on all the candidates. I think all of our clients probably would have continued staying and having distinguished careers in the council. The chairwoman of land use, the chairman of finance, and the chairman of transportation had fantastic contributions in their particular field, have done excellent jobs serving their constituents and their communities. And so term limits, of course, played a role.

I think several of the candidates who ran for comptroller made a principled stand, saying that even though term limits had been overturned by Mayor Bloomberg and Christine Quinn, that they would still honor their commitment to leave after the two terms. And so they made the hard decision to, even if they could stay, to run for higher office if they thought they could serve the city better in it.

So I think it had a huge impact, and I think folks made courageous choices to do that when they could have stayed where they are and continued to further their careers in the manner in which they have.

MR. ROBERTS: Ryan?

MR. RYAN TOOHEY: Well, I think the term-limits decision actually had the biggest impact on

Councilman Liu's performance in the race, because I really feel that from the get-go, he came out and focused his energy on conveying an anti-Bloomberg message. And everywhere I'd go hear him speak at a forum, and the takeaway—there wouldn't be that much substance to it. You'd just say, "Wow, he really went after the mayor."

And obviously when the mayoral race occurred, and we saw that the mayor's margin was as slim as it was, I think we recognized that the campaigns smartly tapped into a Democratic undercurrent that we all may not have been as aware of as we should have been. And it was a smart move by those guys to get out there on it.

MR. ROBERTS: How much of that undercurrent do you think was the backlash against term limits? Or just the fact that Democrats are so overwhelmingly in the majority?

MR. TOOHEY: I think there was a good deal of understanding on the part of the public that the mayor had done something that maybe in substance was OK but stylistically looked like bad form or essentially a power grab.

MS. CHUNG SETO: Well, I think that it was strongly conveyed by prime voters, prime Democratic voters, as John made the circuit to club meetings seeking endorsements. That was like the number-one issue. That people came up to him after his remarks, they agreed with the anti-Bloomberg and sort of the term-limit issue, and they were really galvanized, which is why we sustained that as our early message going into mid-summer to say that this is not appropriate. It's not a vehicle the mayor should have used. And so it certainly really galvanized the base.

MR. ROBERTS: How could you tell when you were dealing with an audience there that was the political cognoscenti, people who were vested in the process, people whose livelihood and lives were affected by the term-limits decision. Is there any sense as to what the general public thought?

Again, you were dealing with that finite audience, particularly in a primary. Did you know at that point

April 23rd, 2009

The Working Families Party endorses Liu.

May 1st, 2009

In an article entitled "Who Hates John Liu?", *The New York Observer* remarks on the "unusual level of commenter vitriol" generated by coverage of the candidate. Much of the hostility comes from the Falun Gong community in New York and from *The Epoch Times*, a newspaper strongly sympathetic to Falun Gong practitioners. *The Observer* reports that the

attacks stem from an incident in Flushing between Falun Gong practitioners and residents, in which Liu was perceived to have sided against the practitioners.

June 16th, 2009

First primary-season debate for the comptroller candidates takes place at CUNY Graduate Center, moderated by Edward-Isaac Dove of City Hall and Michael Scotto of NY1. The tone is edgy and occasionally combative, *The Observer* reports.

I think that if you look back for the clubs, the way that it went down in the voting, John clearly won over David [Yassky] in many of the club issues based on [the term limits] issue alone.

—Chung Seto

It was 100 percent only that issue.

—Cathy Mitchell Toren

that was going to resonate with the public, with the voters at large?

MS. SETO: Well, they congratulated John for taking a strong stance. I mean, that was clearly, initially, I mean, people came up and said, “You were one of the main voices, and congratulations and thank you.”

MR. WARDALLY: I think you also have to look at the fact that John had taken a very principled stance even before the campaign. I mean, he had some very outward statements about the term-limits fight against his own speaker and against other members of the council very early and very quickly. So it was a principled stand as well. It was a message, but it was also something John felt very strongly about and had received good feedback prior to even it becoming a message of the campaign.

So it wasn’t like we could walk it back. I mean, if you read some of John’s statements early on—they were in some of the papers pretty heavily, and even his own releases were pretty strongly worded. So it was something he believed and had gotten good feedback on. So we couldn’t walk it back.

MR. ROBERTS: That wasn’t necessarily true of some of the other candidates, though, who had voted to extend term limits. How did that affect them? Was that a liability?

MS. CATHY MITCHELL TOREN: I can talk a little bit about our early polling. Our early polling with regular voters showed that in fact voters were angry about term limits, but that it would not be a decisive point when they went to the polls. But I do think that when this was before John Liu entered the race, and I think that Bill Thompson was getting sort of underground building strength, that I think that it wound up making up more of a difference than we thought that it would earlier on in the race.

MR. DANNY KANNER: There was an undercurrent. There’s no doubt about that. You can’t deny that. That said, it could have been worse for the candidates that voted to extend, mainly because Bill Thompson, until September 15, did not really seize that, did not seize the issue. He was not loud and vocal until postprimary.

MS. TOREN: Right.

MR. KANNER: I think it really crystallized for us in the runoff when it was a choice between two candidates, and Thompson had really put that issue on the floor, which he had not done until the 15th.

MR. WARDALLY: Although I would say Bill Thompson was pretty vocal about it. I would say the media wasn’t covering Bill Thompson being vocal about it, because every campaign appearance he made throughout the city, whether it be fundraiser or public, he was very clear about his stance on it, and how what a wrong power grab it was. Just no one wrote about it.

MR. KANNER: That’s true.

MR. TOOHEY: Because in our campaign it didn’t come up very frequently. It was—

MR. ROBERTS: From the public.

MR. TOOHEY: —from the public, at debates, at forums—it was a secondary or tertiary issue. It wasn’t ever really discussed as—

MS. SETO: Well, no. I think that if you look back for the clubs, the way that it went down in the voting,

June 17th, 2009

Quinnipiac poll: “Don’t Know” leads the polls in the race for city comptroller. Liu follows with 19 percent; Katz with 13 percent; Yassky with 10 percent, and Weprin with 5 percent, but 50 percent are undecided. “Controller is a big job, with big responsibilities. But half of New York voters don’t know enough about the candidates to pick one,” comments Maurice Carroll, director of the polling institute.

June 26th, 2009

International Brotherhood of Teamsters Joint Council 16 endorses Katz.

July 28th, 2009

Quinnipiac poll: 55 percent of voters choose “undecided” in the Democratic primary for New York City Comptroller. Among those vying for the job, Liu has 17 percent, with 10 percent for Katz, 8 percent for Yassky and 5 percent for Weprin.

July 30th, 2009

SEIU 1199 United Healthcare Workers East endorses Liu.



Robert Olivari, of the Weprin campaign, comments on what draws voters' attention.

MR. OLIVARI: I know that David would not have. David Weprin would not.

MS. TOREN: David Yassky, too, would not have.

MR. ROBERTS: Anybody else? Would anyone have challenged Bill Thompson for comptroller?

MR. WARDALLY: No.

MR. JONATHAN TRICHTER: No.

MS. SETO: No.

MR. OLIVARI: But I have to disagree a little with what Ryan said because I'm used to getting up early 'cause I attended almost every one of these breakfasts and can almost cite from memory each of the candidates' stump speeches. And every time that the issue of term limits came up, I mean, my guy wanted to talk about asset allocation. But if someone mentioned term limits, that did evoke the biggest response from the people in the audience by far.

John clearly won over David in many of the club issues based on that issue alone.

MS. TOREN: It was 100 percent only that issue.

MS. SETO: Correct.

MR. OLIVARI: I think the fundamental answer to your first question is, I don't know how many of the candidates would have run had Bill Thompson decided to remain as comptroller. So, I mean, term limits obviously had a huge effect on that.

MR. ROBERTS: Well, that's a good question.

MR. OLIVARI: Secondly—

MR. ROBERTS: Would any of the candidates have run if Bill Thompson decided to remain as comptroller?

And it's tough enough in the comptroller's race trying to get people to focus on the arcane issues involved in the comptroller's office. But the term limits thing, really, that woke people up at this time of the morning.

IMPACT OF THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE RACE

MR. ROBERTS: Why did John Liu switch from public advocate to comptroller? And also going beyond that for the rest of you, what was the impact of the public advocate race? And let me just explain we're not focusing on that race today, because we could only have time for two. But what was the impact of that race on your race? Kevin and Chung?

MR. WARDALLY: Well, first let me be clear. He didn't switch. He never made a public declaration that he was running for public advocate.

August 20th 2009

The New York Times reports that two prominent figures during the city's response to the 1970s fiscal crisis, former City Comptroller Harrison Goldin and financier Felix Rohatyn, have endorsed Yassky.

August 22nd, 2009

The New York Daily News reports that Liu's mother has contradicted his campaign ads, in which he claims to have worked in a sweatshop alongside his mother as a boy. "I never go to the factory," the article quotes Liu's mother, Jamy Liu, as saying.

August 23rd, 2009

The New York Times endorses Yassky, referring to him as "the one most suited to do the job, with skill, intelligence and independence."

August 31st, 2009

The Uniformed Fire Fighters Association endorses Liu.

Survey USA/WABC-TV poll: Katz leads the pack in the Democratic primary for comptroller, with 27 percent of likely voters. "Undecided" is second with 22 percent, followed by Liu with 21 percent, Yassky at 18 percent and Weprin at 11 percent.

MR. ROBERTS: But he was thinking about it.

MR. WARDALLY: He was thinking about running for everything, right? I mean, when you make a decision that you're not going to run for City Council anymore, you start to think about everything, whether it's the butcher, the baker, or the candlestick maker. And some folks said public advocate, and he thought about that. And his campaign team—we bounced around, and once we looked at the field, once we looked at John's qualifications, and we looked, we talked, we took an extensive time to talk to our supporters and some of the folks who really wanted to get on our side—we made one decision, not one decision and a switch of a decision.

We made one decision, and that decision was to run for and announce for city comptroller.

MR. JAMES KATZ: I'd also say that in terms of sort of the cross currents of how the advocate's race affected this race, from a field point of view, from a Yassky team point of view, to me—tell me if I'm wrong—I perceived us as sharing a greater set of voters with Mark Green than we did with the de Blasio camp. Manhattan, liberal; brownstone Brooklyn, liberal voters. And when we saw the lopsided results in the advocate's race—I see Nathan Smith sitting in the back, thank you for that, Nathan—we knew that was a challenge.

The de Blasio turnout operation in the boroughs in central Brooklyn and throughout New York and

And it's tough enough in the comptroller's race trying to get people to focus on the arcane issues involved in the comptroller's office. But the term limits thing, really, that woke people up at this time of the morning.

—Robert Olvari

the lopsided nature of that, I think, did have some reverberation into this race and may have had some negative consequences for us on our side.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A NARRATIVE

MR. ROBERTS: How did each of you, in a relatively crowded field in a race that wasn't covered probably as much as it should be, in a race that, for an office that many people don't really understand, try to distinguish your candidate from the other three?

MS. SETO: I think that clearly going in, we felt strongly that John had a narrative. So it was—

MR. ROBERTS: A personal narrative?

MS. SETO: —a personal narrative, but also a professional narrative where he is an actuary. Fourteen years in the private sector as a manager of PricewaterhouseCoopers. So we felt that along with his eight years on the City Council and knowing the budget process and knowing how the city works, that it was a narrative that I think would resonate with voters. And that's what we really stuck with.

MR. WARDALLY: I'd also say—and not to be facetious or funny, but look at who's sitting at this panel—in that we also told the story of the people who were supporting John and who John had historically stood with. John had a strong history of not only fighting for the MTA or exposing books, but marching for the death of Sean Bell, appearing at the National Action Network, I mean, being all over the city at all times when he could on issues that mattered to folks of color.

So we also took time to remind folks of the strong history that John had in individual communities of color.

MR. ROBERTS: I don't want to be facetious either, but was John the “black candidate” in this race, in effect?

MR. WARDALLY: I would say absolutely. And not so because—

September 1st, 2009

The United Federation of Teachers endorses Liu.

September 9th, 2009

Our Town, West Side Spirit, and The New York Press endorse Yassky.

September 10th, 2009

Five days before the primary, the candidates take part in a final debate at WNYC's Jerome L. Greene Performance Space. Weprin confronts Katz about donations from the real estate industry, and she counters with a reference to finance industry firms donating to Weprin.

The Epoch Times publishes an article alleging that Liu is part of a Chinese Communist Party plot to infiltrate American politics.

MS. SETO: The minority candidate.

MR. WARDALLY: —but not only because he was a minority, but because—and what I always tried to emphasize both to John and other supporters as we sought endorsements and others—is John was not new to this community, right? I mean in any way or stretch of the imagination John was not new.

His history from beginning to end was one of a very diverse, active, organized, proactive person on issues that mattered to people of color in this city. So it wasn't hard when you looked at polling or you looked at research and when you looked at just general, on the street—people recognized John. They didn't recognize him because he was running for comptroller, because people barely knew what that was. But they did recognize him for being at the march that they were at, and they did recognize him for being at NAACPs. They did recognize him for being at things that they cared about and saw in their community.

So it wasn't hard to then say, “Now that you recognized him, you should support him for X, Y, and Z.” And so, yeah, I would say he definitely was the “black candidate” in this race.

MR. ROBERTS: How did the rest of you run against that?

MR. TRICHTER: Well, we tried to galvanize women obviously. We were the only female candidate. When you're the only female candidate in the field, only female candidate to run citywide. And in ways that were sometimes superficial, if I can offer a self-criticism, but nevertheless we hoped it would work. We tried to play that up.

We had four candidates who started out of all relative equal known-ness, and we tried to play the game—

MR. ROBERTS: Or unknown-ness.

MR. TRICHTER: —we tried to play the game of which one is most different than the other? And ultimately, John Liu outplayed us at that game. And we tried to galvanize women, and we were unsuccessful.

[Liu's] history from beginning to end was one of a very diverse, active, organized, proactive person on issues that mattered to people of color in this city. So it wasn't hard when you looked at polling or you looked at research and when you looked at just general, on the street—people recognized John. They didn't recognize him because he was running for comptroller, because people barely knew what that was. But they did recognize him for being at the march that they were at, and they did recognize him for being at NAACPs. They did recognize him for being at things that they cared about and saw in their community.

—Kevin Wardally

MR. ROBERTS: Why do you think? And we are left with no woman occupying a citywide post at all.

MR. TRICHTER: It could be externalities to the campaign and the faculties of our candidate. We'll never know. Or it just could be that at present it's difficult to galvanize women to vote for a woman running for office, even when qualified.

MR. ROBERTS: So are we in a post-feminist political situation?

September 15th, 2009

Liu finishes on top in the Democratic primary, with 38 percent of the vote to Yassky's 30 percent. Because candidates for citywide office must secure 40 percent of the vote to avoid a run-off, Liu and Yassky will face each other in a runoff election September 29. Just 371,018 votes are cast in the primary, with a record-low turnout of 11 percent of registered Democrats.

September 18th, 2009

Former candidate Katz endorses Yassky.

September 21st, 2009

Speaking on the Brian Lehrer Show on WNYC, rivals Liu and Yassky take opposing views on pension reform. Yassky supports consideration of a proposal that would require new city employees to contribute more money to their pension funds. Liu argues the proposal won't solve city budget problems.

The two Democrats stage back-to-back press conferences outside City Hall. Former mayor Ed Koch endorses Yassky, citing his “honesty, integrity, and independence from the special interests.”

Mayor Bloomberg tells reporters he doesn't know of any Republicans running in the general election for comptroller and public advocate.

The Katz campaign's Ryan Toohey voices his opinion on the role of the Working Families Party in this year's races.

THE ROLE OF THE WORKING FAMILIES PARTY

MR. TRICHTER: There's your next article.

[Laughter]

MR. TOOHEY: You look at our race and then the DA's race, which I was also involved in. The performance of Melinda and the performance of Leslie Crocker Snyder are both telling in that they show that women don't kind of naturally default. That we've moved beyond that, I think.

To your point about the "black candidate," I think we started out with a belief that we could, if anyone other than John could take kind of the black support around the city, or the minority support around the city, it would be us. We tried that, and we got it to some extent. We had council members, Latina council members in the Bronx and northern Manhattan, we



The other thing in terms of the public advocate's race, ...I think the Working Families Party influence on both races was just enormous. ... I think their field operation, which everyone always recognized as being tremendously strong, was even stronger than we thought it would be. And certainly in a low-turnout situation, it was an enormous factor.

—Ryan Toohey

had African Americans in Brooklyn and Queens. But I really think that John's work early to bring out that support, and to get Charlie Rangel, Adriano Espaillat—people who really have tremendous name recognition and have vote-influencing value in their communities—was huge.

And when you look at this race and the public advocate's race, in both cases, the "black candidate" did the best. And because I think Bill certainly grabbed that mantle as well. And the other thing in terms of the public advocate's race, getting back to what James said, I think the Working Families Party influence on both races was just enormous.

I think their field operation, which everyone always recognized as being tremendously strong, was even stronger than we thought it would be. And certainly in a low-turnout situation, it was an enormous factor.

"I was a fool to think that he would help me because we're all on the same party line," says Republican comptroller candidate Joe Mendola.

September 23rd, 2009

Quinnipiac poll: the Democratic primary run-off election remains close with Liu slightly ahead, 49 to 43 percent, with 9 percent "undecided." With participation in the September 29th election expected to be below 10 percent, pollsters speculate that get-out-the-vote efforts may decide the race.

September 25th, 2009

The Daily News endorses Yassky for the run-off, citing his background and law degree. The paper had previously endorsed Yassky in the primary election.

Liu and Yassky take part in a debate co-sponsored by the *Daily News* and NY1. Tempers flared as each accused the other of lying and dirty campaign tactics.

The Huffington Post endorses Liu.

The New York Post endorses Yassky.



Chung Seto from the Liu campaign explains their canvassing decisions.

weren't necessarily voting for John. And although it was helpful to have their support, especially behind the politics, and it was helpful to be able to talk to them, the field operation did not play as much of a role as some of the media had wanted them to or—

MR. ROBERTS: Would you have won without their support?

MR. GOLD: I—

MR. ROBERTS: You can be self-serving. It's okay.

MR. WARDALLY: Say yes.

MS. SETO: Yes.

MR. GOLD: I think that they did play an early role, and I think that was a helpful role. I just don't think that the field operation was ever—we never utilized their field operation because quite frankly, by the time we thought about that, the other stuff had already happened. The DFS (Data Field Services) stuff had already happened. And so there was no—

MR. WARDALLY: Although we made a conscious effort not to hire DFS.

MR. ROBERTS: Why?

MR. WARDALLY: I'll be honest with you.

MR. ROBERTS: Explain what DFS is, if you would.

MR. WARDALLY: DFS is Data Field Services, which is a company—I think everyone's read the 15-part *City Hall News* story by now, outlining DFS and its partnership with WFP—it's just their field arm. It's just a company they started to allow to do a lot of the things that it does well in what they deemed a cleaner format to do that in where they hired their canvassers, hired their supervisors, and did the door-to-door work of campaigns, voter-contact work of campaigns.

MR. TRICHTER: Since Ryan brought that up, I see Josh jumping at the bit. I've actually—a big question in my mind is how effective the WFP [Working Families Party] really was. I know that there was some underground conversation coming from your camp questioning that, and I actually had no idea whether or not the hype is kind of merited. So I'm anxious to—

MR. JOSHUA GOLD: I think they played a really big role in the public advocate race, and that's obvious. And I think they were really helpful to us early on as an imprint of progressive liberal support. And it helped Kevin and his team get more endorsements, but I don't think that, I think their field focus was on the public advocate's race. And although we did share some voters as James mentioned, I think Bill got 14 percent of the Asian vote. I think he won a lot of the Upper West Side districts, he won brownstone-Brooklyn areas where we did not win in the primary or in the runoff. And although we did well, they were pulling voters that

September 29th, 2009

Just 8 percent of registered Democrats turn out for the primary run-off election. John Liu defeats David Yassky, with 135,100 votes.

October 7th, 2009

Former candidate Yassky and former Mayor Ed Koch pen a *Daily News* op-ed entitled "The Working Families Threat: The Party's Ascent is Bad News for Democrats and New Yorkers." The authors argue that the Working Families Party has "exponentially" increased the power of the city's labor unions. The WFP endorsed Liu as well as victors in primaries for City Council and Public Advocate.

October 13th 2009

"Rent is Too Damn High" party founder Jimmy McMillan denounces his own party's candidate for comptroller, Salim Ejaz, accusing him of anti-semitism. The party endorses Liu. "The endorsement came as a pleasant surprise," says Liu spokeswoman Juanita Scarlett. "John, too, believes the rent is too damn high!"

October 21st, 2009

The Jewish Press endorses Liu.

November 3rd, 2009

Liu wins the city comptroller general election and becomes the highest-ranking elected Asian-American official in New York City history.

Look, I would love to tell you that I'm a genius, because I'd love for you to believe that. But the reality is the decision I made to not hire DFS was completely mine, and completely mine not because I had a crystal ball or that I knew that this *City Hall News* story was coming. I would love to be like that was the case.

The case was I made a decision because, one, I had been part of and run some of the largest door-to-door campaigns in this state and knew how to run a door-to-door campaign, how to hire canvassers, and run that myself. And I was, and I just felt we may not have needed it. That we could perhaps, definitely, do it on our own, and I was not comfortable at the time doing it.

I didn't have any information.

MR. ROBERTS: For financial reasons?

MR. TOOHEY: And you guys had the money to do it, which I think was something that hasn't yet—

MR. WARDALLY: Absolutely. We made a decision, a gut decision not to do it based on my recommendation. And it ended up being—and then the story came out two weeks later—and it was the right thing to do. But it wasn't based on any information or anything wrong at DFS or what they were doing.

MR. ROBERTS: But you could have afforded to do it if you wanted?

MS. SETO: We did. But another piece of the strategy that really was a critical part was we also needed to canvass the Asian community.

MR. WARDALLY: Absolutely.

MS. SETO: And we needed to solidify our base, something that has never been tested nor done, so that we had nothing to compare it to. So because we felt that we needed to hire people who looked like me and who spoke bilingual languages, that it was

important that we build our own canvassing to target that community. And that's really, basically we did that successfully.

MR. WARDALLY: And I'd also say one of the things that Josh said, which I think was a little glossed over, was some of the things that WFP was doing were not—they were pulling voters who weren't going to be helpful to us. And we were concerned about some of that as well, because if they pulled voters in brownstone Brooklyn or the Upper West Side, which were clearly going to be helpful to Bill de Blasio, they were not going to be helpful to us.

And so there were some issues there, as I began to think about it, that I don't know if I want to help them pull those people necessarily.

MR. ROBERTS: So you were pretty smart?

MR. WARDALLY: I like to believe so.

MR. ROBERTS: The—I'm sorry, go ahead.

MS. TOREN: I do think—sorry—but on the role of the Working Families Party, I do think while it may not, it's unclear what role it played in the comptroller's race from a field perspective, I do think it played a significant role early on, especially starting in April when the Working Families Party endorsed John. It made it very, very difficult to get elected support, which then in turn influences club support—

MR. WARDALLY: Well, the credibility thing that Josh talked about was exactly that.

MS. TOREN: Yeah.

MR. WARDALLY: I think you're absolutely right.

MS. TOREN: It's just that really made the difference.

MR. WARDALLY: We sought it, we worked ridiculously hard to get it—

MS. SETO: Just like everyone else.

MR. WARDALLY: —just like everyone else.

MS. TOREN: Yeah. We did. We worked hard.

MR. WARDALLY: We worked really hard to get it, and we did want it, and it did give us a certain level of credibility. I think that some of the stories that were written—

MS. TOREN: Or momentum. I mean, really what it gave you—

MR. WARDALLY: Momentum, definitely. Definitely.

MS. TOREN: —is it gave you credibility. But I think in the end what it really gave you was momentum.

MR. WARDALLY: It did. It gave us some early momentum.

Another piece of the strategy that really was a critical part was we also needed to canvass the Asian community... So because we felt that we needed to hire people who looked like me and who were bilingual, that it was important that we build our own canvassing to target that community... we did that successfully.

—Chung Seto

MR. ROBERTS: Let's come back to Working Families. And there's another theme that was sounded here that I want to come back to, too, about the "black candidate" and what that means for the election in general and the future. But let's go to the sweatshop issue.

THE SWEATSHOP ISSUE AND VOTER RESPONSE

Was that an issue? What was the truth about it? Why did it not resonate even more? And how did the other campaigns try to take advantage of it?

MS. SETO: The truth is John came here as a son of an immigrant, worked in a sweatshop with his mother.

MR. ROBERTS: How do we define sweatshop?

MS. SETO: Well, I am also an immigrant and worked in a sweatshop with my mother. And sweatshop is defined as a factory where it's hidden usually, and the business owners try to play loose with all the labor standards and child-labor laws, and so forth.

So it was, those of us in the Asian community and other immigrant communities, I must say, clearly recognize that it was not only a valid story but one that resonates across immigrant communities. I mean, I can say I can produce peers of my generation who grew up in sweatshops. We did. Our mothers didn't have child care. They worked two jobs, and we were there in the garment factory side by side. Some of us worked during summers. We got paid by pennies and cents and so forth.

And I think that what was not focused on in the media stories, and I'm really truly, and one thing, disappointed in the fact that it was John who pursued the story. It was John who said, "This is my story, and I want people to know about it." It was John who set up the interview. It was John who allowed his mother to be on record unrehearsed, unprepared because, and maybe perhaps, in hindsight, he shouldn't have, but she clearly was intimidated and was unsure to be able to say that, look, "I had my child in an illegal atmosphere—condition," and she was quite embarrassed by it.

MR. ROBERTS: Did it hurt? Did it help or hurt more?

MS. SETO: Well, you know what—

MR. ROBERTS: The issue of having worked in a sweatshop, did that help in the Asian community and other perhaps minority communities? And did the mother's comment then hurt in terms of undermining credibility in any way?

MS. SETO: Well, I'll qualify this with an answer, and Josh can confirm as well as Kevin. We went door to door as soon as that story broke—

MR. WARDALLY: Damn right.

Any time [minority elected officials] would be attacked by the white establishment, African-American communities—back then that revolved around churches—stood up for them. And that history has obviously carried forward.

—Jonathan Trichter

MS. SETO: —and in communities of color, and not a single person or voter said, "I don't believe John. This is not someone that I would vote for. Lost my vote." Not a single one.

MR. WARDALLY: And we also made a strategic decision not to take the ad down. There was an ad where we clearly referenced it, and we made a strategic decision to not take it down. We weren't—

MS. SETO: Because it was true.

MR. WARDALLY: —it was true, and we weren't going to run from it. And we refused to allow the comments of others, either of our opponents or the media to make us take down something we knew was true.

MR. TOOHEY: And the ad was fact, fiction, whatever you want to call it—

MR. ROBERTS: Well, what would you call it?

MR. TOOHEY: —it was a great television ad.

MR. ROBERTS: Right. And what would you call it?

MS. SETO: Yeah. Kudos to Jimmy Siegel.

MR. TOOHEY: I would call it a fascinating story. And either—no matter what you believe or don't believe—the John Liu immigrant story of coming here, child of immigrants, his rise through a professional career and then a public-service career, it's a really good story.

MR. ROBERTS: It's a better story if it's true.

MR. TOOHEY: But I think my point is—

MR. ROBERTS: All I'm asking though—

MR. TOOHEY: Beating on the wood of the *Daily News*, all the coverage it did, Erin's tremendous reporting on it, in my opinion, may have actually been a net positive.

MS. SETO: Yes.

Jonathan Trichter of the Katz campaign explains his view on reactions to the sweatshop story.

MR. TOOHEY: If you read the entire stories, you might walk away and say, “Oh, I’m wondering about this.” But if you just kind of looked at it, or just knew about it, hmm, John Liu, son of immigrants. Hard worker. Raised in a tough environment. Rose up, first Asian American, could be the first Asian American citywide elected, etc.” It’s a hell of a story, and I’m glad. If I were them, I would have kept it up too.

MR. WARDALLY: Look, the reality is it did help our name recognition being on the cover of the *Daily News* time and time again. I don’t think that I could argue that point.

MR. ROBERTS: We’re going to dip into this—go ahead.

MS. TOREN: But then strictly from a tactical standpoint, you look at your messaging. It was very emotional—

MR. WARDALLY: Absolutely.

MS. TOREN: —ours was very rational. And I think that the controversy in the end only heightened the emotion, and sort of flattened our being rational.

MR. WARDALLY: Well, here’s a pitch for Jimmy Siegel. We made a decision to hire Jimmy Siegel because we didn’t think the asset allocation argument was going to work for us, regardless of the fact that John was the actuary. We knew John had a great story. We knew we were appealing for African American, Latino, and a surge of Asian votes in order to win this thing, and we knew that if we could tell the story in an emotional way, that that would be the key for us. And that’s why we chose Jimmy, because we knew what he had done for Spitzer and others. And that’s the kind of story we wanted to tell. And I think he did a great job, and we did a great job in getting us where we wanted to be.

MR. TRICHTER: One of the other reasons why it might have been a net positive—I agree with my colleague Ryan—is in New York City and most urban areas, there’s a long history of minority elected officials or minority figures somehow being emboldened or popularized among their constituents after being attacked by what is perceived to be a white establishment: Sharpe James, Al Sharpton, going back to Adam Clayton Powell. And this kind of stems from when white liberals kind of turned their noses up at



so-called uppity ministers who were representing their communities and driving nice cars.

And any time they would be attacked by the white establishment, African-American communities—back then that revolved around churches—stood up for them. And that history has obviously carried forward. That sociological phenomenon has carried forward from Adam Clayton Powell right through Sharpe James. And therefore I agree. I think it was a net positive, irrespective of the facts, which I don’t think are all that interesting to get into here.

I think I’d rather be gracious and just say—

MR. ROBERTS: You don’t have to be gracious.

MR. TRICHTER: —at the same time, acknowledge, I think, Erin Einhorn’s old-school, dogged journalism in pursuing the story, but also saying that the explanation sounds reasonable.

MR. WARDALLY: I mean, Jonathan’s right. Look, the Saturday the story came out, John got a standing ovation at the National Action Network and then some for an extended period of time. And folks were very clear that we’re standing with you regardless of what they say.

MS. SETO: Yeah. We didn’t lose an existing endorsement, and we didn’t lose any endorsers we were seeking.

MR. TOOHEY: If you look at the comments that everybody made in the press, the on-the-record comments that everybody made in the press, you

The fact of the matter is that we were chasing a shrinking number of voters, and the role that the media played in that.

—Robert Olivari



see exactly what John was talking about. It's such a fraught issue that it was a little bit too hot to handle in some respects. Like how do I attack that story—this compelling emotional narrative that Jimmy, to his credit, I mean—I worked with Jimmy a ton on senate races, gubernatorial race. I had this vision of how the ad came to be, and it was Jimmy and John kind of talking, and John says, “Oh, and then my mom ...” and next thing you know, Jimmy says, “Holy crap, we got a sweatshop story here. It's amazing. I can put images to this.”

And it was—while I sat there and tried to doubt it, I would see the ad, and say, “Oh man, I don't know if I can doubt it.”

MS. SETO: I just want to remind everyone, I mean, John has eight years in the City Council, a record, right? He didn't just grow up, like you didn't just drop off and say, “I'm running for comptroller, and here's my sweatshop story.” I mean, he's been telling his narrative for some time now. And so it's not like we did sit in a room, and it just all of a sudden came about for a TV commercial.

MR. OLIVARI: Well, there's no question it differentiated John from all the rest of the candidates. And I think everyone here at the table would agree. Short of indictment or some incredible personal indiscretion, those people who were looking for the silver bullet to get the other candidate in the campaign, that very rarely occurs.

MR. ROBERTS: So now you would recommend that anyone running four years from now, get a job at a sweatshop immediately.

Cathy Mitchell Toren of the Yassky campaign differentiates the Liu campaign's messaging from the other campaigns'.

MR. OLIVARI: No, not at all. No Sam. But when it involves his parents, I mean, putting her out there unrehearsed, I don't know if that was a great idea, but it worked out great because the empathy that people had for that blunted any of the factual questions people had about the story. So therefore, it became, it was a thing that differentiated John's candidacy from the other candidacies.

MR. KANNER: And ultimately it did. It energized John's base around him. There's no doubt about that. I think the hope of the rest of us—I can speak frankly—was that it would alienate people outside of his base.

MR. TRICHTER: Absolutely.

MR. KANNER: And that was the hope. And clearly in the end, John won, and that speaks to their success. And it didn't happen. I do think it probably did have an impact on the race. I think the way, again, we didn't use it in the primary because like Ryan said, it was too hot to handle. In the runoff, I don't think people really responded to it. It didn't break through. I think it had a lot to do with the volume of ads on television, and people saw it as another attack. And frankly, I think people say, “Politicians lie.”

THE MEDIA AND THE MESSAGE

MR. ROBERTS: Let me ask you, this whole issue is a good segue into the role of the press. What impact did particularly the tabloid papers have in minority communities, and also what impact did editorial endorsements have? In this race, obviously, not much. Why not?

MR. KANNER: I would dispute that “not much.”

MR. ROBERTS: Okay. But not enough.

MR. KANNER: No, clearly not enough to win. That said, our original poll in April had David at 1 percent in Manhattan. We did not have institutional support,

I think this is where the emotional component to your messaging really served you well. I think to break through, you had to have something that was really distinctive, not kind of pedestrian. I think that's what you did.

—Cathy Mitchell Toren

I would also add that we chased voters that a lot of other people in this race weren't chasing either. I mean, we had a Korean program, we had a strong Asian program, right? African Americans, old African Americans, Latinos were not—they may have been part of targets for folks, but they were our targets.

—Kevin Wardally

whether it be from unions or elected officials. All due respect to Dan Garodnick and Jonathan Bing, you don't go from 1 percent to where we went, which was first place in Manhattan, in both the primary and the runoff. And the *Times* mattered in that respect.

The *Times*, I think we could run David for Manhattan borough president and have a great shot. And our theory was you come in first in Manhattan, you come in first in Brooklyn, you're going to be in the runoff, and you take your chances. The gap in the primary was too much to overcome in the runoff, but I think the *Times* had a big impact, especially in Manhattan.

MS. TOREN: And the *Daily News*.

MR. TOOHEY: And you guys had a double shot because you did the *Times* plus Chuck Schumer on TV—

MR. KANNER: Sure did.

MR. TOOHEY: —which is about as good as it gets in a primary.

MR. KANNER: That came in the final days of the primary, and the question is did anyone see it? And I'm still not sure of it.

MR. OLIVARI: I think the voters that that appealed to were already so suppressed from the mayor's race that they weren't turning out. So I think all of the questions that you've asked so far, Sam, if you look at this—Katz people talking about the women vote—I'm talking about we tried to run as the most qualified person.

But the fact of the matter is that we were chasing a shrinking number of voters, and the role that the media played in that—look, I did a state comptroller race in 1982, and I'll tell you I will lay \$10 bets right here that there isn't another person in this room other than Bruce Gyory who could actually tell me who the three candidates for state comptroller were in the Democratic primary in 1982.

MR. ROBERTS: Anyone want to take the bet? No? Good for you.

MR. OLIVARI: But my point being that the comptroller's race in and of itself being a difficult race to—and my congratulations to the Liu campaign simply because they differentiated their candidate on matters that really weren't, as qualified as John was, that really weren't related to the office but very successfully energized voters enough to win in the race.

I mean, every time you do one of these things, it's about identifying your voters and getting them out. I mean, we've all heard every night, election night, you keep hearing the same people saying, "Oh, it's turnout, turnout, turnout." And that's obviously true, and it makes everyone nauseous to hear that again and again, but with the shrinking electorate, I mean, if this campaign went on, if it was December, fewer people would have voted.

I mean, look, at the July 4th parade in Travis in Staten Island. People were yelling at the mayor, "Stop running the commercials." Those were his supporters.

[Laughter]

MR. OLIVARI: OK? So, I mean, it got to the point where it was just, the mayor's race just suppressed turnout. And the *Times*' endorsement then, in my mind, actually meant less. A lot of the institutional support meant less because most of the voters weren't even voting.

MR. ROBERTS: But don't those endorsements usually mean more in a low-turnout race?

MR. OLIVARI: It depends on who they influence.

MR. WARDALLY: It depends on who they influence, and it depends on who is energized to show up. But let's also say—and be honest very quickly—the sweatshop story did cost us the primary, right? I think we'd win outright on primary day without that story.

MR. ROBERTS: Anyone else agree with that?

MR. TRICHTER: I still think it helped them. So I might disagree.

MS. SETO: I think that you look at all the numbers and where we significantly expected a greater turnout. I think that those two points were critical.

TARGETED VOTER OUTREACH

MR. ROBERTS: How do you break through, as Bob said. I know that my mailbox, I had to sort of use a shovel to get to it in the comptroller's race—the public advocate race alone. Did anyone read all this stuff that you were putting out? I mean, did you look at the colors of it, the headlines of it, the pictures on it?

How did you, when people were being so inundated, in addition to everything on television, when you guys were relying more on the mail perhaps, how did you distinguish yourselves? And was any of that really worth it? Did any of that change any votes?

MR. BEN BRANHAM: We made a conscious decision early on that the only chance we had was to do it through paid media on television. I mean, our mail program we downgraded significantly in order to try to distinguish Melinda in some ways over the airwaves, and we think we did that. Our ads were good but obviously not good enough. To the Liu's campaign credit, their ad told a more compelling story that people remembered, and it happened to be associated with a pretty—with a four- or five-day media story too.

But the only chance we had was to portray her in a different, tough way. The "stick-it" ad most people remembered quite vividly, but that was our only shot.

MS. TOREN: I think this is where the emotional component to your messaging really served you well. I think to break through, you had to have something that was really distinctive, not kind of pedestrian. I think that's what you did.

MR. GOLD: Two things. A couple things helped that. I mean, Mission Control did a fantastic job with the pieces and using the ad that Jimmy put together already, and sort of reminded people of that ad. And the other thing that helped out was we had just talked about the shrinking amount of voters, and our targeting that Kevin worked on was almost exact when you look at the turnout on Election Day. And we made an effort—

MR. ROBERTS: Exact in terms of total numbers?

MR. GOLD: —total numbers—and we made a real concentrated effort to focus on folks who we knew were definitely going to vote, really super-prime voters, really partisan voters who the term-limits stuff sort of connected with more. And those were the folks who were going to read all the mail, no matter how much mail it is, and the folks in Manhattan were getting, I don't know, 30, 40 pieces from the DA's race in addition to all the mayor's races. But these super-prime voters who don't like the mayor just because he's not a Democrat are going to throw out his stuff, and they're going to take the time to look at our stuff, and we had stuff that connected, because of Mission Control, connected with the ad that was already, that they were already seeing on the air. So it helped.

MS. SETO: I think that's where—

MR. WARDALLY: I would also add that we chased voters that a lot of other people in this race weren't chasing either. I mean, we had a Korean program, we had a strong Asian program, right? African Americans, old African Americans, Latinos were not—they may have been part of targets for folks, but they were our targets.

But part of that also is what's wrong with 99 percent of losing campaigns. It's not as interesting to talk about in roundtables, but we didn't have the money.

—Jonathan Trichter

Where we weren't so concerned about the Upper West Side or brownstone Brooklyn or southern Brooklyn or Staten Island, except for some parts of the north shore. Our voters weren't necessarily always getting as many pieces because Thompson wasn't mailing to them. And Bloomberg only tangentially mailed to them about his 18 million—his 17 notebooks plans for the city. But it wasn't so much targeted directly for them. So—

MR. TRICHTER: I never got a piece of mail—I never got a piece of mail.

MS. SETO: We did well.

MR. WARDALLY: Then we did the right thing.

[Laughter]

MR. TRICHTER: I live seven blocks from here.

MS. TOREN: You also had very—

MR. ROBERTS: And I'm not going to ask what you voted for.

MS. TOREN: —get-out-to-vote effort. So I think that Reverend Sharpton, for example, which I know you had targeted robo calls that I think that in the end was very, the persuasion piece was very, very sort of high in a way that the other candidates—

MR. GOLD: Can I just add to that that I read an AP piece on the Bloomberg campaign having 75 different robo calls. I think we might have had more than that by the end of it. Really, really targeted, get-out-to-vote robo calls. Different versions for different validators. We probably had like 90 robo calls.

MR. ROBERTS: In different languages as well?

MS. TOREN: Which we did the same.

MS. SETO: In different languages.

MR. WARDALLY: Different languages.

MS. TOREN: We did the same but with various Robert Kennedy, Schumer, but it didn't, but it just did not have sort of the emotional, persuasive component that I think in the end you really had to have for a race like this.

TRYING TO CATCH FIRE

MR. ROBERTS: So when you step back and look at the four candidates and look at what John Liu had and look at a well-run campaign, which I think we will all give them, was his election almost inevitable?

MS. SETO: No.

MR. WARDALLY: No.

MS. TOREN: No.

MR. ROBERTS: Not to demean your effort.

MS. SETO: No. I mean, if you, well, you recall that it was the undecideds were the ones winning almost. You'd look at primary day, you look at us going into July and August. I mean, polls were, public polls still had undecided as the number one, and leading of this.

MR. WARDALLY: And there were some polls where we did not, were no longer in front after the *Daily News* story, which a lot of, which everybody and their mother put a lot of weight on. But it must be clear, I mean, there was, like, whole—the mail pieces and TV commercials, like, we surged ahead. I mean, that became, like, the story. John's down thanks to the sweatshop story.

So no. Clearly inevitability was never in our minds.

MR. OLIVARI: There was one poll that showed Melinda, I think, in the lead at 27, right, at some point late in the campaign?

MS. TOREN: Right.

MR. KANNER: Yeah.

MS. TOREN: —extraordinarily well in Queens, which was odd.

MR. WARDALLY: Yeah. That was also—

MR. OLIVARI: The question—but just the polling is, like, who were people polling?

MS. TOREN: Can I just say one thing—

MR. ROBERTS: Yes.

MS. TOREN: —on inevitability? I do think though that, while I don't think it was inevitable, I think that it was likely—once the Working Families Party endorsed John Liu in April with the unions and the electeds, sort of the

establishment support—I think it was virtually, or not virtually impossible, but it was really, really difficult at least for us who I do think, we were sort of your, by far and away, your closest competitors, to get one breakthrough.

MR. WARDALLY: I would disagree with that primarily only because so many parts of the Working Families Party did not support John. I mean, the Working Families Party as an institution—

MS. TOREN: But you go back to the clubs and the elected officials and the implications—

MR. WARDALLY: Yeah, but elected officials don't follow the Working Families Party.

MS. SETO: Yeah.

MR. WARDALLY: The Working Families Party follows a lot of the elected officials. It's not the other way around.

MR. TOOHEY: But don't you think at any point in the, there were points in the race where other candidates could have caught fire?

MS. SETO: I agree.

MR. WARDALLY: Absolutely.

MS. SETO: Yes.

MR. ROBERTS: How?

MR. TOOHEY: Well, when we put Melinda on TV—

MR. WARDALLY: First.

MR. TOOHEY: - yes, first - conveying what we thought was a highly resonant message, which was, "I'm a tough New York City woman who doesn't back down



Liu's campaign staffers discusses targeted voter outreach.

from hard choices, from the establishment,” and then kind of tried to wrap it in this “I’m a woman,” and we’re mailing things with pictures of her stove.

MR. WARDALLY: And it was a good ad.

MR. TOOHEY: And it was a good ad, and it spoke to us. From day one of our campaign, we were like, this should be about the kitchen table and figuring out, relating to New York’s families making tough choices. We never really drove home that message as hard as we could. We got a huge kick out of the fact that the mayor’s last ad was about the kitchen table because our kind of internal chat was always “We got to get back to the kitchen table, back to the kitchen table.”

MR. WARDALLY: And when Schumer endorsed Yassky, when Schumer endorsed Yassky, and the *Times* endorsed Yassky, there was a moment there that we thought that—

MS. SETO: It would take off.

MR. WARDALLY: —would take off, right? ‘Cause Schumer was, he’d been in 62 counties every five minutes, right? I mean, like, there isn’t a voter in the state of New York that hasn’t got a personal visit from Chuck Schumer, and he is the most important component, one of the most important validators in the state. So—

MR. ROBERTS: Could you tell how much he pushed the vote?

MR. KANNER: We truly thought that it could get us over 40. I mean, you have to follow this—

I’d also say that so many of your colleagues [the press] had already decided that that race was over.

—Kevin Wardally

MR. KANNER: -closely to know this, but in the last debate, we were unscrupulously positive. We made a comment like, “You’re going to see a lot of attacks in the final weeks of this campaign.” We wanted to go—

MR. ROBERTS: Does anyone else have that kind of clout other than Chuck Schumer—

MR. KANNER: No.

MR. ROBERTS: —in terms of—

MR. TOOHEY: Not right now in New York. I don’t think so.

MS. TOREN: So in parts of it, in Brooklyn for example, Marty Markowitz polls unbelievable—

MR. TOOHEY: I just think one thing that you can kind of pull out of what we’re all seeing is no one knew going into primary day what was going to happen. And that’s pretty fascinating. And so that’s why I come back to whether it was Kevin’s brilliance or the Working Families, I describe it to everyone. They did an incredible job on Election Day that made a huge difference. They clearly targeted the right voters.

So we thought we could get 30 percent of the vote on primary day. These guys thought Chuck and the *Times* could push them over 40. They thought that they were—so no one knew. And it was kind of amazing. We didn’t really—

MS. SETO: We knew we would—

MR. WARDALLY: We had close to 100,000 ones on primary day, so we knew where we were going.

MR. ROBERTS: Close to 100,000—

MR. WARDALLY: I’m sorry—

MR. TOOHEY: “Ones” are guaranteed votes.

MR. WARDALLY: We had about 100,000 identified Liu voters on primary day, so our day was very specific.

MR. ROBERTS: How did all of you get your voters out? I mean, if you were so worried about turnout—

MR. WARDALLY: We all did similar, I’m sure we all did exact similar things.

Kevin Wardally of the Liu campaign comments on the role of validators and of the press.



MR. TRICHTER: But not at all to the degree, magnitude, success as John Liu. Part of that—you guys received a lot of praise, and I don't want to take away any. You guys deserve all of it. But part of that also is what's wrong with 99 percent of losing campaigns. It's not as interesting to talk about in roundtables, but we didn't have the money.

Yassky's campaign and Weprin's campaign didn't have the money that John Liu had, and that's not to take away from their campaign either. I mean, campaigns are a lot about having the resources to get your message out, do what you need to do.

MAGNITUDE OF PERSUASION: THE WEIGHT OF ENDORSEMENTS

MR. ROBERTS: Let me ask you, if I can, about one resource that we give a lot of weight to when we cover campaigns or the dynamics of campaigns, and I'm not sure whether it's too much weight or not. Union endorsements. What do they really mean in terms of giving an imprimatur, in terms of persuading elected officials, in terms of obviously turning out to vote?

MR. TRICHTER: Just that we polled *New York Times'* endorsement to see what it was worth, and it was worth something. We also polled UFT—

MR. ROBERTS: How much, so I can go back and tell our editorial board?

[Laughter]

MR. TRICHTER: I'll e-mail you the exact figures. That's your second op-ed you've gotten from me today.

The second thing we did is we polled UFT's [United Federation of Teachers] endorsement, and it was shockingly close in terms of magnitude and weight to the *New York Times*. We felt that that, plus the additional dollar you guys are now charging, probably made UFT even—for us anyway it would have been more impactful. We figured the *Times* is too expensive for anybody in New York City.

MR. OLIVARI: I think you have to go back to, again, to the mayor's race about this. Why didn't Chuck

Schumer's endorsement put David Yassky over the top? Why didn't the *Times* endorsement? Because those voters weren't going to vote. It's that simple. Our colleagues in the Liu campaign, they had a much better targeting operation, I think, than the rest of us. They identified their voters much better than the rest of us did. And there were just, a lot of traditional voters were just not going to vote in this. They had had enough.

MR. ROBERTS: And Kevin, were you able to do that because of money?

MS. SETO: No.

MR. WARDALLY: But look, money helped us begin ID-ing a lot sooner than any of my colleagues here.

MR. OLIVARI: Right. They had focus.

MR. WARDALLY: We began ID-ing a lot sooner than they did because we had some money there. But we also, as some of the stories began to break, we also began to weave a message in a lot of the local papers, a lot of the weekly papers—the *Amsterdam News*, the *El Diarios*, the *Hoys*—that were, and they, to what Jonathan was saying, they quickly jumped on the fact that the sweatshop story was an attack on immigrant communities, attack on people of color. And they began to run our story about what Rob was saying, how important it is for us to vote. How important this position is to our community, and can be to our community. How John is a standard bearer.

Because once that story came out, we knew we would never—we're not going to get the *Times*. We knew clearly our shot at the *Daily News* was out the window. We never expected the *Post*. So we had always had a focus on local papers. But it really became a driving force for us, not only to focus on them for endorsements, but to also make them realize that we needed them to carry our message, which is why even on election night, John thanked about 25 local papers on New York 1 because that was important to us.

MS. SETO: Well, I think that if you look back at the schedules, and we—let's just face it—I will say that I truly believe we had the better candidate. I truly believe that this guy gets up, and he expects to be out there from 6:00 a.m. to 10:30, 11:00 o'clock p.m.

He worked going into primary weekend, the schedule was we couldn't, I would say, humanly keep up. And we went to target communities. But looking back, he sat, I would say, if not with all of the significant like, community papers, I would say 90 percent. There was not a Russian paper we missed. There's not a Polish paper we missed, a Korean paper, or Chinese or Spanish, or you know, just, we really microtargeted those communities as well because we felt that it had to work hand in hand with our messaging and what we were doing in the mail and what we were doing on TV and radio.

Let's be clear: None of us in the consultant world thought that that race was done. We clearly thought Bloomberg was spending more money than Jesus Christ, but no one thought that that race was done.

—Kevin Wardally

So it's sort of like the plan as we wrote it had to go hand in hand. It wasn't—

MR. ROBERTS: To pick up on Bob's point. If there had been a more spirited primary campaign for mayor, how would it have affected your primary?

MR. WARDALLY: If Billy had spent more money in communities of color, we think that would have helped, right? But if Anthony had spent more money in communities that helped David. It's hard to know.

DEMOGRAPHICS: RACE AND THE RACE

MS. TOREN: It's also, one thing we talked about last night was the demographics of the voter, of a down ballot voter turnout, which I do think, I continue to believe, played a significant role. And it's very difficult to parse that out without having any real hard data on it. But I think if you have a Manhattan-Brooklyn strategy based on sort of historic election cycles in the past—and the demographics of Manhattan have changed dramatically over the past four years.

It's very difficult to sort of analyze kind of why who came out came out. I don't necessarily believe that it had as much to do with the mayoral as it may have had to do with the demographics of the voter public.

MS. SETO: To Kevin and Josh's credit, I mean, that's where we focused. We recognized—

MS. TOREN: Clearly. Clearly.

MS. SETO: —the demographics have changed in New York.

MS. TOREN: You didn't just focus on it. What I do, I really do applaud and was really impressed by, that you didn't focus on it for the election. You had been focusing on, you know, sort of, and just showing up, and showing interest in those communities for a long time—

MS. SETO: For a long time. Three years.

MR. WARDALLY: Absolutely.

MS. TOREN: But that is not so dissimilar to David in central Brooklyn, for example. The clergy community rallied around him in a big way because he really had developed a relationship with them over the course of the past couple of years. It just did not materialize.

MR. ROBERTS: Let me ask a question that is sort of a segue to our next panel but is relevant to this one as well. If John Liu was the “black candidate” in effect, in quotes, and he won, why didn't the “black candidate” for mayor win? And what does that say about mayoral politics, citywide elected politics—

MS. SETO: Well, it goes back to your original—

MR. ROBERTS: —in this race and four years from now?

MS. SETO: —premise: Can anyone beat a man who spends \$102 million?

MR. WARDALLY: Is it only 102?

MS. SETO: I don't know.

MR. TRICHTER: And he was an incumbent. I mean—

BLOOMBERG AND THE FRAMING OF INEVITABILITY

MR. WARDALLY: He was the incumbent. This was an open-seat seat. But I would also say—and I'm sure some of my colleagues from the Thompson campaign are going to address this—I'd also say that so many of your colleagues had already decided that that race was over.

MR. TRICHTER: Mm hmm.

MS. SETO: Right.

MR. WARDALLY: Right? And had a narrative that we, throughout the summer and throughout September and October to November, that that was finished. That that was—that this was just an exercise in campaign futility.

MR. ROBERTS: Now did all of you agree? I mean, we were wrong, but what about you guys? Did you think it was inevitable too?

MR. WARDALLY: No.

MR. OLIVARI: The mayor's race? No.

MR. WARDALLY: No.

MS. SETO: No.

MR. OLIVARI: No. Absolutely not.

Bloomberg could have been beaten if there had been a little bit more faith, right? A little bit more faith, not amongst Bill Thompson but amongst people who should have been with him and who weren't, or who were tangentially with him.

—Kevin Wardally

There was also, it's actually, it was an interesting kind of phenomenon because I think if you asked any of us around this table how close we thought the mayoral race was going to be, we would have said what most folks here have said, which is five, three to six, something like that. If you asked the Bloomberg campaign—who were going, they were mailing negative mail, they had negative TV—they clearly knew that too.

—Ryan Toohey

MR. WARDALLY: None of us thought that. I mean, we clearly were focused on other races, as Ryan and I worked on the same DA candidate. And we also were focused on John 24/7. But let's be clear: None of us in the consultant world thought that that race was done. We clearly thought Bloomberg was spending more money than Jesus Christ, but no one thought that that race was done. And we all thought—thanks to the economy, thanks to the anti-incumbency fervor going on out there, the annoyance with all the ads—that that thing was going to be tighter.

Now, whether we knew exactly the numbers or not, we all knew that was going to be tighter, much tighter than the media folks made it sound.

MR. OLIVARI: What Kevin's saying is that, I mean, I think all of our experience, when you're out in the street with your candidate, you know, okay, it's the old story. If everyone tells you that they voted for you, you would have won the, you know—

MR. WARDALLY: Exactly.

MR. OLIVARI: But nonetheless there was that feeling out there that people really were upset, particularly in some of the communities we campaigned in, about the water rates, about real estate, about—

MR. WARDALLY: Tickets.

MR. OLIVARI:—real estate taxes, about being out of touch. So that the idea that there was some inevitability was counter to our daily experiences. So therefore, like, I mean—Bruce again, Bruce Gyory, the *Times* ran a good story about him, his prediction—but I think if any of the rest of us had asked— not to take away from Bruce—but, yeah, three to five.

MR. WARDALLY: Yeah. I said five.

MR. ROBERTS: All right. You said five. Could Bloomberg have been beaten?

MR. WARDALLY: Yeah. I believe Bloomberg could have been beaten. I do believe that.

MR. ROBERTS: By?

MR. WARDALLY: I think, well, I think Bloomberg could have been beaten if there had been a little bit more faith, right? A little bit more faith, not amongst Bill Thompson but amongst people who should have been with him and who weren't, or who were tangentially with him.

MR. ROBERTS: Who?

MR. WARDALLY: Amongst those who went—

MR. ROBERTS: Are we talking about voters or—

MR. WARDALLY: I'm talking about validators.

MS. SETO: Validators.

MR. WARDALLY: Talking about credible validators. And if there had been a little bit more objectiveness in the press in writing about it, I think he would have been beat. I mean, a couple days before the election there was a story in one of the papers, but it was, like "He's going to win by, like, 25 points."

That was the most ridiculous thing I'd ever read in the paper a couple days before elections in my life because that's just not going to happen even in his wildest dreams or if he had spent all of his money. I mean, it was just not going to happen. So I think if there had been more faith amongst some of the voters, amongst some of the validators and endorsers, and if the press had covered it a little bit more in the middle of the road, I think he could have been beaten.

MR. ROBERTS: To what extent, and I know this is a very subjective question, was that the fault of the Thompson campaign?

MR. WARDALLY: I think you've got some good consultants who are about to come on and talk about that.

MR. ROBERTS: I know, but I'm asking you.

[Laughter]

MR. TOOHEY: There was also, it's actually, it was an interesting kind of phenomenon because I think if you asked any of us around this table how close we thought the mayoral race was going to be, we would have said what most folks here have said, which is five, three to six, something like that. If you asked the Bloomberg campaign—who were going, they were mailing

negative mail, they had negative TV—they clearly knew that too.

MR. WARDALLY: Yes.

MR. TOOHEY: But it never trickled up to the newspapers. I never really understood that. It was—

MR. ROBERTS: Up or down?

MR. TOOHEY: Yeah, it was, and in deference to—

MR. ROBERTS: Thank you.

[Laughter]

MR. TOOHEY: —there was this elite opinion—elite if you consider us elite, I guess—that it was going to be tight. The campaign behaved like it was going to be tight.

MR. WARDALLY: That's right.

MR. TOOHEY: Yet papers never heard it or got it, which I thought was fascinating. It was very interesting.

MR. OLIVARI: Well, I mean, Ryan, what was it about? They were in a very effective campaign with, for lack of a better term, media elites and others. They even, the *Times* reported that it even went to the White House—

MR. WARDALLY: Yep.

MR. OLIVARI: —where like, frankly, if I were working there, today there'd be people with their stuff on the lawn in cardboard boxes, OK, that they got hoodwinked into this.

MR. WARDALLY: Yep.

MR. OLIVARI: OK? But the fact of the matter is that they ran a campaign intentionally of inevitability, and with the media people it really worked. And with the voters, it worked in that it suppressed voter turnout.

MR. TOOHEY: Just one quick thing. You don't, and you don't run negative TV ads and do negative mail if you think you're, if you're inevitable.

MR. WARDALLY: That's right. Thank you.

MR. TOOHEY: If you—and I give the Bloomberg campaign—

MR. WARDALLY: You ignore the opponent.

MR. TOOHEY: —credit, because on election night when they said, it was, you know, everybody thought it was, like, the spin of “we thought it was going to be close all along.” I think they probably did think it was going to be close all along.

So—

We had the words “partisan” and “senior” and “Democrat” written down on a big board in our war room, because that's where we needed to focus on the primary.

—Josh Gold

MR. WARDALLY: A smart friend in the audience said a great line a little bit ago this morning, that we all have to give Howard Wolfson some credit, right, because he did brilliant misdirection, right? He talked a lot over here, and we paid attention to what was going over here, and nobody really paid attention to the fact that they were running negative ads and negative mail, and they were running scared of Bill Thompson till the very end, and then beat him by four points.

MR. TRICHTER: There were even more obvious clues, not to beat a dead horse, and make the press feel worse than it should or does.

[Laughter]

MR. OLIVARI: Do you think they really do?

[Laughter]

MR. ROBERTS: Some do.

MR. TRICHTER: I'm hoping to get into that in the off-the-record lunch and hear some contrition. *[Laughter]* But there was more obvious empirical evidence that the thing was close. You guys don't know how to read polls.

MS. SETO: Right. Yeah.

MR. TRICHTER: You just don't—

MR. OLIVARI: I think the fact that the mayor was rarely over 50 percent, right?

MR. TRICHTER: If you've got an incumbent that spent upwards of \$200 million to date prior to this election, and he's only at 51 percent, forget about the 16 percent that you're down. I mean, that vote's not going to the incumbent, the known entity. What's so hard about that?

THE ESTABLISHMENT CANDIDATE

MR. ROBERTS: Let me ask, in the comptroller's race, Fred Hochberg raises a question. In the runoff, and in the campaign leading up to the runoff, did Yassky suffer by being perceived as the establishment candidate?

MR. KANNER: Well, I don't think we were the establishment candidate.

MR. ROBERTS: But were you perceived that way with the endorsements?

MR. KANNER: No, I just think it was an organizational infrastructure that was too much to overcome. And it was the, we weren't, I'm not going to say shocked. We were surprised by the margin in the primary where you could have—you saw that it was going to be very tough in the runoff.

I think that there was very little that happened in those two weeks that would have affected it either way, frankly.

MR. GOLD: We built a very different field operation for the runoff than we did for the primary. We had the words “partisan” and “senior” and “Democrat” written down on a big board in our war room, because that's where we needed to focus on the primary. And we circled them for the runoff because if the primary turnout was so low, the runoff turnout was going to be even lower. And we wanted to make sure with the ability to spend even more money for the runoff, we wanted to double down in the field program and go after those voters even more so.

We didn't have necessarily, we had an infrastructure in place to go after our base, and we just repeated the same program we did in the primary for the runoff because it worked very well there.

MR. WARDALLY: Exactly.

MR. GOLD: But to go after the additional voters that we needed in the runoff, we built up in those two weeks. We hired an additional 150 canvassers, trained them all, and really built a more specific field operation because we knew that the race was going to be just such a low turnout that it really came down to that.

MR. WARDALLY: And I would take issue with my friend Hochberg's assertion. I would say we were even more the establishment candidate than they were. Because we immediately went after their endorsements, and went after Bronx County and those elected officials, and Weprin's endorsements immediately, and Staten Island. And then when you combine that with the labor unions we already had, I would say—and we were much more the establishment candidate, and ran to it, than Yassky was.

MS. TOREN: Especially in the runoff because—

MR. WARDALLY: Yeah, in the runoff—

MS. TOREN: —it got so big that—

MR. WARDALLY: —in the runoff. Without a doubt.

MS. TOREN: —immediately established that the sort of support that we were potentially positioned to get, we just, it was really hard to get it.

MR. WARDALLY: We ran right at it after the primary.

MS. SETO: Yeah. We ran, yeah.

MR. KANNER: And while I have no doubt it was a different organization for the runoff because of our very low name ID at the beginning and how much of our resources we spent on television in the primary, it was tough to turn on a dime. And that's what you had to do, you had to do it very quickly.

MS. TOREN: Because we too had a very different field operation for our runoff.

MR. ROBERTS: What was the different strategy in the runoff against Liu than during the primary?

MS. TOREN: It was the same, we put—I don't remember, I don't know how many—

MS. SETO: Well, you were negative.

MS. TOREN: —exponentially more, well, beyond that. We were negative, true. But we also put together a paid field operation in a way that we did not for the primary.

MR. WARDALLY: Yeah, if I was you, wouldn't—

MR. KANNER: Yeah, and if it was 12 points, a 12-point gap in the primary, presumably you would have gone negative as well.

MS. TOREN: Right.



Josh Gold of the Liu campaign reveals their get-out-the-vote plans.

FINAL THOUGHTS

MR. ROBERTS: Let me ask before we break for the next panel, obviously we're going to talk, some of us, at lunch too, but is there anything that I didn't raise that any of you would like to raise?

MR. OLIVARI: I would like to say this. I mean, when the Liu people said they had the better candidate, I would say that it's true in this respect—and they talked about it briefly before. John really went all over the city in the prior three years. There were a lot of people [who] knew him. It wasn't done with a lot of fanfare, but a lot of people knew him.

My candidate's fault was I don't think that he did that in the prior three years. And therefore, he didn't have that, in a shrinking electorate, he didn't have that base of support to rely upon. I don't know what Melinda did or what David Yassky did in terms of that. But I know that David Weprin didn't pursue that in the same way. He was more focused on his governmental role. Had I had the opportunity to get him out into the boroughs and get him out to more political clubs and more unions rather than just his governmental role as finance chair, I think that we would have not finished fourth. I don't think we would have won, but I think that the Weprin campaign would have been much, much more effective. And I give John Liu all the credit in the world for having that foresight.

MR. ROBERTS: How come John Liu had so much time?

MR. GOLD: I want to thank Chung. I came on in the middle of the summer, and Chung has been working with John for years. And we talked about the importance of money. But it was really early money. I think David ended up maxing out for both, or equal in the runoff and maxing out for the primary.

But John's fundraising was done in July, and it gave him the opportunity to follow up on what you were talking about and be out from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. in the streets with voters that were really highly targeted, because of Kevin, who we knew were going to vote. We didn't have to spend time that—I know you guys have to do a lot of call time, I'm sure, and spend a lot of time raising money—and we didn't have to do that for the last two and a half months because Chung had put together a really great operation to raise that money way before other candidates.

MR. WARDALLY: Absolutely.

MS. SETO: And to add onto Robert's point is for the three years prior to, for me to pull together the team, that's where we focus. We knew heavily coming into this that we needed to build a successful coalition. And so we went after clubs and organizations and validators early, early on.

So three years of coming to the same meetings, as Kevin said earlier, we're known. Like, they loved John.

MR. OLIVARI: And don't forget what they said by their own admission if you will, was they weren't sure what John was even going to run for.

MR. WARDALLY: Yep. But I'd also—there's also one key piece that—

MS. SETO: But any—

MR. WARDALLY: —will be written in this, in the next five years when we talk about this, or the next three or four years. We also, early on, even before we knew we had no clue what John was going to run for, there was an effort to flip 30,000 or so Asian voters, who had traditionally been Independents and Republicans and were blanks, to register in the Democratic Party because we made them understand that in order to be helpful to John, they had to be Democrats. And that was a big, big push in the Asian community for the last several years, in hopes that John would run for something more than just City Council.

And those voters in a low-turnout election meant so much more this time around than folks who—people are going to pay attention to that in the long run.

MS. SETO: Yeah. Hopefully we'll get the numbers, and when it comes, and it's—

MR. ROBERTS: Call me.

MS. SETO: —validated.

MR. WARDALLY: Yes. Absolutely.

MS. SETO: Yeah, right.

MR. WARDALLY: Facebook. Facebook.

MS. TOREN: That's where endorsements probably did play a big role, because David didn't undergo a citywide race until 2007, sort of well into 2007. And John did poll really well early on, and David did poll, was a distant third. The fact that we did sort of get to where we did, and had a lot of money to raise along the way—

MR. WARDALLY: Sure.

MS. TOREN: —because we did not raise all the money before. So it's hard to parse out.

MR. ROBERTS: We'll take a break. We'll be back in about 15 minutes at the most for our next panel. Thanks to this panel, and please give them a hand. They're very smart people.

ROUNDTABLE II: THE RACE FOR MAYOR

WHO'S WHO

Moderator

Sam Roberts

Campaign Representatives

Tony Avella for Mayor

James Trimarco, Communications Director

Bloomberg for Mayor 2009

Karen Persichilli Keogh, Senior Political Advisor

Basil Smilke, Political Outreach

Bradley Tusk, Campaign Manager

Howard Wolfson, General Consultant

New Yorkers for Bill Thompson

Eduardo Castell, Campaign Manager

L. Joy Mitchell, Political Director

Roberto Ramirez, General Consultant

Nathan Smith, GOTV Director

Doc Sweitzer, General Consultant

MR. SAM ROBERTS: Also for those who were not here earlier, let me just go through the ground rules again. There are hardly any. The idea is that you should jump in whenever you can, whenever you feel like. You can ask each other questions. I will sort of try to moderate this discussion, but by moderate I mean just keep people from interrupting each other so that we can record it, and so that the audience can hear it.

We've got a lot of ground to cover in a relatively short period of time. Remember for some of the participants, at least, there is a lunch that will follow in which we can discuss on an off-the-record basis anything we didn't discuss here. But I would urge you all to be as candid as possible. I think that's the great value of discussions like this for you and certainly for the rest of us.

Again, as Andrew White said, if we could speak into the microphones, give your name at least the first time, and again, in the audience, if anyone has questions, please fill out one of those cards, whatever color they are, and just have them—hold them up.

Let me start off by at least starting chronologically, and that is getting a sense from those who were there what the field looked like before term limits was extended. What did the campaign look like? What did the prospects look like for the various candidates, presumably the Democratic candidates. Eddie?

BEFORE THE TERM LIMITS EXTENSION

MR. EDUARDO CASTELL: Well, obviously term limits changed everything. You probably would have looked at a broader Democratic field. It would have been a very different campaign. It would have been a campaign that would have been targeted towards the primary. The day term limits changed, we knew that it was going to be a battle for the general against Michael Bloomberg.

We felt at that point the most important thing was to work to clear as much as you could off the field in the Democratic primary. If you had a shot, if you really were going to have a shot, a Democratic candidate had to have as clean a shot as possible. And secondly, we then knew as well that you weren't going to be able to go toe-to-toe with the self-financed billionaire, and that you really were going to have to run a smart campaign where you were saving your resources towards the end where it was going to matter very much about field. The same as the conversation in the earlier panel, it was about targeting your vote and getting out your vote. And you had to do it towards the end.

You would not have been able to sustain it. We wouldn't have had the resources to sustain it early.

MR. ROBERTS: But you didn't have to clear the field though. Bloomberg did it for you.

MR. CASTELL: Well, I sort of, I know they took credit for that. But I think that there were a lot of, I think there were a lot of factors that play in that quite a bit. And I think that the calculation was, is always a bit, I think any other Democrats of the sort of bigger-name Democratic candidates—and certainly Anthony Avella stayed in the race—but I think of the candidates who had more name recognition and more name, the thought was always if you have a strongly contested primary, it would have been very, very difficult to turn that around with just a couple of weeks and be able to come at an incumbent mayor with his number of resources.

MR. ROBERTS: So did Bill try to persuade Christine Quinn, Anthony Weiner, anyone else to get out of the race?

MR. CASTELL: No. We didn't speak to the candidates directly. It was a matter about, number one, showing that there was, you were in it, and you were in it to stay in it. That you were not going to budge. And that therefore, those candidates who may have had options, they should exercise those options, because we weren't going anywhere.

And number two, to start to lock in what was going to be a very strong, your strong sort of base of support in

a way that illustrated that you were in it and were in it for real and were going to stay.

MR. ROBERTS: The press and other observers had doubts about whether you were going to stay in. Did you?

MR. CASTELL: No. Absolutely not. The one thing, once Bill Thompson made a decision, it was ironclad. And I think that's been the case. I mean, Bill Thompson, he's sort of viewed as a measured, cautious guy. I think he's very prudent and he's judicious. But I think when you've looked at the big decisions in his life, he's been willing to roll the dice. He ran in 2001 at the age of 48, for the first time in his life he ran for public office.

He ran citywide for the most substantive office in the city other than mayor—comptroller—coming off of the Board of Education. Some people thought that was, like, well, that wasn't judicious. And it proved to be sort of an aggressive and bold and smart move.

I think once he decided that it was time to run, that term limits was going to be an Achilles heel for Bloomberg, that the voters were very upset, particularly with the—what we talked about—the affordability squeeze, the affordability gap that existed in New York, that there was a chance there.

MR. ROBERTS: Did he really decide on the voting line for Obama?

MR. CASTELL: Did he really, I'm sorry?

MR. ROBERTS: Did he really decide to run when he was on the line to vote for Obama for president?

MR. CASTELL: Yeah, he was nearing it, and I think when he saw the potential for—I mean, he called me after that and said if there were any doubts, they've been cleared. I think he was very close to that place, but I think that that day, on a very personal level, I think—as it was for many New Yorkers, and certainly for African-American voters across the country—on a very personal level it just sort of put a little jump in his

Obviously term limits changed everything ... The day term limits changed, we knew that it was going to be a battle for the general [election] against Michael Bloomberg.

—Eduardo Castell

step about things because he was a candidate who was running against odds.

He was a candidate who supposedly didn't have a chance. And I think there was, it created some sense of hope and belief in him, and fortified him.

MR. ROBERTS: A lot of people looked at Mike Bloomberg perhaps running for president, perhaps wanting to be vice president, perhaps taking some other job, and then didn't understand why he decided to run for mayor and why he sought to extend term limits.

Could you explain what went through his thinking?

MR. BRADLEY TUSK: None of us were on his staff when that happened, but I think, at least looking back at it a bit, two major factors. One is the economy. He saw what happened, Lehman Brothers, saw what happened on Wall Street, felt like he was in a unique position to try to help deal with that.

Two, it's education. I think anyone here who knows Mike Bloomberg—and a lot of people here do—know that's really his passion. That's what he cares about. It felt like he made a tremendous amount of progress in the schools over eight years and felt like he was going to get to continue that progress.

He tells a story of—and some of you probably have heard this—of being on the subway, a mother comes

CAMPAIGN TIMELINE: MAYOR'S RACE

HOW THE RACES WERE PORTRAYED IN THE NEW YORK PRESS

November 30th, 2007

Mayor Michael Bloomberg meets with Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama for breakfast at the New York Luncheonette on East 50th Street. There is widespread speculation about the mayor's national ambitions. "He's not running for President, but he's trying to influence the national debate," says mayoral spokesman Stu Loeser.

February 26th, 2008

WNBC and Marist poll: More than one in three New York City Democrats say they are unsure whom to support for mayor. Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz tops the list with 18 percent. Congressman Anthony Weiner has 13 percent, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn has 11 percent, Comptroller William Thompson and Public Advocate Betsy

Gotbaum each have 9 percent, and City Councilmember Tony Avella has 4 percent.

March 13th, 2008

Quinnipiac poll: Police Commissioner Ray Kelly is rated top possible candidate for mayor by city voters, at 22 percent.

Eduardo Castell, Thompson's campaign manager, discusses about Bill Thompson's decision to run.

up to him, she's got a little baby, she says, "Mayor, now thanks to you, my child will have the schools to go to." And he said, "Well, that's great." She said, "Only if you're mayor." And to him that meant something. And to him that was, "I've been able to make a real difference in this system, and I believe I can continue to do that because of my independence." And that was what drove him to choose to move forward.

MR. ROBERTS: And how did he approach the issue of term limits? I mean, this is something that he validated in terms of the voters' will, in terms of referendum. Here he turns completely around. What went through his thinking, and what was the process by which he thought this should be done?

MR. TUSK: I mean, I wasn't—

MR. ROBERTS: Right.

MR. TUSK: —I don't think any of us were there when that happened so I don't think any of us can answer that question.

MR. ROBERTS: You must have asked him though.

MR. TUSK: Well, when he chose to do it, we were at a point where the only way to do it was through City Council legislation, and he went about doing it.

MR. ROBERTS: But he could have done it early if he had wanted to, or he was thinking about it earlier.

[Obama] was a candidate who supposedly didn't have a chance. And I think there was, it created some sense of hope and belief in him, and fortified him.

—Eduardo Castell



MR. TUSK: Yeah. I never said—I don't know how much time you've spent with him, Sam. Mike Bloomberg's not the kind of guy that you sit here and start grilling him, "Why did you or did you not do that?" When he makes a decision, he makes a decision, he moves forward. And if you believe in it and you want to work with him you do. And if you don't, you don't.

So at the point where I think we came into the mix, he had decided to do it. The only way to do it was through the City Council, and he moved forward.

MR. ROBERTS: Was there any polling done as to what would happen in a referendum?

MR. TUSK: Not that I've ever seen.

MR. ROBERTS: Howard, do you know?

MR. HOWARD WOLFSON: Not that I saw.

May 18th, 2008

Bloomberg has breakfast with GOP presidential candidate John McCain. Discussing a vice-presidential slot for Bloomberg was not on the agenda, McCain says.

July 16th, 2008

Quinnipiac poll: Bloomberg gets a 71 to 22 percent approval rating and leads the list of possible 2009 mayoral candidates. Asked whom they would like to see elected mayor in 2009, 38 percent name Bloomberg. Kelly comes in second with 12 percent. But voters oppose changing term limits 56 to 38 percent.

August 22nd, 2008

Mayor Bloomberg says he'd consider signing City Council legislation to extend term limits. The shift comes amid increased chatter in political circles that the mayor and Council Speaker Quinn want to amend the law and allow the mayor and other officials to seek a third term.

October 1st, 2008

Marist poll: Registered New York City voters support existing term limits for elected officials by 50 to 35 percent. Asked if Bloomberg should be allowed to seek a third term, 44 percent say, "No way." Nonetheless, the poll shows the mayor outpacing all likely opponents by large margins. "Get out the brooms," says the pollster's press release. "Bloomberg sweeps potential democratic rivals."

MR. ROBERTS: Did you have any sense what would have happened with a referendum on term limits, Eddie?

MR. CASTELL: I think it's a good question. I think to tell you the truth, there would have been a chance to pass it, quite possibly. I think there were folks who came out as strong as they did against the term limits vote in the City Council, including Bill Thompson, because of the way it came out. He personally said, "I don't believe in term limits, but the voters have voted twice." And I think it would have, going to a referendum, would have put people like Bill Thompson in a very awkward situation because it would have said, "Well, you said that you don't support term limits, and it's, you support the will of the voters. So if the voters, if it's going back to the voters, then what are you going to do? Are you going to support it or oppose it or stay neutral?"

MR. ROBERTS: And the answer is?

MR. CASTELL: Well, the answer is we never have the opportunities to do that, so I don't know what the, certainly the discussion would have been different. We never had the opportunity for that discussion. But I think it would have put people like him in a situation to maybe stay neutral or maybe even support it. You would have been, I think politically, you would have been boxed in. And I mean from a completely political calculation boxed in.

And I think that it would have been harder to, I would say that the obstacles to sort of possibly doing a voter referendum that could have been successful if you would have put the resources, you would have had a number of elected officials. Some of the institutional players that they had, you know, sort of saying, "Go for it," would have said, "Put those same resources into doing it on a referendum."

But it's, I mean, honestly, I'm giving my perspective. I mean, who knows, right? Who knows what would have happened, quite honestly.

MS. L. JOY MITCHELL: And I think that that decision was what made the difference with the voters. It wasn't

In terms of the term-limits issue, what really resonated with voters is that someone other than you who voted for it made that decision for you.

— L. Joy Mitchell

necessarily that people agreed or disagreed with the term limits, because it—whether it should be three years or two, you know, or whatever. The issue was that it was done without a voter say when they had already voted twice for it. And so I think that is what, in terms of the term-limits issue, what really resonated with voters is that someone other than you who voted for it made that decision for you.

THE WEINER FACTOR

MR. ROBERTS: We can be sure we're going to get back to that issue. But let me ask about—I'm sorry, go ahead.

MR. DOC SWEITZER: I want to ask a question. You brought something up, and I want to ask the Bloomberg campaign about this. First of all, when I first met Bill, and came up in January, we went over the mathematics of the primary, and he said, you know, "If Anthony Weiner runs, the mathematics are not there to win the primary." Roberto might talk about that a little bit more. But so give the campaign credit.

You gave the Bloomberg campaign credit because they once again misdirected. Howard did—I'm the guy that's calling him the magician, saying that they're the ones that got Weiner out of the race. But if he looked at a poll, if Anthony Weiner looked at polls, looked at mathematics, he looked at a race that was going to be very difficult to win a primary and then very difficult to put back together for a general election.

October 3rd, 2008

Quinnipiac poll: By a margin of 54 to 42 percent, voters favor extending the eight-year term limit to 12 years so they can elect Bloomberg to a third term. Asked who they most want to see elected mayor in 2009, 51 percent name Bloomberg.

October 21st, 2008

As a City Council vote nears, the Quinnipiac poll finds voters shift against amending the term limit law by a 51 to 45 percent margin. A large majority, 87 percent, prefer to have the issue decided by referendum.

October 23rd, 2008

The City Council votes 29 to 22 to extend term limits, allowing Mayor Bloomberg to seek re-election and undoing the result of two earlier voter referenda.

November 21st, 2008

Bloomberg's approval rating has dropped significantly, according to polls from Marist and Quinnipiac—perhaps because of the recent term limits legislation and the mayor's plan to cancel a \$400 property tax rebate.

MR. ROBERTS: So the numbers you're saying were not there for Weiner.

MR. SWEITZER: That is correct. The mathematics, the first lesson everybody ought to learn is Mathematics 101, and if Mathematics 101 were followed and looked at, you knew it was going to be a close race. We knew it was going to be a close race, and everybody else missed it.

But my question is—because when I saw you making the move on Weiner—I said, “Well, wait a second. Be careful what you wish for.” Because I looked at Weiner and said, “You could have spent \$50 million cutting his head off every day, and everybody would cheer you.” As opposed to us, which you had to sort of let us because Bill is a great candidate, a mensch, a good guy, people liked him. You had to sort of let us in the game to the end, which I thought was always your danger, letting us—letting a candidate in to the end.

So I'd just be interested—

MR. ROBERTS: Well, that's a good question.

MR. SWEITZER: —why?

MR. ROBERTS: Who did the Bloomberg people really want to run against?

MR. TUSK: Magician, you want to take this?

[Laughter]

MR. WOLFSON: Now I disappear.

If Mathematics 101 were followed and looked at, you knew it was going to be a close race. We knew it was going to be a close race, and everybody else missed it.

—Doc Sweitzer

[Laughter]

MR. HOWARD WOLFSON: The candidates presented some interesting contrasts with each other, and both had strengths and weaknesses. I think Bradley and I and others who had worked with Anthony and with people who had worked with Anthony, and worked for the person who he had worked for, had a sense of his particular strengths and weaknesses. And we ultimately made a decision—and the decision could have been the incorrect one, although I think in retrospect, we still think it was the right decision—that he presented a set of challenges that Mr. Thompson did not. And that therefore it would be better for him not to have been in the race.

MR. ROBERTS: What were those challenges? What were the assets that he brought to a campaign that Bill Thompson didn't?

MR. WOLFSON: Again, and I don't want to present this as Bill Thompson was a weak candidate or had no strengths, because he did. I think what, I think Anthony would have—and this is actually sort of the flip to the point you just made—I think he would have engaged the race much more, much earlier, and more aggressively. And the earlier panel talked a lot about sort of the free press component of this. The notion of the race and the inevitability factor, I think, would have been very different had he been in the race.

No, it doesn't mean that he would have won. I think we would have won either way, but it would have been a very different race.

MR. ROBERTS: Who do you think would have won the primary if Bill Thompson had stayed in?

MR. WOLFSON: You know, I mean—

MR. ROBERTS: Do you agree with Doc's numbers there?

MR. WOLFSON: —but you know, I mean, the answer I think is no. I mean, the math is the math. But we also know that in campaigns things happen, and you can't discount the strengths and weaknesses and different

November 22nd, 2008

Allies of New York City Comptroller Bill Thompson tell reporters their candidate intends to pursue the Democratic nomination for mayor despite the term limits revision. Days later, the Times reports Thompson has raised \$5 million in campaign funds.

February 2nd, 2009

Deputy Comptroller Eduardo Castell announces his departure from his government job in order to become Thompson's campaign manager.

February 20th, 2009

Marist poll: 55 percent of registered voters say it's time for someone else to lead New York City while 40 percent say Bloomberg deserves to be re-elected.

February 24th, 2009

Quinnipiac poll: Registered voters say they would support Bloomberg over Thompson, 50 to 33 percent. They choose Bloomberg over Weiner 48 to 36 percent. And Democratic voters would choose Weiner over Thompson in a primary by 32 to 22 percent. Very large percentages of registered voters remain undecided.

attributes of different candidates. So, I mean, I don't know who would have won. I don't, I wouldn't, I wouldn't count Bill Thompson out at all.

And look, there were some people who could have argued, and there may have been some who did argue, that a hard-fought primary on the Democratic side would have been better for us. If you have Weiner and Thompson beating each other up for all these months, you have a divided Democratic Party. We've seen that movie before, and it tends to end well for Michael Bloomberg. But ultimately we made a different decision.

MR. ROBERTS: Your conscious decision was leave it to Thompson in the primary. Let him be the Democratic nominee?

MR. WOLFSON: Yes.

MR. TUSK: We also to some—

MR. WOLFSON: But let me just say one quick thing. And I do think, you know, credit or not, I mean, it's not like we waved the wand and this happened. I mean, there were, obviously—

MR. ROBERTS: You waved the axe.

MR. WOLFSON: Well, there were—look, in my experience, people who want to run for office and want the job and think they can win, they run. So he was ambivalent, he was obviously ambivalent. He was in a runoff in 2005 and dropped out of the runoff rather than go through with it. So I mean, there is a history of somebody who—and he was publicly ambivalent.

MR. ROBERTS: But how did you analyze that? Did you have a psychological profile like jury selection of this guy who once backed off a race? How do you persuade him to back out of this race? What kind of negative publicity do you generate about hockey playing and missing votes or any other things that would let him know, give him a taste of what he was in store for?

MR. TUSK: I think that's the stuff that's fun to focus on. I think one of the things we worry about—

The candidates presented some interesting contrasts with each other, and both had strengths and weaknesses. I think Bradley and I and others who had worked with Anthony and with people who had worked with Anthony, and worked for the person who he had worked for, had a sense of his particular strengths and weaknesses. And we ultimately made a decision—and the decision could have been the incorrect one, although I think in retrospect, we still think it was the right decision—that he presented a set of challenges that Mr. Thompson did not. And that therefore it would be better for him not to have been in the race.

—Howard Wolfson

MR. ROBERTO RAMIREZ: I'm sorry. Before you answer, can I answer what Howard said?

MR. ROBERTS: Yes, please, Roberto. I was wondering why you'd been so quiet.

MR. RAMIREZ: I just love to listen to a reality that's not there. First of all, Mayor Bloomberg could have had a referendum. I suspect—don't hold me to this—but every major New York paper would have supported that. I think the *New York Times* and the *New York Post* would have said, "Yes, we need Mayor

March 17th, 2009

Weiner returns more than \$60,000 in campaign contributions that have come under scrutiny, city records show. Most of the money, 32 contributions in all, had been received from limited liability corporations and partnerships, which are now banned from contributing to political campaigns in New York City.

March 24th, 2009

Quinnipiac poll: 47 percent of voters say because he is the wealthiest person in New York, Mayor Bloomberg is less able to understand the needs and problems of average New Yorkers.

April 6th, 2009

The *New York Times* reports that "Mr. Bloomberg commissioned a telephone poll last month that spread derogatory information about Representative Anthony D. Weiner... The calls came around mid-March, even as Mr. Weiner announced he was not certain he would run for mayor." The Bloomberg campaign does not directly refute the allegation, but denies that it is engaged in push-polling.

April 7th, 2009

Bloomberg's first television ad airs.

The Bloomberg campaign's Howard Wolfson talks about who the campaign did and did not want to run against.

Bloomberg because no one else can run this city but Mr. Bloomberg.”

I heard this before. And I heard it in 2001 when Rudy Giuliani could not leave until one person in Albany in the legislature could put his conference together and said, “Not so quickly, Mr. Mayor.” So that’s the first issue.

Issue number two, Weiner didn’t drop out of a runoff. Weiner lost the runoff. He didn’t have the numbers to be in the runoff. No politician pulls out when the numbers are there. So he made a tactical decision, his campaign did, that he was not going to be able to maintain a runoff that the numbers did not justify.

The third point that I would like to make—

MR. ROBERTS: In terms of a final count, you mean?

MR. RAMIREZ: The actual—and the numbers actually validate that. Last point I want to make is since this is fantasy, and we are sort of in this other matrix where an incumbent mayor of the city of New York chooses not to have a referendum, let me suggest the following: if Weiner had been the candidate, you would have handed him out the worst defeat of a Democratic mayor candidate or the Democratic candidate.

MR. ROBERTS: Why is that?

People who want to run for office and want the job and think they can win, they run. So he was ambivalent, he was obviously ambivalent.

—Howard Wolfson



MR. RAMIREZ: Mr. Weiner did not have—it is the same thing why Mr. Liu became the comptroller—is that there’s two different worlds in this city. There is the world in which the *New York Times* and the press live, and then there is the world that exists in the city. And in that world that exists in the city, 50 percent of the people who come to the polls come from different communities.

So if Mr. Weiner had run for mayor, and in fact—which I don’t see how the numbers would have been there for him against Billy Thompson because Howard says, “Well, I don’t want to argue that Mr. Thompson was a weak candidate,” but you don’t have to ‘cause the numbers prove that he was not, against 100 and some odd million dollars.

So if Mr. Weiner had been in this race, it is my prediction— with no basis to back it up since no one of us has a basis for anything that we’re saying here— that

April 14th, 2009

The Campaign Finance Board denies Thompson’s request to lift the spending limit for the Democratic mayoral primary. Mayor Bloomberg, Thompson’s likely general election opponent, is a self-financed candidate and is therefore not subject to spending limits.

April 21st 2009

Office and Professional Employees International Union Local 153 endorses Bloomberg.

Weiner harshly criticizes Bloomberg at an NYU event for “lying” about a plan to seek a charter change referendum on term limits.

April 30th, 2009

Bloomberg endorsements include NARAL Pro-Choice New York, former mayors Ed Koch and Rudolph Giuliani and many others, nearly 250 in all. Thompson’s endorsement list includes four state lawmakers and about 16 others. “Mr. Bloomberg’s list reads like the dense thank you roster in a seemingly interminable Oscar acceptance speech, while Mr.

Thompson’s better resembles an intimate toast at a birthday party,” comments *The New York Times*.



James Trimarco of the Avella campaign talks about his candidate's motivation in running.

Mr. Weiner would have lost overwhelmingly to Mr. Thompson. And B, that Mr. Thompson would have gone on to be a strong if not a stronger candidate had he been in a primary.

And by the way, just two points. Originally, there was Mr. Carrion who was going to run for mayor. We all forgot, but that's okay. We have Mr. Carrion who is running for mayor, we have Ms. Quinn, we have Mr. Markowitz. And if you look at your own lineup here, of the timeline, Mr. Markowitz was supposed to be the mayor. He was the frontrunner when you guys started doing polling.

MR. ROBERTS: Doc, what do the numbers show on Anthony Weiner in a primary?

MR. SWEITZER: I don't have 'em. I mean, I don't—we didn't poll the primary. We only polled straight to the general.

MR. ROBERTS: But you said the numbers weren't there for him.

MR. SWEITZER: The makeup of the primary electorate in terms of—

MR. RAMIREZ: Yeah. It's very basic. You can cut it any way you want. You can want it to be the way you want, but the fact of the matter is, in a primary in the city of New York—as it was evidenced with Mr. Liu and as it was evidenced in 2001 and 2005—if a candidate has a narrative, if a candidate has a curriculum vitae, if a candidate has the willingness to run, and Mr. Thompson does, there is no way that Mr. Weiner would have been able to pull it off.

MR. ROBERTS: Howard?

MR. WOLFSON: What do the numbers say you guys were going to get in '05?

MR. RAMIREZ: Oh my god, which numbers? The ones that Quinnipiac said or our numbers?

MR. WOLFSON: Your numbers. You said the numbers don't lie. What did, did you—

MR. RAMIREZ: Well, it depends on which timeline and the campaign you're talking about because if you're talking about January, it wasn't our numbers, it was everybody's numbers. They said that Mr. Ferrer was going to beat Mr. Giuliani—Mr. Bloomberg by about 20 points.

In March that changed. By June it became different—

MR. WOLFSON: It changed.

MR. RAMIREZ: Right.

MR. WOLFSON: That's my point. Elections happen, campaigns happen, and things change.

May 4th, 2009

In an interview with *New York* magazine, Weiner accuses the Bloomberg campaign of planting negative stories about him in the press, including one that exposed illegal campaign contributions from Brazilian models at a time when Weiner sought to increase visas for foreign supermodels. "You really have to tip your hat to an organization that can find

out the immigrant status of someone who wrote me a \$300 check," Weiner says of the Bloomberg campaign. "People think I'm paranoid. But I'm not."

May 13th, 2009

Former Mayor David Dinkins endorses Thompson, and also refers to Bloomberg as a friend. Asked what he found lacking in Bloomberg that led him to endorse Thompson, Dinkins replies, "Gee, I wish he [Bloomberg] were a Democrat."

Marist poll: 47 percent of voters are in favor of Bloomberg for a third term, while 48 percent are against.

May 26th, 2009

The *New York Times* publishes an Op-Ed by Anthony Weiner, "Why I'm Not Running for Mayor." The presumed mayoral candidate cites his desire to focus on Congressional work and Bloomberg's overwhelming financial advantage. The following day Weiner officially withdraws from the race.

MR. RAMIREZ: Yeah. But there are some basics that you cannot alter, and those are—

[Crosstalk]

MR. RAMIREZ: —the basis of that is—

MR. WOLFSON: It's a picture of the two.

MR. ROBERTS: Roberto, just a short answer if we could. Did you have numbers that showed Anthony Weiner couldn't win a primary?

MR. RAMIREZ: It's the same argument that we made in the last two primary elections. If you have a candidate that can articulate a vision for a part of the city that most of the candidates ignore, and that candidate is willing to go out there and do, fight every day, then the candidate will pull it off, and that was the case in the last two elections. And in this case, Mr. Thompson fit that bill better than anybody else.

MR. ROBERTS: Why did Tony Avella—

MR. WOLFSON: Wait a minute, wait a minute. Did Mark Green fit that bill better than Freddy Ferrer in '01?

MR. RAMIREZ: No. Absolutely not.

MR. WOLFSON: But he won the primary.

MR. RAMIREZ: Well, he won the primary. He won. You want to debate 2005, I'd be more than happy to do it—

MR. WOLFSON: No, no.

MR. RAMIREZ: —he—

MR. WOLFSON: I'm—you made a point. I'm questioning you. You said that basically demographics are destiny. I'm putting words in your mouth.

MR. RAMIREZ: No. No. No. No. You said that, I didn't.

MR. WOLFSON: Well, you said the numbers are what the numbers are.

MR. RAMIREZ: Right.

MR. WOLFSON: So, and the candidate who, so I'm asking if Mark Green made the better case that you are suggesting needs to be made in '01 than Freddy Ferrer did.

MR. RAMIREZ: Mark Green ran a race in which race was the center of his primary victory. But Howard, you tend to forget, I don't. If you look at the numbers in September 11 of 2001, and go back to the headlines, Mr. Ferrer had 40 percent. So the answer is yes.

MR. WOLFSON: So things happen in campaigns.

MR. RAMIREZ: It can be, yes. When a candidate chooses to use the race card, the same way that Rudy Giuliani decided to do it on this election when he went and said that if this city somehow were to not reelect Mr. Bloomberg, that this city would go back to the crime-infested area that he cleaned it from. Yes. When you use race, then it doesn't hold true.

TONY AVELLA

MR. ROBERTS: I want to get back to that point, and also let's just stipulate that things do change in campaigns. But let's go to Tony Avella, and why was he in the Democratic primary. What did he hope to accomplish?

MR. JAMES TRIMARCO: Tony always thought that there was some minute chance that we could win the primary, I mean, very minute. We had a tiny fraction of the money, and we really couldn't do any media at all. We were doing everything by grassroots.

Tony felt very strongly that no candidate on the Democratic side would really talk about gentrification substantively, and say, like, "Affordable housing needs to be talked about in different terms. The way we do it today isn't really affordable." Like in my neighborhood, the housing that's built that's affordable is actually not affordable for, like, more than 50 percent of the people who live there. And I think it's difficult to run a campaign that way because you're talking to, in a way,

June 1st, 2009

In an interview with WNYC's Brian Lehrer, Weiner discusses his endorsement of Thompson. He also accuses Bloomberg of "political hypocrisy." He says voters should be wary of the mayor's campaign millions of dollars worth of advertising. "You know, when they launched Vanilla Coke, I saw so many ads for it, I wanted to try it. It was still crummy."

June 16th, 2009

Quinnipiac poll: "Bloomberg sweeps the political spectrum, leading Thompson 49 to 40 percent among Democrats, 71 to 12 percent among Republicans and 59 to 26 percent among independent voters... Black voters split with 43 percent for Bloomberg and 42 percent for Thompson. The mayor leads 60 to 26 percent among whites and 50 to 37 percent among Hispanics."

July 8th, 2009

Marist poll: While 51 percent of registered voters think it is time to replace Bloomberg as mayor with somebody new, 73 percent expect Bloomberg will be re-elected.

July 21st, 2009

Robert Burck, better known as "the Naked Cowboy," a street performer of Times Square, announces his candidacy for mayor.

you're talking to urban planners, like progressive urban planners. And it's easier to tell, like John Liu's story really works. Like we see how powerful that is, and how that brings people out.

But Tony really felt that those issues needed to be represented, and they weren't. He was just going to represent them, and hope that it—

MR. ROBERTS: Well, we got diverted very quickly from Bloomberg's presidential prospects. Was that a serious campaign? Obviously a lot of you were not involved in that per se. But you must have asked. You must have inquired. What was that about?

MR. TUSK: I would say that Joyce [Purnick] behind you knows more about that than any of us.

MR. ROBERTS: I think she probably does. Everyone should buy her book too.



THE BLOOMBERG “PRIMARY”

Let me ask you about the Bloomberg primary then. What was the philosophy in a primary that didn't exist, but in which a candidate was still running from the get-go? Bloomberg was running for mayor all through a Democratic primary, not waiting a moment for that primary to end or any Democratic candidate to emerge as a nominee.

MR. TUSK: Look, we started this campaign pretty early. I think we understood a few basic things, right? One was we had some great strengths. We had a candidate with a high approval rating, strong record, and a lot of resources. And we had some real challenges as well.

In 2005, Mike got 57 percent of the vote. In 1997, Giuliani got 57 percent against Messenger. What that tells you is the high watermark for a non-Democrat is 57 percent of the vote. Now start layering things on, term limits, the economy, anti-incumbency, parking tickets, water rates, property taxes, and have the electorate changed a lot since '05: first minority-majority election, became a lot more democratic, a lot of Obama enrollment.

You pull that together, start subtracting from 57. We understood that we had a challenging election no matter what, and so our view was take nothing for granted, start early, and never take your foot off the gas. Spent a lot of time actually looking across the river at Corzine, understanding the parallels were somewhat similar, and seeing him sort of get, take a lot longer to get out of the blocks and knowing that we weren't going to make that mistake.

So basically in April, we started the campaign in full. We went up on TV, we started canvassing. And our view was we were never going to stop. And we tried to obviously shape the race along the way. But primary or no primary, we were just going to run our race, and we did.

Bradley Tusk of the Bloomberg campaign talks about the strategy of selling inevitability.

July 28th, 2009

Quinnipiac poll: Thompson has cut Bloomberg's lead in half, to 10 percent. Black voters line up behind Thompson, 56 to 30 percent.

August 19th, 2009

The Bloomberg campaign says Thompson has a “record of failure” as comptroller. A spokesman for the Bloomberg campaign says Thompson has “mismanaged” the city's \$80 billion pension system. Previously, the mayor has described Thompson as “maybe the best comptroller the city has ever had,” reports the *Times*.

August 26th, 2009

Quinnipiac poll: Bloomberg leads Thompson 50 to 35 percent. Of the 78 percent of voters who have seen the mayor's campaign commercials, 47 percent say they are “annoying.” Only 15 percent of those who have seen the ads say they make them “more likely” to vote for Bloomberg, while a large majority say the ads won't make a difference.

September 2nd, 2009

The Bloomberg campaign attempts a softer touch with the release of a television spot chronicling Mayor Bloomberg's rise from a public school boy in Massachusetts to the wealthiest man in New York City.

By the way, it didn't really change, right? I mean, the same inevitability that we put forward to try to help to sway Weiner from running was the same thing we did to try to help deny resources to [Thompson]—labor, the White House. We tried to take away the resources from Working Families Party. I mean, this was a very deliberate thing, knowing that our ceiling was actually pretty low to make sure that you didn't get the traction that you'd need to beat us. This was essentially the same strategy.

—Bradley Tusk

MR. ROBERTS: When you were looking at the numbers that early, were you matching Bloomberg against Thompson?

MR. TUSK: Sure. We polled against Thompson, we polled against Weiner. And look, you guys maybe didn't poll the primary. We polled your primary. And what we found was Weiner was up by a little bit but not a lot, was definitely close, could have gone either way.

Roberto made a point that actually no one's made before but we agree with, which is that you would have been strengthened by beating Weiner in a primary. We understood that. We didn't want to take that risk. And so our view was we do think that Weiner could have been a pretty formidable opponent if he was the Democratic nominee. We also thought that you were a stronger opponent if you had beaten him. And so either

way, it was to our advantage if we could take him out early, to do so.

And so one of the reasons we started so early and aggressively was we knew that Weiner was thinking about it, wasn't sure what he wanted to do, and the more that we did early on, the better we would, the more we'd influence the race. His pollster Benenson said back in March, "We're going to basically announce this on Memorial Day. We're going to poll, we're going to decide."

So we knew when they were going to poll, and our view was the sooner we went up on TV and the sooner we started knocking on doors, the more we'd impact those numbers.

We polled exactly the same time he did. Azi had caught the Weiner polling, and he mentioned in his blogs, so we knew we were in the field at the same time that they were. Saw what the numbers were, knew what the spread was between us and them, and knew he wasn't going to run. And he didn't.

MR. ROBERTS: I don't want to dwell on this too much, but again, the strategy of sort of intimidating Anthony Weiner to get out of the race, the hockey stories, whatever else—what else did you have in your bag? You knocked, had canvassers knocking on his parents' door.

MR. TUSK: They were prime voters.

MR. ROBERTS: Yes. They were. Not for Bloomberg though.

MR. TUSK: You never know. *[Laughter]* Look, we wanted to make it clear that we were going to run a really aggressive campaign all the way through no matter what. And I think we saw in '05—we disagree about this a little bit—that Weiner did show a tendency to actually back out. We thought he could do it again, we thought that we would be stronger either way whether it was denying them a primary victory or taking Weiner out, who might have been a pretty difficult opponent.

September 3rd, 2009

The Amsterdam News and Caribbean Life endorse Thompson.

September 6th, 2009

Thompson criticizes Bloomberg's school reforms, describing the city's latest annual public school report cards as "make believe." He accuses Bloomberg and Schools Chancellor Joel Klein of taking a "step into Neverland, a step into Fantasy Island" by giving 97 percent of the city's elementary and middle schools either an "A" or a "B" and only two of them an "F".

Colin Powell formalizes his endorsement of Bloomberg. Powell, who lives in Virginia, said he'd vote for Bloomberg if he were able.

September 9th, 2009

"Naked Cowboy" Burck suspends his candidacy, citing a fine of \$250 stemming from the disclosure that he lives in New Jersey.

So we started early and did everything that you do in a campaign, and that was our strategy. By the way, it didn't really change, right? I mean, the same inevitability that we put forward to try to help to sway Weiner from running was the same thing we did to try to help deny resources to you—labor, the White House. We tried to take away the resources from Working Families Party. I mean, this was a very deliberate thing, knowing that our ceiling was actually pretty low to make sure that you didn't get the traction that you'd need to beat us. This was essentially the same strategy.

So it never really changed from day one through election.

MR. ROBERTS: But it wasn't true.

MR. TUSK: Well, we shaped your own reality. We shaped the reality to make sure that we won the election.

BLOOMBERG'S DECISION TO RUN

MR. ROBERTS: But you—we'll get into this later, of course, but the whole notion of inevitability is so fascinating because clearly it wasn't inevitable, which I want to go back and examine a little bit more closely, the mayor's decision about running. You may not have been there when that decision was made. You may not have understood exactly what went into it. But when you go to work for a candidate, and you have to sell that candidate to the voters, don't you need to understand what his vision is, what his mission is, what his agenda is?

How does he explain that I'm going to do things in a third term when he had eight years to do them in a first and second term? How do you sell that? And don't you have to understand it first before you sell it to other people? What was his thinking?

MR. TUSK: A couple things. One, I think you're right, which is why we developed a really aggressive policy operation early in the campaign so that we were

constantly putting out new ideas and really not just saying, "Elect me because of what I did, but elect me because of what I want to do."

Now one of the challenges of that was we met with the mayor every single week and went through policy ideas. He was very, very reticent to put out ideas that would cost a lot of money, knowing the budget we were heading into. So we limited it a little bit—and Michael wrote a pretty good story about this in October or September, something like that—limited a little bit what we could put out there, but we really did want to put forward a vision.

We opened our campaign with the five-borough economic opportunity plan, which is a 400,000 jobs plan. Pretty much all of the advertising you saw in April and May was based on that plan. And most of the advertising throughout represented or reflected a part of his vision whether it was economy, education, public safety, whatever it was. So I think we very much understood that.

Look, in terms of why Mike Bloomberg wanted to be mayor, it's pretty clear what he cares about, right? He really cares about education. He really cares about public safety. He really cares about public health, understands he's a good steward of the economy and the budget, and felt that he could continue to do these things.

MR. ROBERTS: But didn't he care earlier—again, you know, I don't want to—

MR. CASTELL: If I can just jump in a second on some of this. I think—

*Well, we shaped your own reality.
We shaped the reality to make sure
that we won the election.*

—Bradley Tusk

September 14th, 2009

The Bloomberg campaign accuses Thompson of releasing the election's first negative ads, citing three Spanish-language radio spots aired over the weekend.

September 15th, 2009

Bloomberg hosts his primary night celebration at Pier 94 with a crowd at more than 4,000 people. Democratic candidate Thompson holds his primary victory party at the Barclay Street headquarters of AFSCME District Council 37. Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union President Stuart Appelbaum warms up the crowd, leading them in chants of "Spend it all, Mike!"

September 17th, 2009

Thompson releases two television ads portraying the candidate as a champion of the middle-class, a man who "never forgot where he came from" and rose to hold the city's "second most-powerful office."

September 18th, 2009

Thompson's campaign announces the endorsement of Governor David Paterson. The Friday release leads some reporters to speculate that the Thompson camp is playing down the endorsement because of Paterson's low approval ratings.

[Bloomberg] was not only thinking but talking about changing term limits way before Lehman Brothers. He was speaking to the editorial boards and the publishers that spring and early summer.

—Eduardo Castell

MR. ROBERTS: —if he cared that much, why not in the middle of his second term did he say, “I want to run for a third term. Let’s extend term limits. Let’s have a referendum. Let’s simply do it the right way?”

MR. TUSK: I think we’ve discussed this before, and one, we weren’t there for it. But when the Lehman Brothers crisis hit, and I worked with Lehman Brothers, and I remember him calling me on the day they went bankrupt and started saying, “How you doing? This is really bad.” In a weird way he was more shaken by it than I was ‘cause he, I was just dealing with my own personal situation, and he was dealing with a macro for the entire city. It clearly affected his thinking, and he clearly was worried about what that meant for the city. I think he saw himself as someone in a unique position to handle that issue going forward, both from an economic standpoint and a budgetary standpoint.

MR. CASTELL: But I’ve got to just comment, with all due respect though, he was—

MR. ROBERTS: You’ve always got to watch out what anyone says “with all due respect.”

MR. CASTELL: —he was not only thinking about but talking about changing term limits way before Lehman Brothers. He was speaking to the editorial boards and the publishers that spring and early that summer. The decision to run and to not have the opportunity to do a referendum and only be able to do it legislatively, I will, unfortunately, say you guys weren’t there for that decision. That was a cynical decision because he would

have preferred, he felt that he had a definite shot to do that through the City Council, and doing it through a referendum was a bigger roll of the dice.

He had already been not only thinking about it but discussing it with the publishers of the editorial boards. The fact that the day he makes a decision, their editorial board’s already written that morning saying, “Hey, we think it’s a good idea,” means this was not something that just came up.

When they started to explain—

MR. ROBERTS: And there was—

MR. CASTELL: —and when they started to explain that it was the single-man theory, which is like “Only I can save this city in these tough economic times,” that did not gain traction. And as a matter of fact, when it was Anthony Weiner and John Liu and others as well as with Bill Thompson, day to day sort of starting to take the fight on term limits, and they started to erode not just in public opinion, but certainly even members of the council who started to sort of get pulled away. Again, and it wasn’t this team, but certainly, but the folks at City Hall who were working on this issue—they changed their tack. And it went the first, his first sort of rationale was that no one can save the city, it’s going in the dumps. And then it changed to “Oh, I haven’t fulfilled my agenda yet, and I want to fulfill my agenda.”

So the rationale, the decision, the timing was cynical, the decision had been in the works, and the rationale they tested and changed depending on what it was. And as I said, that’s not a campaign question, as I said, but I think it’s an issue which laid the groundwork for the campaign that became. And I think it’s important to get to that.

MR. ROBERTS: As long as we acknowledge Joyce Purnick’s expertise on this issue. She does point out there was a poll in the spring that showed a referendum would lose. And if the economy was really the driving force here, can’t you say that in light of the collapse of Lehman and other factors, a referendum last November might well have passed?

September 24th, 2009

Quinnipiac poll: Thompson, despite his primary victory, still trails Bloomberg, 52 to 36 percent.

September 25th, 2009

Bloomberg flies by chopper to a U2 concert at the Meadowlands to avoid traffic. The chopper flew the route twice, once for a test run and again for the event. A WCBS-TV reporter reminds Bloomberg that it takes a lot more energy to fly a chopper than a car. “I suppose you could say that, but there’s other ways to get around,” Bloomberg replies. “Some are more energy

efficient, I could have walked or swam across the river as well, that would have used less.”

October 9th, 2009

“The President is the leader of the Democratic Party, and as that would support the Democratic nominee” for mayor of New York City, states White House press secretary Robert Gibbs, notably not naming the candidate himself. No one from the White House contacted Thompson before the statement, catching the campaign off guard. “It was a bit of a surprise,” Thompson acknowledges.

MR. TUSK: Again, you keep asking us questions we weren't there to be able to give you answers to.

MR. ROBERTS: I know. But you're smart.

MR. TUSK: I don't think legally once Lehman—it was like September 15, I'm pretty sure, was the day Lehman collapsed, right? I'm not sure you could have put something on the ballot for that November.

MS. KAREN PERSICILLI KEOGH: Timeline wouldn't have worked.

MR. TUSK: So,

MS. MITCHELL: And I think also the conversation, the absence of Bloomberg's narrative on why he decided to pursue the term limits the way in which he did, it made for people to come up with their own interpretation. And it was easy for us to talk to people

So term limits was an issue, and the economy was an issue. I think probably the two biggest atmospheric issues.

—Howard Wolfson

individually, to talk to other Democratic leaders and create the narrative for our own selves in saying, "Here is a person that is self-serving who changed the law for his own self-interest." And so it made the narrative easier because through the campaign there wasn't the narrative of "he wanted to save the city from an economic collapse, and he wanted to do these extra policies going forward another four years" didn't quite stick. Because people knew that he had the conversation with editorial boards. People knew that those conversations already existed, and it created more of a conspiracy theory that we were able to put forth in the Democratic establishment and also with Democratic voters that helped push Bill's message as well.

TERM LIMITS EXTENSION AS A LIABILITY

MR. ROBERTS: Of course the council was complicit in that, but how big a liability did you think that was going to be in the general-election campaign?

MR. WOLFSON: Definitely a liability.

MR. ROBERTS: Because?

MR. WOLFSON: Definitely a liability. I mean, Bradley touched on this, and I think we all knew if roughly 57—I don't know if you guys would agree with this—but if roughly 57, 58 is a ceiling for a non-Democrat running for mayor in New York City, and then you

Roberto Ramirez of the Thompson campaign talks about Bloomberg's reason for overturning term limits.



October 14th, 2009

The Thompson campaign releases a video on its campaign website, asking "What Does \$15,000 An Hour Mean to You?" The question refers to a report from the Associated Press which noted Bloomberg had spent \$64.8 million on his re-election bid through September 28th—or roughly \$15,000 an hour.

October 18th, 2009

Citizens Union endorses Bloomberg, despite its previous opposition to the term-limits extension.

Rudy Giuliani appears at a breakfast of the Jewish Community Council in Borough Park, Brooklyn, along with Mayor Bloomberg. The former mayor says he fears the city may return to the dangerous days of the

early 1990s if Bloomberg's opponent is elected. The statement is widely interpreted as a racially coded reference to the period when David Dinkins was mayor. "You know exactly what I'm talking about," Mr. Giuliani says. "This city could very easily be taken back in a very different direction. It could very easily be taken back to the way it was with the wrong political leadership."

October 19th, 2009

State Democratic Chairman Jay Jacobs says Bloomberg should have learned a lesson from the country's first president: "George Washington, one of the things we remember best about him is that he knew when to leave and he understood that two terms is enough."

take a lousy economy, a lot of people out of work, term limits, whatever accumulated unhappiness comes after two terms, you're dealing with a tough race. And so, yeah, there's no question that term limits was an issue.

I also think—though we've said this—and continue to believe, that the economy was just as much of an issue, if not more so. And you guys ran a lot of ads on both. I assume you thought both were an issue. And you had incumbents in Nassau County and Westchester losing not because of term limits but because of a lousy economy and taxes. Corzine wasn't a function of term limits. It was taxes, lousy economy, other factors.

So term limits was an issue, and the economy was an issue. I think probably the two biggest atmospheric issues.

MR. ROBERTS: How would you define term limits as the issue? The mayor's reversal, the mayor's abrogation, if you will, of two referenda, the mayor's sneaky maneuver in the City Council.

MR. WOLFSON: Well, I wouldn't define it that way but—

[Laughter]

The mayor never gave a narrative, a convincing argument for having done away with term limits outside of "I am indispensable." What that left was a real opening for the rest of us to just run a truck through it. But the execution of the campaign was as good as the bad decisions were on the macro.

—Roberto Ramirez

MR. ROBERTS: No. But how would you, in terms of having to deal with it as a political issue that you had to somehow quash? What was the public perception in your mind?

MR. WOLFSON: You know, probably some version of all of that. There are some people who may have been unhappy about different aspects of it.

MR. RAMIREZ: Let me just—there's two issues here. There's the macro issues, this issue like term limits, issues that go about the demographics of the city, all the big issues of it. And then there is the practitioners' execution of a campaign. What they did on that score has to be acknowledged.

They did enough to be able to win. And they won by a very small number, but they did tell the world that it was inevitable: this is going to happen. I mean, I don't—you go back, November 2, the headline "Blowout." "Blowout—he's going to be up 20."

That reminds me of another headline five years ago, another story. "Blowout." Two days before. What they managed to do was, because the mayor never really—your point is really good—the mayor never gave a narrative, a convincing argument for having done away with term limits outside of "I am indispensable."

What that left was a real opening for the rest of us to just run a truck through it. But the execution of the campaign was as good as the bad decisions were on the macro.

SELLING INEVITABILITY

MR. CASTELL: I just want to add to that. I think that that is the key, and I would say you hit on two, two comments have come out. I think Roberto hit the nail on the head. You used the word "inevitability." Howard, you know—and Bradley admitted to the fact—that everyone on the inside who was looking at numbers, who looked at the dynamics of the city at that point, knew that this was going to be a lot closer than anyone expected.

October 20th, 2009

Thompson gets more personalized attention from President Obama at a Democratic National Committee event at the Hammerstein Ballroom, with Obama telling the crowd, "Our candidate for mayor, my friend Billy Thompson, is in the house."

October 21st, 2009

Thompson pledges that if he is elected, he will give voters the chance to decide whether the new three-term limit should remain in place.

Gay City News endorses Thompson.

October 22nd, 2009

The New York Times reports on "mismanagement" in the Thompson campaign, stating that the candidate "is chronically late to campaign events, at times failing to show up at all. His press releases misspell words, even getting his own name wrong.... Mr. Thompson faces seemingly insurmountable obstacles in his bid to unseat Mayor Bloomberg, ...the biggest of them all

may be Mr. Thompson's own undisciplined campaign."

Marist poll: Bloomberg has increased his lead over Thompson to 16 percentage points.

Communications Workers of America Local 1180 releases a radio ad as part of its "NYC is Not For Sale" campaign, criticizing Bloomberg's use of private planes and helicopters.

And I think the single greatest thing that the Bloomberg campaign did was sell that to the media, and the media absolutely swallowed it. All right? And it made the challenge for us a lot harder. And I give him absolute credit for it—all of ‘em. They didn’t just sell it early on, but then they sort of created the appearance of it.

MR. ROBERTS: I wanted to get to that later, but as long as you’ve raised it, why did you let us swallow it?

MR. CASTELL: Well, number—

MR. ROBERTS: What could you have done differently?

MR. CASTELL: Sure. Number one, I sort of tried to do the Heimlich maneuver as much as I could every single day, just sort of have you spit it out. But once they believed it, it was impossibly hard to get them to unbelieve it. And I think it was a function of just sort of, it was easier that way. It was like the world was expecting—

MR. ROBERTS: But there were polls. It wasn’t just the imagination of the press and other people. There were polls, presumably legitimate independent polls that showed a very big spread.

MR. CASTELL: The reading of those polls, as I said, was interesting. You had polls that never showed the mayor much over 50 percent. You had polls that showed that a huge number of undecideds for a two-term incumbent mayor that at that point in the summer had already spent tens of millions of dollars, more than we were going to spend in the entire campaign. And the polls were not budging.

As Joy said, at one point it became clear, not just on term limits, but that the mayor could not sell the narrative. That—and this is not to put the campaign down—I think that was a function of the landscape, that you had this sort of unsettlement from the voters.

Those polls indicated that it was going to be very close. When you still have a couple of weeks out, a couple of weeks out, 12 to 15 percent, and consistently undecided voters from the beginning, you start in, let’s

say, in March and April, and you have 12 to 15 percent undecided voters for a two-term incumbent with 70 percent approval ratings who’s spending at that point already \$70, \$80 million. And you have, you’re not over 50 percent, and you still have 10 to 15 percent undecideds. And you have a Democratic candidate who has intentionally said, “I haven’t yet put out my paid campaign because I have limited resources.” And this was Doc’s line: “Don’t shoot ‘til you see the whites of their eyes,” right?

So we had black, African Americans who were undecided. That was just a function of folks, sort of, some folks realizing that you had a qualified, viable African-American candidate who had a great narrative and a great story. We knew once we put that out there that those voters would come home. We felt that the undecided voters, once we started to do paid direct-voter contact, which we did not do in the primary—and we tried to explain this, the mechanics of this, exactly what we said to the press in March and April and May and June and July and August and September and October—it’s exactly the game plan we played, and it’s exactly what came out. They wouldn’t listen.

FUNDRAISING

MR. ROBERTS: We’re going to get back to this whole issue, believe me. But let me ask you about that one point. Was it a mistake or was it inevitable to conserve cash?

MR. CASTELL: We had no choice, given the limited resources.

MR. ROBERTS: And how—

There’s something to be said about the media being a co-conspirator in the inevitable argument.

—L. Joy Mitchell

October 23rd, 2009

The New York Times endorses Bloomberg for a third term.

Bloomberg breaks his 2005 record, spending \$85.2 million to-date on his bid for a third term.

Democratic Queens Councilmember Jim Gennaro crosses party lines to endorse Bloomberg for re-election.

October 26th, 2009

Quinnipiac poll: a “Bloomberg Blowout” may be in the making on the eve of the last debate, with the mayor ahead 53 to 35 percent among likely voters. One-tenth of those surveyed remain undecided.

Longtime Bloomberg ally City Council Speaker Christine Quinn announces her endorsement of Thompson. *The New York Times*

dubs it “the oddest and most unloving endorsement City Hall has ever seen.”

Democratic Bronx Councilman G. Oliver Koppell announces he is crossing party lines to support Bloomberg.

October 27th, 2009

In a debate between Bloomberg and Thompson, the challenger is asked to grade the mayor’s performance over the past eight years. “I think I’ll be kind and give the mayor a D-,” he says, with a laugh. The Bloomberg campaign immediately produces an ad featuring the statement, juxtaposed with highlights from endorsements from all three major daily newspapers.

We raised money on the low-dollar level. To be able to raise on that level though takes an incredible amount of campaign, of the candidate's time. It's incredibly inefficient for a campaign, the monitoring on compliance is a huge burden as well. So we did some of it. We shifted.

—Eduardo Castell

MR. CASTELL: You cannot do deficit spending in a campaign, right? It's like the city. We have to have a balanced budget. You have to have a balanced budget. Maybe you can have a slight debt, right, but you can't do deficit spending in a campaign.

MR. ROBERTS: Well, let me ask you about fundraising. How much were the Bloomberg people able to suppress Thompson's fundraising? How much was going on either subliminally or directly, saying, "Don't give money to this campaign?"

MR. CASTELL: I can't qualify how much they did. I know they did a bit, but for some mysterious reason, money started to dry up. Fundraising started to dry up for us in the summer. What are from the institutional, the larger institutional forces in the city, right? The folks who are the big Democratic donors or the big political donors, you know, the real-estate industry and finance, and all those sorts of folks who have the money in the city, even sort of the big-money Democratic donors, the big-money Democratic donors. Everything started to dry up.

MR. ROBERTS: But part of that is a factor of incumbency, right?

MR. CASTELL: I think part of it's a factor of incumbency, and I think they, obviously they sent a

message out, which was we're going to win, and we're not going to forget who was stupid enough to cross the line for a losing campaign, I suspect, from their point of view.

MR. ROBERTS: Let me ask how explicit that message was. I mean, were people actually called and said, "You don't want to give to Thompson because we're going to remember. We have long memories, we can carry a grudge."

MR. WOLFSON: Never.

[Laughter]

MR. ROBERTS: You can speak, don't just shake your head.

MR. BASIL SMILKE: Not that I'm aware of.

MR. TUSK: No.

MR. ROBERTS: Well, why not, frankly?

MR. SMIKLE: Why not—why not threaten—

MR. ROBERTS: Well, why wouldn't you—

MR. SMIKLE: —them and twist arms? Why do we need to? I mean, frankly—and I think one of the things that's actually lost in this conversation—is that people actually like the guy. They did. And as we went out to communities, as I went out to communities all over the city, had difficult conversations about the term limits, no question about it.

But people genuinely liked him, and people genuinely liked the work he was doing. I mean, we had people coming into our office all the time saying, "We want to organize something for Bloomberg." Parents for Bloomberg. And the kind of work that we would do with these constituencies because there were just people around the city that genuinely liked the work that he was doing.

So it—so although the term limits conversation could be a little difficult, one of the things that I had to do was get them to a place to say, "Okay, now you

News breaks that Bloomberg's accountant, Martin Geller, gave the maximum allowable contribution (\$26,000) to Newark Mayor Cory Booker one month after Booker, a Democrat, crossed party lines to endorse the mayor. Thompson spokeswoman Anne Fenton accuses Bloomberg of paying Booker for his endorsement. Bloomberg spokesman Howard Wolfson insists there was no quid pro quo.

October 29th, 2009

On a hastily organized conference call, Thompson campaign pollster Geoff Garin tells reporters that Bloomberg leads Thompson 46 to 38 percent among likely voters, but fully 17 percent are still undecided. He adds that the race is much closer among voters who say they are "certain" to vote, with Bloomberg leading Thompson 44 to 41 percent and 15 percent undecided.

October 30th, 2009

Marist poll: Bloomberg leads Thompson 53 to 38 percent among likely voters, including those who are undecided but leaning toward a candidate.

SEIU 1199 United Healthcare Workers East announces its decision to stay neutral in the mayor's race, though former president Dennis Rivera endorsed Bloomberg publicly in

early October.

The mayor releases his "One-Room Office" ad, featuring the mayor in shirtsleeves and sitting at a kitchen table, urging New Yorkers to vote.

just have a choice. How do you want to exercise that choice?" I mean—

MR. CASTELL: But you have a 20-point gap between, and I agree, his support, his approval numbers were great, and people liked the job that he was doing. But you had a 20-point gap in people saying, "Yeah, we like the job that he's doing." "But will you vote for him?" "Not so sure."

So there was a gap, and I think that there were two sort of different things—

MR. WOLFSON: I'd like to—

MR. ROBERTS: Who were the people in that gap?

MR. WOLFSON: Well, I want to, wait, I want to push back here for a second.

MR. ROBERTS: Go ahead.

MR. WOLFSON: People give money to candidates because they think they can win, and/or they want them to win, OK? We have a thing, as everybody knows, people can raise an awful lot of money online now. We weren't, there's no arm-twisting on the Internet, and you would have a better sense of why, why we would, of why you guys didn't raise more money online. But it ain't a function of arm-twisting. And there was an awful lot of money, theoretically, out there for a candidate running against Michael Bloomberg in an overwhelmingly Democratic city, in a city that had participated online, in the context of fundraising, overwhelmingly in the last presidential election.

MR. ROBERTS: Fair question. Why didn't you?

MS. MITCHELL: I think this also, if I can just jump in here, to bring back that inevitable conversation again. There's something to be said about the media being a co-conspirator in the inevitable argument in that—and I'll just tell a quick story that I mentioned earlier.

My own family members who said to me after the election that they didn't think it was going to be so

If there was any heat, meaning any drive, to turn out, it would have been on the term-limit issue. I mean, that's where the anger was coming from.

—Doc Sweitzer

close because they said in the paper and on the radio that Bloomberg had already won. And I said, "Who is 'they'?" It was like, "In the paper. They said." You know? So there was this conversation that even when we talked about Bill—and people liked Bill, and people liked his policy, and they disagreed with the way that the mayor went through with term limits and may have liked the mayor and some of the things he's done—the conversation was still, "But, I don't think he," either "I don't think he can win against Bloomberg," or they said that it's already going to be with Bloomberg.

MR. ROBERTS: But why not have used the Internet for fundraising?

MS. MITCHELL: Because that contributed to it. People did not want to, this is their money—

MR. ROBERTS: Did you even try?

MS. MITCHELL: —in an economy—

MR. CASTELL: Yeah. We did. We did.

MS. MITCHELL: —where the economy is down, people contributing money to something they think is going to lose.

MR. CASTELL: From a fundraising perspective, I would just say that what we did was once we saw that all those sources were dried up—and by the way we heard from folks that folks in the Bloomberg campaign bragging about how they were drying up big Democratic money from us. And it was never sourced, but there were certainly folks who had worked with Democratic

November 2nd, 2009

Quinnipiac poll: One day before the New York City mayoral election, Bloomberg leads Thompson 50 to 38 percent, with 10 percent undecided.

November 3rd, 2009

Most of the polling proves remarkably inaccurate on Election Day. As the votes are tallied, it becomes clear that the race was far closer than predicted. Bloomberg wins a third term by 50.6 to 46.0 percent, or less than a 5 percent margin. With 1.18 million votes cast, turnout is just 25 percent of registered voters.

candidates in the past who had access to sort of the big Democratic DNC-type folks, and it came back to us that folks were bragging about them sort of tamping down some of that money.

I would just say the other thing is we shifted to then low-dollar stuff, which was beneficial to us anyway because of the 8.5 match. We raised money on the low-dollar level. To be able to raise on that level though takes an incredible amount of campaign, of the candidate's time. It's incredibly inefficient for a campaign, the monitoring on compliance is a huge burden as well. So we did some of it. We shifted.

The other thing is we raised some money online, more towards the end when the polls started to show, and we started to get more in the last couple of weeks, a little bit more of an oomph. So the inevitability thing mattered.

MR. ROBERTS: In retrospect, in retrospect—

MR. CASTELL: I would just say one other thing. No candidate in New York City has been able to raise a lot of money online. John Liu didn't do it, Bill de Blasio didn't do it, Sy Vance didn't do it. For some reason, the phenomenon that Obama did online has not yet been replicated, certainly in New York City on any scale yet, and we just weren't able to sort of somehow create the magic there that no one else has been able to create yet either.

MR. ROBERTS: All right. Let's turn to the magician then. Howard, is that so, and if so, why?

MR. WOLFSON: I think Eddie's right in one, that it has not, the national model has not yet been successfully replicated on the local level. I mean, he's factually correct on that.

Having said that, there's no reason—I mean, I'm not an expert on the Internet or Internet fundraising—but there's no reason why theoretically you wouldn't be able to raise money online here. And I think if one day there is a candidate who catches on and is able to impress small donors in the city that he or she would

be the best person and has a real chance of winning, they will.

I mean, but I don't know—there is a magic to it that I am not an expert in, but the money, theoretically, right, I mean, the money was there. There is money in this city online for somebody running against—

MR. RAMIREZ: If they can ignite it, absolutely.

MR. WOLFSON: Yeah, if they can ignite it.

MR. RAMIREZ: In the Billy Thompson case, this is a problem. If you remember the polls from the very beginning, he was polling at 8 percent of the vote. That was when Weiner was at 30 percent of the vote. Billy Thompson was at 8 percent. First you had Adolfo Carrion, who was running, so that freezes a certain constituency. Then you have Weiner, and that freezes another constituency. Then you have an incumbent who's at 70 percent of the vote. You have an incumbent who is very much liked, and all he, he doesn't want you to give him money. All you got to do is not give money to anybody, so that freezes that money.

Then on the Internet until Billy becomes a real candidate—which I think some of your commercials did for Mr. Thompson because you put him so much on the air, and he didn't have the money to do that—until there was a real awareness that he was running and that this was this guy, that's the time that I think the Internet money began to take hold.

MS. MITCHELL: Also the conversation of raising money online as compared to the national model—albeit a separate conversation in how Obama ran his race will trickle down to other state and localities—is the psychology of campaigns in New York City, and donating money is a little different, where donors still expect in New York City some contact with the candidate when they're giving money.

And because that psychology is different in New York City, when you have a smaller subsection where people are used to giving a check and receiving a handshake, or at least being in the same room with them, that's going to be a little different when you're trying to get the people to do something online.

MR. ROBERTS: One thing we keep returning to, and good reason for it, inevitability. Let me ask a question that bedeviled me a little bit toward the end of the campaign. If you promote inevitability, as you did and did very successfully, is there a risk that lukewarm Bloomberg supporters don't come out?

You may drive, obviously, some of the Thompson supporters away, because they say, "It's inevitable, why bother? We're not even that enthusiastic about him anyway, and he can't win." What about the Bloomberg supporters who say, "Well, I got mixed feelings about the guy for any number of reasons. If he doesn't need me, if he's going to win by 20 points or whatever, I

Now, was it in our interest, strategically, to point out the fact that we—as I said 50 times—had a double-digit lead and approval ratings over two-thirds? You bet. And the campaign that is in the position we were will do that four years from now.

—Howard Wolfson

don't have to vote." And therefore you collapse that margin.

MR. TUSK: It's hard—we definitely spent a lot of time after the election asking ourselves that question. It's hard to quantify it because there are three camps of people. There are people like that who maybe had they come out definitely would have voted for us. There are people who had they thought it was closer would have come out and voted for them. And to know, look, their party has a six-to-one registration advantage over ours.

So from a mathematical standpoint if you can freeze more of their people, that works to your advantage. And there are people who clearly in Jersey and Westchester and Nassau four years ago voted for the incumbent, liked him for whatever reason, and then came out. When they got to the poll said, "You know what? I'm sick of A, B, or C," and they pulled a lever. To us, the risk of the second and third camps was far greater than the first camp.

So I don't know if anyone can ever really quantify it, no, but that was our sense.

MR. ROBERTS: Doc, did you want to say—

THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY TO READ A POLL

MR. SWEITZER: Yeah. I was just going to say, it's a hypothetical. If there was any heat, meaning any drive, to turn out, it would have been on the term-limit issue. I mean, that's where the anger was coming from.



If you look at the makeup of the undecideds, the undecideds look more like us than they did like Bloomberg. But if you, after eight years and \$100 million, you're still holding back, you're either not voting or you're going to the challenger.

—Doc Sweitzer

One thing you said that I want to point out: "polls from credible sources." OK? These are the academic polls, and I think one of the lessons—

MR. ROBERTS: I meant independent sources.

MR. SWEITZER: Right. Independent. One of the lessons of this campaign is that those polls have become less and less credible. The reason for it, it's very, very expensive to do an accurate poll, particularly in a low-turnout election like this. And most of us professionals when you look at academic polls, we don't make decisions off of them. We look at them, and just sort of go, "Oh, I hope they got even part of it right."

That's a story line because that—

MR. ROBERTS: But you had an accurate poll.

MR. SWEITZER: That's correct.

MR. ROBERTS: Was that the first time you took—

[Laughter]

MR. SWEITZER: We had it right on the nose.

MR. ROBERTS: Why wasn't that poll out earlier, or why wasn't the trend that—

MR. SWEITZER: Because this is when it was taken.

MR. ROBERTS: —that poll suggested earlier?

MR. SWEITZER: It was given to you the minute it was taken.

MR. ROBERTS: And was the entire poll released at that—

MR. SWEITZER: Yes.

MR. CASTELL: Yes.

MR. SWEITZER: Yes, in its entirety.

Doc Sweitzer of the Thompson campaign talks about the credibility of polls.

MR. RAMIREZ: But ask the question how extensively was it covered?

MR. ROBERTS: Well, but how do you compete in a situation like that? You have independent, maybe not credible polls put out, and suddenly the campaign puts out a poll showing the race is much closer. What does the press do in a case like that?

MR. RAMIREZ: Obviously what it did here.

MR. ROBERTS: Well, I know what it did—

MR. SWEITZER: No. But I would say—

MR. ROBERTS: But are you that surprised?

MR. CASTELL: I think some of the—and you guys mentioned a story that you did, Sam, on Bruce Gyory, sort of saying I'm not surprised, 'cause if you read some of the earlier polls and it wasn't how, it was just sort of like it's not just the headline. There were underlying factors. If you got into the meat, if you got into the body and the guts of some of these earlier polls, you would have said, "Hey, this thing is going to be a little closer."

So the headline was, oh, "Bloomberg up 15 percent," but there were all these other, it was like it was these independent sources would, some of the folks would make comments which would fit what was basically the headline and really wouldn't do the studious analysis, that detail that showed that this is going to be a little more damaging.

So some of the data, not certainly the top line, but some of the underlying data was there to show that it was a close race.

MR. ROBERTS: Were your polls, Howard, showing the same thing as the Garon poll?

MR. WOLFSON: Well, I'll answer that in a second, but it is—and I'm sure some would think it's easy if you lose to sort of complain about the polling—but I would like to jump in in their defense because we had the same conversation. I mean, one of the purposes of these

forums, presumably is to educate all of us who are involved in these races.

MR. ROBERTS: As I said earlier, before this group came, I think we want to learn from our mistakes so we can make different ones the next time.

MR. WOLFSON: Well, we had the same, well, I mean, it's funny, but not so much funny, because we had the same conversation in '05. And I was sitting on that end of the table then, and the polls were wildly off. I mean, they were just flat out wrong. I mean, they predicted the winner accurately but the margin was very, very divergent.

And here we are four years later, and the same sort of focus on polling drove a lot of coverage. And whether it's bad polls or bad analysis of polls, I mean, I really hope that we are not having the same conversation four years from now.

Now, was it in our interest, strategically, to point out the fact that we—as I said 50 times—had a double-digit lead and approval ratings over two-thirds? You bet. And the campaign that is in the position we were will do that four years from now.

MR. ROBERTS: What were your polls really showing?

MR. WOLFSON: I mean, you know, our polls consistently had us 51, 52, 50.

MR. ROBERTS: And where was Thompson?

MR. SWEITZER: That's an irrelevant question.

MR. SWEITZER: When you're an incumbent, and you've been in eight years, and you're spending all that money, you look at your top number. You look at the 50. You assume—

MR. ROBERTS: But it is relevant if they're saying it's a double-digit lead, and their polls are showing—

MR. SWEITZER: —I'm going to teach. Real simple. You look at that top, for the incumbent you look at that top number. If I have—I've done 600 campaigns and tons of incumbents—and if I'm sitting at 50, I'm squirming. I am squirming because the undecideds break to the challenger.

And if you look at the makeup of the undecideds, the undecideds look more like us than they did like Bloomberg. But if you, after eight years and \$100 million, you're still holding back, you're either not voting or you're going to the challenger.

MR. ROBERTS: Were you guys squirming?

MR. TUSK: Look, we always understood—I think Doc's analysis is totally right—we understood that from day one. I would have always rather have been up 55 to 43 instead of 50 to 38. It sounds, same 12-point margin, dramatically different race. We understood that,

I would have always rather have been up 55 to 43 instead of 50 to 38. It sounds, same 12-point margin, dramatically different race. We understood that, and that's why we did so much and took nothing for granted.

—Bradley Tusk



Basil Smikle of the Bloomberg campaign discusses the notion of inevitability.

MS. BERNSTEIN: You want me to say it?

MR. ROBERTS: Yes. Please.

MS. BERNSTEIN: By the way, this wasn't my question, but since I have the microphone, I'll just mention—I don't know, is Lee here? Lee Miringoff or Mickey? I mean, I would just say that in all of those press releases that they send out—'cause I remember in the Cuomo-Pataki race that Cuomo was winning by huge margins until the end. And it was sort of seared in my memory in that race, you don't look at the gap. But I will say when you get press releases from these academic polls, they always say, "Look at the gap, huge margin."

And to the point where I've started to send out memos saying, "Just look at the top number." But there is a certain kind of fueling of that that happens.

MR. ROBERTS: In fairness, Lee said that at least at one press conference, he explained to people that the gap wasn't as important as the top number, but that certainly wasn't reflected in the news releases I saw.

SCRUTINY OF A CANDIDATE

MS. BERNSTEIN: All right. I'm being asked to stay on topic, so the question that I wanted to ask was, so say it had been different and say everybody understood to look at the top number and understood the race was close, which I think that I did hear from the Bloomberg campaign, it is a close race, it's a tough race.

Say that everybody had understood that. Could Bill Thompson have withstood the scrutiny of being a serious candidate for mayor?

MR. CASTELL: You mean given otherwise the lack of scrutiny that he was given as a candidate? You mean, oh, you think, or the lack of seriousness from the Bloomberg campaign?

MS. BERNSTEIN: Well—

But I'm saying when you go through, you as a candidate suffer six weeks of TV, mail, and radio, probably in excess of \$20 million of negative campaigning on you, and you still get 46 percent of the vote, that's pretty remarkable.

and that's why we did so much and took nothing for granted.

So the amount of activities out of our campaign, I think, answers the question that we always thought it would be close, and we tried to prevent it.

MR. RAMIREZ: Sam, let me say something. My son asked me why do I keep coming to these events?

[Laughter]

MR. RAMIREZ: Because we consistently get it wrong. And my answer to him was that I come here because I'm playing to history. I'm not playing to the people who are here. See, somewhere along the line, somebody's going to come back and ask what happened in 2001, 2005, and 2009. And if you look at this room, and if you look at the coverage that I've read for here, Bill Thompson wasn't even running until September 6 of 2009, which is the first time that there's an article that states an opinion from him.

If I look back 50 years from now, the folks that I come from, we weren't even in this race. See, the problem is that what you started to say here was said last time, and I want to echo what Howard said. I pray that the next time I come here, you look at me and you say, "Roberto, we got it right this time."

MR. ROBERTS: Well, let's hope we all do. There's a question from Andrea Bernstein. Where is Andrea?

MS. ANDREA BERNSTEIN: Behind you.

MR. ROBERTS: OK.

—Eduardo Castell

I don't want anyone to overstate how, if Obama came in and went into the projects or what have you, that that necessarily translated person for person, vote for vote into those people actually coming out and voting for [Thompson] on Election Day.

—Basil Smikle

MR. CASTELL: I mean, the fact that they went, and I will say this, I think—

MS. BERNSTEIN: No, no. Let me just say, but also from the voters.

MR. CASTELL: Yeah.

MS. BERNSTEIN: Because I certainly heard a lot of people on Election Day saying, “I like Mike Bloomberg, but I’m voting for Bill Thompson because I’m mad at Mike Bloomberg.”

MR. CASTELL: I also, and I think, though, there were more voters who would have been coming out. I think it’s, again, less the day of the election as how you set it up.

As I said, they knew that playing the inevitability card as they did, you know, come Election Day, there’s some questions to that. But without a doubt, I agree with them. And I think they made the smart move, which is that playing the inevitability card early sets the stage. Because what it does is it influences decisions that people make those 10 months leading up to it.

If the race would have been closer, there’s no doubt that it would have played to our advantage ‘cause you would have had people—and I believe Kevin Wardally said this at the last panel, the one thing and, look, you could look back at a million things, that could have gone different—but if you would have had more of your own Democratic base, of your union support, of institutional plays, just believing, just believing and willing to take that risk, you can point to, easily how they would have made different decisions leading up to the election. And those are decisions that would have undoubtedly played to our favor.

So I think certainly the scrutiny of Bill Thompson as a candidate, we will take it any day. He is a viable, thoughtful candidate who has, is able to sort of garner a demographic without ever racializing an election. He did not run as a black candidate in 2001 for comptroller, and he overwhelmingly got the black vote, and a good portion of the Latino vote. And he was able

to get white voters as well because he did not racialize the election.

He ran in 2009, getting a strong, as a proud black candidate but not as a black mayoral candidate. He ran as a qualified candidate and was able to get black support. We did very well in the Latino community and got white support as well. He is a viable, competent candidate who not only ran for citywide office but served in citywide office. We absolutely will take the scrutiny. And as a matter of fact, we’ll take it because the decisions that people would have made leading up to that day would have been to our benefit.

MR. ROBERTS: Eddie? We talked to the first panel about John Liu as the “black candidate,” the candidate who attracted sort of multiethnic racial support. Why wasn’t Bill Thompson the black candidate in the mayoral race in that sense?

MR. CASTELL: If you look, I think I would say he absolutely, positively was. Look at the results. When you’re outspent again to that extent—and I think it’s not so much the money that was spent early on, because I said this again to the reporters, I said at some point, they’re not listening to sort of the Bloomberg, they weren’t buying the Bloomberg narrative.

When you, I think the most important numbers to look at in both for how the race was going was the amount of negative campaigning that was spent at the end. And I think, look, you got to win, that’s what you’re going to do. We certainly did some as well because you had to. You had to get into, you had to defend, and you had to get into that scrum.

But I’m saying when you go through, you as a candidate suffer six weeks of TV, mail, and radio, probably in excess of \$20 million of negative campaigning on you, and you still get 46 percent of the vote, that’s pretty remarkable.

But I would say, too, you get 78 to 80 percent of the African-American vote, you get between 55 to 60 percent of the Hispanic vote, how could you not be the minority candidate? He obviously was.

MR. ROBERTS: And if you look at the polls—and people had accepted that this was a four- or five- or a six-point race—and Bill Thompson was taken as seriously as perhaps he should have been at that stage of the campaign, and Obama had come in and campaigned for him in Sonia Sotomayor’s neighborhood, things like that, would Bill Thompson have won the election?

MR. SMIKLE: I can speak to that. I don’t think we really know the answer to that. I really don’t think we know the answer to that.

MR. ROBERTS: What you’re saying is Bloomberg’s election was not inevitable.

MR. SMIKLE: No. What I'm saying is that I don't think the people, I don't think people just go vote for the black guy. And I've never felt that way.

MR. ROBERTS: Well, I don't mean just because of—

MR. SMIKLE: But yeah. I understand what you're saying. I just think that I don't want to—I don't want anyone to overstate how, if Obama came in and went into the projects or what have you, that that necessarily translated person for person, vote for vote into those people actually coming out and voting for him on Election Day.

MR. ROBERTS: But I meant the whole notion of him being a serious candidate, and serious enough in a close enough race so Obama actually would have come in and campaigned. Not necessarily black-for-black vote.

WHO AND WHAT THE PRESS COVERS

MR. SWEITZER: Well, I was just going to say we don't know inevitability. I mean, these are all hypotheticals. I have no clue. You have to understand we're missing one thing, which is what the stakes of this election were, and that's because of the economy. If this election were about crime—I mean, my biggest fear was a crime wave because people believed the mayor's done an outstanding job on crime, and in fact it was our next mayor has to fight crime, we're out of the game.

This was about the economy. I remember telling Bill early in February or March, he said, "How am I going to win this?" And I said, "Well, you're going to sit at 44 or 45. That's inevitable. You're going to get something

I think that term limits was a metaphor for the anger of the middle class. I think it was parking tickets, it was everything. It was, like, come on, make a change. Do something.

—Doc Sweitzer

like that." But look at the newspapers. Every day it's about Bernie Madoff, it's about Goldman bonuses, it's about the Yankee deal. I said, "by the fall, people are going to have pitchforks, and they're going to be going after people with money." And this guy's spending it, and he looks it, and he's playing the game like that, and that's our best hope is that we get to 44, 45, and then it becomes a referendum on that.

Howard was right, our final polls were both the economy and term limits. It was a competing interest, and we, that's all we talked about. And we stayed consistent, on message. And I'll actually say this: I think that term limits was a metaphor for the anger of the middle class. I think it was parking tickets, it was everything. It was, like, come on, make a change. Do something.

But—

MR. ROBERTS: Kind of reaction to arrogance, instant—

MR. SWEITZER: Reaction to the whole deal. The reaction to the \$100 million on the campaign, that became an issue. I mean, you just got it—people feeding it back.

MR. ROBERTS: Karen, you were going to talk about the inevitability just—

MS. KEOGH: Well, not inevitability, but going back to the Obama question, when you look at Suozzi and Spano, who both lost 60,000 and 50,000 votes respectively, the Republicans in both of those races did not fare that much better, but their voters sat home.

Same in our race. Bill Thompson got basically the same number of votes as Freddy Ferrer, and we got 160,000 votes less. If Obama had come in and there had been more of a horse race— and we'll never really be able to answer this—would more of our voters come out? Would more of the voters that pulled the line for Bill Thompson because they were pissed off about term limits but wanted the mayor to stay mayor, would that

The Bloomberg campaign's Karen Persichilli Keogh comments on what might have changed the race.



have changed the race? And that's not a question we can answer.

MR. WOLFSON: I would be sitting in Washington rather than New York today if I believed inevitability. I worked for the last inevitable candidate who is now secretary of state and not president.

And this gets back to the discussion I was having with the chairman earlier. Campaigns have dynamics, and campaigns are about campaigns and candidates. And things happen. And I don't ever believe that anything is inevitable. This is not the old Soviet Union. I mean, underdogs win, people, dark horses you've never heard of become elected to office.

So the answer is I think in any race, nearly any race, any, either of the candidates can win.

MS. MITCHELL: I disag—

MR. ROBERTS: Michael Barbaro wrote in the *New York Times* that postelection story—which I thought was really one of the best things I had seen written on the campaign—but talked about the foreclosure crisis and the fact that you guys were really, really worried that the Thompson campaign was going to strike a really resonant chord with that.

What did you do to overcome that? And why didn't you strike more of a chord with that and the economy? Why was there such a balance between term limits and the economy rather than more of a focus on the economy when that seemed to be the real gut issue? That was the gut issue, the term limits perhaps more the metaphor.

MR. WOLFSON: Well, my recollection is that there was one specific event that you guys were doing on this, that we were ready to respond to, and it didn't get covered. I'm not sure that we were worried about it so much in the macro sense. I think there was, Michael wrote—unless he can correct me if I'm wrong—but

there was a specific instance of a specific event that you all were planning that we were able to respond to or attempted to respond to.

MR. ROBERTS: But you never have.

MR. CASTELL: We did every week. We had four periods, and we did it twice. We did it one wave sort of for the primary, and we did one wave for the general, where every week there'd be a theme, and we would go out and we'd have Bill talking about issues, and they all connected back to the economy.

Foreclosure was something we hit on a number of times, but it wasn't about, we weren't looking to create segments on the economy. You wanted to sort of talk about the issues, and it wasn't about so much jobs as about the affordability issues that you mentioned, the water rates. It was the death of 1,000 cuts, right? And it was, like, how do you pull all these together? And Bill was out there talking to voters about it. He was out there campaigning on it. We were out there speaking about it. It just didn't get played.

And for us, the issue was we saw both term limits and the affordability issues as running neck and neck. And term limits was, they both really were neck and neck. And even one was much more universal than the other. Term limits was the more universal piece.

MR. ROBERTS: Jim.

MR. TRIMARCO: Listening to this conversation, I almost wish that Bloomberg had just had a referendum and won because the affordability issues and the problems with small business, those issues, I think, are more motivating and get people more fired up. And when we spoke to people about that, I think they did get fired up, but then we were always going back to term limits.

And I think that some people who wanted to vote against Bloomberg because of term limits, in the end they stayed home because it doesn't actually, like, feed their kids or anything like that. And we, I think we drifted off on it. But we had to because everyone was mad about it.

MR. ROBERTS: Howard.

MR. WOLFSON: Bradley used to say this all the time, maybe he should say it here, but he would say, "At the end of the day, we, our argument is that what matters more in the lives of people are the schools that they send their kids to and whether the streets are safe or clean." And on those basic bread-and-butter issues that people who live in this city see and feel and touch every day, he got a lot of credit.

Seventy percent of the people in the city think he's doing a good job. And from our way of thinking—and I assume everyone would agree—that's a pretty

If Obama had come in and there had been more of a horse race...would more of our voters come out? Would more of the voters that pulled the line for Bill Thompson because they were pissed off about term limits but wanted the mayor to stay mayor, would that have changed the race? And that's not a question we can answer.

—Karen Persichilli Keogh

extraordinary number. I mean, that is a very high number for an incumbent in this climate.

If you look at governors right now around the country, there are not too many with 70 percent approval ratings. Look at other chief executives.

So the term limits obviously was an issue for some people, but more importantly for obviously the majority of people were schools and crime and cleanliness and all the things that make New York a great place to live.

BRINGING BACK THAT OLD GIULIANI FEELING

MR. ROBERTS: Early on Roberto raised a point, let me just come back to that, that I'd like to go back to Rudy Giuliani. Did you guys know what he was going to say? Was that racial code?

[Laughter]

MR. ROBERTS: What was the impact of it? And why didn't the Thompson campaign jump on it harder?

MR. BRADLEY TUSK: Well, I mean, a couple things. One, no, we did not. And it was, I don't think it was even actually a political event. It was a governmental, a JCC legislative breakfast, which, it wasn't our event. We just attended. He attended.

Keep in mind, former mayors intersect with each other all the time. Mike runs into Rudy and Koch and Dinkins at events constantly. You can't live a life where you avoid your predecessors. So we didn't know he was going to say that. Clearly, I think we recognized once it started to become an issue that it was a challenge for us. I think one of the reasons we were so glad that we spent the whole campaign soliciting endorsements and going quite frankly to black churches and trying to get similar support from the community is that when this happened, we were able to call so many of our allies and say, "You know us, you know Mike Bloomberg, you know how he's been on this issue for the last eight years," and that was very, very helpful.

And I don't know whether—

MR. ROBERTS: Bradley, were you surprised that the Thompson people didn't jump on it?

MR. TUSK: I don't know if they either basically said Mike has a really good record on this and we don't want to run that kind of campaign, or if they made calls and people basically said, "Yeah, Rudy said something stupid, but ultimately Mike's got a really good record on this." But I think all the groundwork that we laid both for eight years as mayor, which he did, and then I think the campaign, which we did, really gave us the ability to recover from that quickly,

We could have a whole separate conference on why the Obama effect, which was so potent in 2008, was just not present in this election at all.

—John Mollenkopf

which otherwise it certainly would have been a challenge.

MR. ROBERTS: And the answer is?

MR. RAMIREZ: Let me—no, no. Let me—I am going to let Eddie answer that one—but let me go back to the term limits for a moment.

MR. ROBERTS: Wait. Could Eddie answer then, and then we'll go back to term limits? Thank you.

MR. RAMIREZ: We're about race. Go ahead.

[Laughter]

MR. CASTELL: I think sort of—Bradley hit on some of it—I think we came out hard and strong on Giuliani's comments, but to wrap that around Bloomberg I think was going to be both difficult and could be dangerous in a way that you're getting into, again, what is then a sort of very racialized sort of issue, and that was going to be the debate.

And it could cut both ways, and we knew that. It could cut both ways. At that point we knew that the electorate, that the turnout was going to be low. We basically figured it would be one, three, for the primary. We then recalculated, which was, we were pretty accurate. We were pretty much on course. We put it back down to about between one, one and one, two. Nathan can speak to that more, our field director. And so we sort of targeted what we needed to target.

Certainly a surge in folks who would have been, African-American voters, let's say in particular, would have been helpful. But once you press that button, you have to be really, really, really careful. And we have, as I said before, we had full confidence that we had a candidate who was going to get black supporters. He had in the past as he did this time, and was able to speak to issues that mattered to black voters about his narrative without sort of taking and really throwing, pressing that button.

MR. ROBERTS: But black turnout was pretty low.

MR. CASTELL: Well, turnout was low across the board, but what we knew is we knew where black turnout was coming out when it was coming out for us. And we did what we needed—

MR. ROBERTS: Did you guys make a Giuliani commercial and decide not to use it?

MR. TUSK: No. We, I think we never even got to the point where we produced something.

MR. ROBERTS: But you thought of it?

MR. TUSK: Sure. I mean, look, he's a mayor that had—

MR. ROBERTS: Did you decide not to do it because of that?

MR. TUSK: It just never fit the narrative of what we were doing. Quite frankly, we were focused on them at the end, so we did a Koch commercial also that we didn't use. We, look, he's a mayor that's still—I don't know, I haven't polled him lately—but he has a lot of popularity and a lot of popularity and a lot of credibility in a lot of constituencies of the city. And to Eddie's point, there were a lot of—if you look at where we were in '05 and in '09, we lost a lot of white ethnic support for issues like water rates, parking tickets, property taxes.

These guys knew it. Doc's first ad was all about that. And I think that you ran just like you were worried about a crime wave, potentially having those voters say, "Yeah, I don't like this and this, but I'm coming out and I'm voting for Bloomberg." And you didn't want that risk, yet you ran the same risk with this as well.

So it was a really tricky issue, I think, on all sides, but we had—and this is, and so as I was going to say before—I was actually glad when their last ad was about term limits because I was more worried about affordability because I knew how we were on those types of issues with voters that were supposed to be our base. And that's where we were.

AFFORDABILITY AND THE ECONOMY

MR. ROBERTS: In retrospect, are you sorry that you didn't focus on affordability and the economy more than on other issues?

MR. CASTELL: No. We basically did a 50-50, right? And this was—these were sort of, certainly conversations we had internally was term limits, was affordability, and it was, like, for our polling, they both showed to be resonating. And the one thing is we knew you had a cohort of angry voters on term limits, and in a low-turnout race, we couldn't afford to have them possibly fall asleep, because we knew those were the folks coming out.

But we knew that his, that while term limits was going to get us to the dance, it wasn't going to deliver the entire game for us. We knew we had to go on affordability as well, and for us, really, the rubric was you had to be talking about both of them.

MR. ROBERTS: We're going to go to Roberto—

MR. SWEITZER: I actually have the final commercial, so I mean—

MR. ROBERTS: I'm sorry?

MR. SWEITZER: —I mean I actually have the script of it, so you could see how we do affordability. "For eight years Michael Bloomberg looked out for those at the top, but now Bloomberg's overturned term limits and is on a spending spree to buy himself another four years. But eight years is enough. Across New York, Democrats are uniting to elect Bill Thompson.

Bill Thompson, a proven record of fighting for the middle class. Tuesday vote, send a message even a billionaire can't change the rules to suit himself."

MR. ROBERTS: Let me just ask the—

MR. WOLFSON: Hold on. That was an affordability ad?

[Laughter]

MR. SWEITZER: No. It's got afford—yeah.

MR. CASTELL: Well, what we tried to do was really—

MR. ROBERTS: Let me just ask the four Bloomberg people again, because we got diverted slightly, if the campaign had been recognized for what it was, a much closer election, Thompson as the Democrat, a much more serious candidate than the independent credible polls suggested. If there had been Obama campaigning, if more Democrats had come out to support him, would Bloomberg have been inevitably the winner? Bradley?

MR. TUSK: You know, no. Inevitably, no. I mean, I think almost everyone, at least around this table, would say that there's really no candidate that's inevitable in any election at all. I think we would have won under any circumstances because we would have changed the dynamics of our race accordingly.

THE ELECTION DATA

MR. ROBERTS: Now we will hear from John Mollenkopf, director of CUNY's Center for Urban Research and Distinguished Professor of Political Science and Sociology at the CUNY Graduate Center. He is going to present his analysis of election data.

MR. JOHN MOLLENKOPF: Four basic aspects of the results deserve to be highlighted. First, the turnout was exceptionally low, even compared to the 2005 mayoral election. Second, despite that, it turned out to be a much closer election than expected, with Mayor Bloomberg winning by only a little more than 50,000 votes. Third, the results were also a great contrast to the enthusiasm expressed for the Obama candidacy just a year ago in November 2008, showing

that the 'Obama Effect' had very little spillover into this contest. Finally, this was also reflected in the fact that Mayor Bloomberg did better than his African-American challenger in assembling a "rainbow coalition."

Why such low turnout? I think it reflects doubts among the electorate about both of the candidates. Bradley and Howard have already described the challenges facing the Bloomberg campaign.

The contest was intrinsically hard for the mayor because of the unpopularity of setting term limits aside, erosion of support for incumbents in the wake of such a severe recession, the likelihood that this will be a tough budget cycle that is going to be all about how to inflict pain in the most economic way. And that's not something that necessarily makes you popular.

The other side of it is that the Thompson campaign failed to excite the Democratic base to the level that it could have. We don't know exactly why. Exit polls or focus groups could have told us more about that, but he clearly didn't get to 50 percent plus one.

While the perception of the inevitability of the mayor winning hurt the Thompson campaign, it also hurt the Bloomberg campaign to a degree. I base that mainly on talking to my Park Slope neighbors, many of whom told me they wanted to send the mayor a message that, while they liked him and thought he was somebody they'd like to see in office again, he had done quite a few things that didn't sit well with them—and they wanted to let him know that.

And a lot of people did. If it were more generally known that the race was really tight, a number of those people who voted for Thompson in order to send a negative message to the mayor might have reconsidered. Bill Cunningham made that point last night and I agree with him.

This election also presents a vast contrast with November 2008, just a year ago. It was a completely different election and electorate. Why what happened in 2008 seems to have had so little impact on 2009 is a really interesting and profound question that we haven't delved into yet.

We could have a whole separate conference on why the Obama effect, which was so potent in 2008, was just not present in this election at all.

MR. ROBERTS: Well, isn't part of it, John, that Bill Thompson's not Obama?

JOHN: Well—

MR. ROBERTS: For better or worse.

MS. MITCHELL: Yeah. I think, no, I think that this, I think that the difficulty is, is that—and a number of people tried to write about this either during the campaign in terms of why isn't the Obama effect sort of carrying over—is, you know, being from that

We knocked on 2 million doors in this campaign. We built a field operation that no one's ever seen on this campaign. We were on TV since April to sell this notion of inevitability. That costs a lot of money.

—Bradley Tusk

Obama-generation piece is one, that the investment in Obama was different, right? Just like JFK was a movement for a different generation, Obama is a movement for a different generation. And that movement, that electorate is not going to move to other candidates and to other issues in a monolithic way.

I don't think, you know—and there's a lot of people that disagree with me—and I don't think Obama can even move his electorate to other candidates, and to other issues as well. It's a whole separate movement that, again, I agree with you, is a whole different conversation. And I don't think that movement can be translated to other candidates.

MR. MOLLENKOPF: Well, I would say, you know, I think the Bloomberg campaign did an excellent job in trying to align themselves as much as possible with what the Obama administration was doing to prevent that from having a spillover effect in the local election.

Just two brief last points. Why is it that the Democrats seem to have a hard time nominating a candidate who's going to win a clear majority in city elections? And I think if you look at the shifts, both in turnout and who people voted for between '05 and '09, you see, so that the African-American vote, which Bloomberg took roughly half of in '05, shifted towards Thompson, although the Bloomberg campaign still did 20 to 22 percent in black districts. And Latino districts, which had gone for Freddy Ferrer fairly strongly in '05, shifted to Bloomberg. And basically if there are three or four basic components to the Democratic Party electorate in New York City, they don't agree with each other.

And if you have strong support in one, you often get a negative reaction in the others. And even between blacks and Latinos, and there's a clear shift here. So there's a basic structure problem of the Democrats trying to get all of the components of the Democratic coalition together for a mayoral candidate that they manage to do for presidential elections and other elections, comptroller elections, but not for mayoral elections.

And the last observation is—and I think this is a point that Bradley and Howard have tried to make—that the Bloomberg campaign did at least as good a job of assembling a multi-ethnic rainbow coalition as the Thompson campaign with the added benefit that the

*We could have put together that coalition.
The fact of the matter is the Bloomberg
team did an amazing job at stopping that
at almost every road we went down.*

—L. Joy Mitchell

core of the Bloomberg campaign and white Catholic and Jewish outer-borough neighborhoods vote at higher rates than blacks and Latinos. So it's a bit stronger base to begin from.

MR. ROBERTS: Let me ask a question that we really have skirted during this whole discussion, and that is money. Did you really have to spend—

MR. RAMIREZ: I'm sorry, Sam. Sam, I got to stop you.

MR. ROBERTS: OK.

MR. RAMIREZ: There's a couple of points I would make here that, I know numbers don't lie, but they're just so counterintuitive to what I know that I just, I don't think you can have—

MR. ROBERTS: I promised you before. I'm sorry.

MR. RAMIREZ: That's okay because Eddie made the point that I wanted to make before. The notion that somehow Democrats are not nominating candidates who cannot win citywide election blows my mind, because that's three citywide elections, and two of them were won by Democrats: John Liu and Bill de Blasio.

We've run for three consecutive—

MR. MOLLENKOPF: I meant to say mayoral candidates.

MR. RAMIREZ: Well, we ran for three consecutive elections. And there's a guy who has spent \$250 million, and I'm not sure I would call anything but a—

MR. ROBERTS: But we haven't elected a Democratic mayor since 1989.

MR. RAMIREZ: Yeah, I'm sorry. And how often do you get to have a candidate that can pay \$103 million? Because the one question that you haven't asked when you're asking about Obama and you're asking about everybody else, you haven't asked if you were to have capped both candidates at the same amount of money as is the law in the city of New York, if you had capped them, would Bloomberg have won given what we have?

MR. ROBERTS: Well, that was the question I wanted to ask.

MR. RAMIREZ: Just the last point that I want to make—

MR. ROBERTS: Will you let me ask that one?

MR. RAMIREZ: But no. But I don't want to go and refute it. The notion that black and Latinos somehow are—there's a shift, and there is this counter, it's absolutely counterintuitive, and it's just untrue.

THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING A BILLIONAIRE

MR. ROBERTS: Could you have won if you had abided by this, could you have won if you had abided by a spending cap and taken public financing in Buckley vs. Valeo ruled on by the court?

MR. TUSK: That's one half of the equation. So let me ask, could we have won if we had a spending cap and nonpartisan elections, right? Because it's two sides of the same coin.

MR. ROBERTS: Well, let's ask one at a time. Let's ask the spending cap, and then we'll go to nonpartisan elections. That's fair.

MR. TUSK: Well look, in terms of the spending, I don't know. I know that when we have a six-to-one registration disadvantage, we left that party. They weren't so happy with us either, right, on the Republican side. So when you have that kind of disadvantage, look, Mike Bloomberg had a great first term, and John has 58— I think we thought it was 57—but roughly still got a little more than half the



L. Joy Mitchell of the Thompson campaign talks about Bloomberg's influence.



Nathan Smith of the Thompson campaign talks about the advantage of being a Democrat in New York City versus that of being a billionaire.

really actually had a much more difficult challenge than anyone understood, it made sense for us—

MR. ROBERTS: Did you have to spend more than \$100 million? And did that amount of spending, as Joyce Purnick raises the question, did it backfire?

MR. TUSK: In a low-turnout, low-engagement, low-interest election, to say that by contacting voters last they're going to vote more, to me seems totally counterintuitive. I don't know what these guys would say.

MR. NATHAN SMITH: I mean, I don't know. It seems to me though that we're comparing apples and oranges here, right? Like, we're sitting here saying, "Well, if we had nonpartisan elections, and we didn't have the registration advantage, you know, does that negate the money, dah-da-da-dah?" But there's a key difference, right? Your party registration is a matter of your choice.

Michael Bloomberg was a Democrat many, many years ago, could have stayed a Democrat, and run and taken advantage of those registration, you know, that registration disadvantage now. Billy Thompson couldn't click a lever or fill out a form, become a billionaire, and spend \$100 million.

So I just think it's apples and oranges to say that, you know, if Michael Bloomberg wanted to take advantage of the registration rate and still have the reform of having, you know, equal money distributed across all candidates, he could've done that. He chose not to.

MR. TUSK: If we wanted to have the reform of having the best possible candidates be able to run in a system that in one party is totally based on how you've worked your way through the ranks, you'd also have that.

MR. CASTELL: Yeah, but Michael Bloomberg could have also decided to run as a Democrat, which is what he was. Michael Bloomberg made a decision in 2001 that he didn't want to run as a Democrat, which he was registered as. He decided he wanted to run as a Republican because it made the most sense.

Michael Bloomberg decided if he was thinking about running for president, he was going to change his registration, become an Independent, because that made the most sense.

Michael Bloomberg decides to run as a Republican because that makes sense for him politically. And so I think—and I agree with you on, sort of, on the larger scale, which is on the premise. Once you accept the premise if he's running as a Republican then it's different. But he chose to run as a Republican because he's gone from Democrat to Independent—from Democrat to Republican to Independent back to Republican. So that's his choice.

votes. Rudy Giuliani had a very effective first term, got a little more than half the votes. So I think once you're starting off at that point, your question assumes everything's equal on a spending cap. We'll see who wins, right?

But when the party from, the candidate from one party can only in the very best circumstances get a little more than half, and you're not starting at equal points. So I don't know what's the answer to that question.

But if we had nonpartisan elections and a spending cap, do I like Mike Bloomberg's chances? Absolutely. Spending cap, I know; nonpartisan, I don't know. I mean, we've been going around this table saying, "You don't have inevitability. If you had Obama, you have the WFP." There's a million different elements.

And by the way, what campaigns try to do is affect all those outcomes, right. You don't throw it all up in the air, and then pick something out of the hat. Every single thing that we did was pretty deliberate. There's not a lot that we left to chance in this campaign, and part of that same view of we're going to take away all of their strengths, and then we're going to try to sell the notion of inevitability, is that we're going to be out there constantly. And we did certain things that have never done before.

We knocked on 2 million doors in this campaign. We built a field operation that no one's ever seen on this campaign. We were on TV since April to sell this notion of inevitability. That costs a lot of money.

So we did a lot of things, but in order to make sure—the mayor has the money—and in order to make sure that we could be successful, knowing what that we

MR. ROBERTS: So is part of the third-term agenda, which we've heard very little about, pushing again for nonpartisan elections?

MR. TUSK: Well, we're just on the campaign side, so—

[Laughter]

MR. ROBERTS: You just work there.

[Laughter]

MR. ROBERTS: Let me ask—

MR. TUSK: I think charter reform will certainly be something the mayor does in the next four years, and do I think that a charter commission would look at that? Yeah. I think, look, the mayor's been very clear, and I think that Working Families Party—I know Eddie was certainly there, you know, he was asked that question. And he said, "I believe in this. It's the right thing to do. We tried in '03. It didn't work. If there is a viable political roadmap, I would strongly consider it again."

We could have a whole separate forum as to whether or not there's a viable political roadmap on this, and, but so I think for the mayor it really becomes, one, is there a viable political roadmap? And it certainly is—we spend a lot of time looking at it, yet—and two, given everything else he wants to get done, where does that rank on the list?

MR. ROBERTS: Let me ask one more money question if I can. We're sort of running out of time. Did you feel totally outgunned because the Bloomberg people had bought everyone up? And did you guys feel bought?

Well, in a manner of speaking, hiring everyone that could be hired who had really good talent available to run a campaign. And to, and to bring—

MS. MITCHELL: I take offense to that.

[Laughter]

Michael Bloomberg was a Democrat many, many years ago, could have stayed a Democrat, and run and taken advantage of the registration, you know, that registration disadvantage now. Bill Thompson couldn't click a lever or fill out a form, become a billionaire, and spend \$100 million.

—Nathan Smith

MR. ROBERTS: —and to preclude the Thompson people of many choices who they might have hired, too. And the Weiner people and others. I mean bought in the good sense.

MR. CASTELL: I'll help my colleagues on this side. I think, look, without a doubt, having that level of resources provides you opportunities that any campaigning candidate would want to have, right? I still, though, do think that given the limits of our resources, we put together a strong team. And I think we put together a hell of a strong campaign. And I think that—and I go back to this—the things we said we were going to do in March and April and May are exactly the things that we did.

And some folks just wouldn't believe us, but there was a bit of a low turnout, you're outgunned, limited resources, you play a rope-a-dope for a couple of months, and then you, you know, you sort of rally at the end. And that would be somewhat your best shot because these guys both had the talent, and they had the resources to be able to change strategies all the time in a way that when you have limited resources, you can't.

So they both had the talent. And the fact that they had the resources doesn't take away from the talent they have. Obviously the two are linked to some extent but not completely.

MS. MITCHELL: I think we're glossing over the influence of money in the election though. Besides having the, as Eddie mentioned, having the resources to be able to change strategy, to be able to do sort of the technical things that you need to do in terms of the campaign—being able to put more people out in the field, being able to be up on TV early, and sustain that—besides that technical point, there is the influence of his money and who he is as the richest person in the city of New York, has influence on people's vote, has influence on people's support.

That is, that is what makes Bloomberg as a candidate almost.

MR. ROBERTS: That was a question I actually wanted to get to: the influence of the philanthropy. But the last question I think, because we are out of time, what lessons for 2010, for 2013 can we walk away from this campaign with, other than look at polls more carefully?

MR. SMITH: I mean, for me, I think the history of successful Democratic campaigns, and I think we saw this in the Liu campaign and the de Blasio campaign, is a history of coalitions. And I take a little bit of issue with John's analysis on being able to put forth a mayoral candidate that can build the kind of coalition that can win in this city. I think Billy Thompson's exactly that kind of candidate.

I think we are just up against an amazing political team with a lot of resources that had a lot of arrows

in its quiver. I mean, I think L. Joy's exactly right, it's not a matter of just the money spent on the campaign. It's not even just a matter of the philanthropy, it's also a matter of a real fear that a lot of leaders have of a billionaire mayor.

I mean, we joke about it in political circles all the time—never take on the billionaire, never take on the person who has barrels of ink, right? These are just kind of parts of the political reality. And so I think, look, I mean, I think we heard this all the time. We heard it from, well, I won't name the unions, but we heard it from numerous unions. They didn't have a problem being with Billy Thompson. They didn't have a problem being a part of that coalition. We could have put together that coalition. The fact of the matter is the Bloomberg team did an amazing job at stopping that at almost every road we went down. I mean, it was just amazing that they just got there first and were able to put the clamp on what really is the only kind of roadmap for Democratic citywide elected officials, which is coalition politics, which is exactly—you said earlier, Sam—that the Liu campaign said that they were the African-American candidate.

They actually never said that. You said that. They sat here and said, “No, we are the coalition candidate that put together the Latinos, that put together the Asians, that put together the white liberals, that put together the African Americans. That's how we win. That's how Democratic candidates win in the city.”

They were amazing at stopping us from being able to do that one.

MR. RAMIREZ: Yeah, I would say the lesson is the first one. It is very difficult to run for mayor for a third term. I think that's sort of been glossed over. If there is a reason why there hasn't been that many who were successful, and there is no question that if you're going to run for a third term, it helps to have \$100 million and to be an incumbent. That's issue number one.

I think that this city has an opportunity, and certainly the media has an opportunity, to look at itself and ask the question the same way we in the campaign do: What could we have done better to make sure that the real story was told?

—Roberto Ramirez

And the second rule—and the second lesson for me is a clear one that I want to challenge—is I think we, those of us who are in the media, have to do a real better job of questioning the underlying premises, particularly when it comes to money. Because the pervasiveness of any substantial amount of money that is so great whether it comes from private contributors or whether it comes from developers or whether it comes from a man's wealth does tend to undermine the basic notion of a democratic system where every vote counts the same. And I think that this city has an opportunity, and certainly the media has an opportunity, to look at itself and ask the question the same way we in the campaign do: What could we have done better to make sure that the real story was told?

MR. ROBERTS: Thank you for that inspiration. And I mean that. And thank all of you for coming and joining us. You really contributed an enormous amount, and it's very much appreciated. Let's give this panel a hand, and thank you all for coming.

[Applause]

PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

EDUARDO CASTELL serves as executive deputy comptroller to NYC Comptroller William C. Thompson, Jr. He was manager of Comptroller Thompson's 2009 mayoral campaign. Prior to his current appointment, Castell served three years as special assistant to the president of the New York City Board of Education. From 1993 to 1997, Castell worked for U.S. Representative Nydia Velazquez (D-NY), eventually becoming her chief of staff. From 1989 to 1993, he served as legislative assistant and then legislative director to the late U.S. Representative Ted Weiss (D-NY).

JORGE FANJUL was John Liu's field coordinator in the 2009 comptroller race, where he oversaw the day-to-day operations of the candidate. Fanjul has worked on a number of New York City campaigns and was awarded the Outstanding Leadership and Service Award from the City University of the New York and a citation from the New York State Assembly/Senate Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force. He also coordinated Latinos for Liu.

JOSHUA GOLD was director of voter contact on John Liu's campaign for New York City Comptroller. Gold is currently deputy director of the Healthcare Education Project, a statewide initiative between 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East and the Greater New York Hospital Association dedicated to protecting and expanding access to quality, affordable healthcare. He has worked on numerous issue and political campaigns, most recently directing Presidential candidate Barack Obama's get-out-the-vote operation in Cincinnati, Ohio.

DANNY KANNER served as communications director for David Yassky's campaign for New York City Comptroller after four months as press secretary in Yassky's City Council office. Previously, Kanner served as communications director for Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster's campaign and transition. From February 2007 until April 2008, he served as a press aide and special assistant to the Governor of New York State. Kanner also worked as a compliance associate for the Spitzer-Paterson gubernatorial campaign, and he currently serves as first deputy press secretary for the New York City Department of Education.

JAMES KATZ led the citywide field effort for Councilmember David Yassky's 2009 campaign for New York City Comptroller and served as Brooklyn get-out-the-vote director for Democratic mayoral candidate Bill Thompson during the 2009 general election. In 2005, Katz was the statewide Field Director for SEIU 1199's successful effort to preserve \$3 billion in Medicaid funding. During the 2004 presidential campaign, Katz worked for America Coming Together, supporting Kerry-Edwards and the Democratic ticket.

KAREN PERSICILLI KEOGH served as national political director for HillPAC, Senator Hillary Clinton's political action committee. During the 2008 presidential campaign cycle, she directed the New York State campaign for Senator Clinton and served on the national delegate selection team. Keogh served as New York State director for Senator Clinton from 2002 to 2007, managing all aspects of the senator's New York State operations. In 2006, Keogh took a leave of absence to manage the Senator's successful re-election campaign. She previously served as director of operations and senior advisor to New York City Council Speaker Peter F. Vallone.

L. JOY MITCHELL was political director of Bill Thompson's 2009 mayoral campaign.

ROBERT OLIVARI worked in a major role in at least 45 state & local campaigns; most notably as Staten Island GOTV coordinator for Cuomo for Mayor 1977, Brooklyn coordinator for Mario Cuomo's gubernatorial campaigns in 1982 (general election) 1986 & 1994, campaign manager Finneran for State Comptroller primary 1982, campaign manager for District Attorney Bill Murphy (Staten Island) 1987, 1991, 1995 & 1999, GOTV coordinator Ferraro for Congress 1978 (general), deputy GOTV coordinator Bradley for US Senate 1984, 13th Congressional District coordinator Mondale for President 1984 and Gore for President 1988 & 2000.

ROBERTO RAMIREZ was a consultant to Bill Thompson's mayoral campaign. He served previously as senior adviser to Fernando Ferrer's 2005 mayoral campaign and as chair of Ferrer's 2001 mayoral campaign. He is a former member of the New York State Assembly and a past chair of the Bronx County Democratic Party. Ramirez is a practicing attorney. In 1998 he was appointed to the Committee to Promote Public Trust and Confidence in the Legal System, and that same year The New York Post recognized him as one of the "50 Most Powerful People in New York City".

SAM ROBERTS has been The New York Times's Urban Affairs Correspondent since 2005. Before that, he was deputy editor of *The New York Times* "Week In Review" section and urban affairs columnist. He served as deputy metropolitan editor and as a metropolitan reporter from 1983 until 1987. Prior to joining *The Times*, he worked for 15 years at the Daily News, first as a reporter, then as city editor and finally as political editor. He is the host of *The New York Times Close Up*, an hour-long weekly news and interview program on NY1. He also hosts a weekly podcast for The Times, "Political Points", and has hosted another weekly podcast, "Only in New York."

CHUNG SETO worked in the Clinton/Gore campaigns of 1992 and 1996 and as a member of the Clinton administration before returning to New York in June 2000 to work on the New York State Democratic Coordinated Campaign. Prior to joining the campaign, Seto served as press secretary to U.S. Labor Secretary Alexis M. Herman. Five months after joining the New York State Democratic Committee as communications director, Seto became the committee's first Asian American executive director. In May 2005, Seto became Campaign Manager for C. Virginia Fields, the first African American woman candidate for Mayor in New York City. In 2006, she worked on the finance committee for the re-election of Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton and that same year, Councilmember John C. Liu brought Seto on board as his chief campaign consultant.

BASIL SMIKLE JR. has been involved in numerous campaigns across the country including most recently Mayor Bloomberg's re-election campaign. He was a consultant to Anthony Weiner when the Congressman was contemplating a run for mayor in 2009. Smikle has also worked for a variety of elected leaders Senator Hillary Clinton, Senator Joe Lieberman, White House Director of Urban Policy Adolfo Carrion and US Trade Representative Ron Kirk.

NATHAN SMITH is former director of minority information services for the New York State Senate and the field director for the NYS Democratic Senate Campaign Committee. This year, he served as get-out-the-vote director for mayoral candidate Bill Thompson. Smith has been campaign manager for numerous State Senate, New York City Council, and issue advocacy campaigns. He served as chief of staff for New York City Councilmember Annabel Palma and has extensive experience in labor and public advocacy campaigns for organizations including ACORN, the New York Unemployment Project and the United Farm Workers. Most recently, Smith helped spearhead Bill de Blasio's successful campaign for New York City Public Advocate.

DOC SWEITZER, a consultant to the Thompson campaign, is one of The Campaign Group's founders. Sweitzer is a veteran of two Presidential campaigns and has successfully elected more than 30 members of Congress and statewide elected officials. He is a regular guest lecturer across the country on political strategy and media planning.

RYAN TOOHEY was a general consultant for the Melinda Katz's campaign for comptroller. After finishing the 1998 Attorney General's race and a brief stint in Eliot Spitzer's office, Toohey began his private-sector career at Weber Shandwick Worldwide. He left Weber Shandwick in 2002 to join Westhill Partners, a New York and Washington-based firm with a focus on complex corporate reputation and regulatory affairs campaigns. Toohey also worked as a consultant to the Democratic National Committee, Dick Gephardt for President and America Coming Together (ACT), the 527 Organization active during the 2004 Presidential campaign.

CATHY MITCHELL TOREN serves as campaign director for the Council of Urban Professionals (CUP). Toren managed the 2009 NYC Comptroller campaign for Councilman David Yassky and served as his chief of staff. She was finance director for Yassky's re-election and 11th District Congressional bid. Before that, Toren worked as campaign manager for the Advertising Council, Inc. on numerous government and nonprofit communications programs for clients including the American Red Cross, The United Way of America, The United Negro College Fund, The National Institutes of Health, Environmental Defense and The Business Roundtable Poverty Initiative.

JONATHAN TRICHTER most recently served as manager for Melinda Katz's campaign for New York City Comptroller. Prior to that, he was a public finance investment banker at JP Morgan, covering New York State and New York City governments. In 2002, Trichter founded The Pace Poll, an institute at Pace University for survey research on politics and public affairs conducting original opinion studies. Trichter came to Pace having served as a polling analyst for numerous political candidates, such as Eliot Spitzer, Fernando Ferrer, Cory Booker, and Representatives Loretta Sanchez, Linda Sanchez and David Wu. He also consulted on the campaign to pass New York's Smoke-Free Air Act.

JAMES TRIMARCO was communications director for Tony Avella for Mayor. On the Avella campaign, he brought together supporters from diverse communities through extensive volunteer opportunities, an aggressive social media campaign, and a strong focus on the candidate's practical and progressive policy ideas.

BRADLEY TUSK most recently served as campaign manager for Mayor Bloomberg's 2009 re-election bid. Previously, Tusk served as deputy governor of the State of Illinois from 2003 through 2006, where he oversaw the state budget, policy, legislation, communications and operations. Before his appointment as deputy governor, Tusk served as special assistant to Mayor Bloomberg, and before that he worked as communications director for United States Senator Charles Schumer. Tusk also served as senior advisor to New York City Parks Commissioner Henry Stern.

KEVIN P. WARDALLY was senior advisor to the John Liu campaign for New York City Comptroller. His work has included the successful election of Congressman Keith Ellison, the first African-American from Minnesota and the first Muslim ever elected to the U.S. Congress. He serves as the lead strategist for State Senator Malcolm Smith; and provided strategy and analysis for the creation of radio and print ads for the re-election of former U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton. He engineered a statewide effort to increase the level of voter participation among African-Americans by designing and running one of the largest voter contact programs in U.S. history. In 2004, he was tapped to manage the democratic response to the Republican National Convention in New York. Wardally began his political career in the office of Congressman Charles B. Rangel, then worked for the New York City Council for nearly a decade. He rose from senior political advisor to director of the Member Services Division and eventually deputy chief of staff before his departure.

HOWARD WOLFSON was general consultant to the 2009 Bloomberg campaign for mayor. He served as communications director for Senator Hillary Clinton's 2008 presidential campaign. He also served as chief spokesman for Clinton's 2000 campaign for Senate. Wolfson was executive director at the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) in 2001 and 2002, and got his start in politics working for his hometown congresswoman, Nita M. Lowey. He also served as communications director in Charles M. Schumer first Senate campaign.

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