



MILANO THE NEW SCHOOL  
FOR MANAGEMENT AND URBAN POLICY



# THE RACE FOR GOVERNOR & ATTORNEY GENERAL

Campaign Roundtable 2006  
Wednesday, November 29, 2006



**THE RACE FOR GOVERNOR AND ATTORNEY GENERAL:  
CAMPAIGN ROUNDTABLE 2006**  
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## FOREWORD

Shortly after the 2006 election, Milano The New School for Management and Urban Policy invited senior strategists from the campaigns for New York attorney general and governor and the journalists who covered them to discuss the races. The forum followed a similar discussion convened by Milano after the 2005 New York City mayoral campaign. The focus was on how campaign decisions reacted to events, how decisions were made, and why. In addition, our intention was to leave a historical record of elections in our city and state enabling us to turn back to them in the future, compare strategies over the years, and learn from the differences and similarities.

The race for governor was vastly different from the mayor's race. While Mayor Bloomberg, like Eliot Spitzer, ultimately won his election with a substantial majority of the vote, he did not start out with a substantial lead in the polls. The 2005 election year also featured a competitive, and at times, nasty Democratic primary. Not so in 2006. Eliot Spitzer was a juggernaut from the moment he quietly announced he was running for governor a full two years before the election. He had established a national reputation as attorney general for taking on Wall Street and many observers thought that his "Mr. Clean" image was just what the state capital—notorious for secrecy and dysfunction—needed. Despite a spirited challenge in the primary by Nassau County Executive Tom Suozzi, Spitzer's path to the nomination and the Governor's Mansion seemed largely unobstructed. He was able to run as both an agent of change and as an incumbent.

Additionally, it was noted that New York's senior senator, Charles E. Schumer, had at one time expressed interest in running for Governor but decided early on that he would remain in the U.S. Senate. This, too, had a profound effect on the Democratic field.

After Governor Pataki's announcement that he would not run for a fourth term, jockeying for the Republican nomination began immediately, with early attention focusing on former Massachusetts Governor William Weld. Originally from Long Island, Weld had returned to New York after serving nearly two terms as an extremely popular moderate Republican in the Bay State. Weld—a Harvard educated, charismatic lawyer who reporters appreciated for his wit and unguarded comments—stood in stark contrast to the serious, precise, and lawyerly bearing of Eliot Spitzer. As we learned in our discussion, Weld's lack of understanding of how primaries work in New York led to his being outmaneuvered by the lesser-known John Faso. Faso assiduously courted the county chairs and ended up with the nomination. He has since returned to the private sector. A number of the observers in the room expressed the view that we have probably not heard the last of Bill Weld, since he would certainly like the

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option of running for Hillary Clinton's senate seat should it become vacant after the 2008 election.

Despite stark differences in their campaign platforms, the contest between Spitzer and Faso didn't generate many sparks. The election was portrayed in the press from the beginning as Spitzer's to lose, and Faso had a hard time breaking through that inevitability. Faso's serious style and message almost exclusively focused on taxes, and left him little opportunity to highlight the differences between himself and Spitzer. For example, on social issues such as same-sex marriage, Spitzer and Faso parted ways. John Faso did not believe it an important issue though clearly it would have scored him some points. At the roundtable, there was criticism of the way the press covered this race. By continually referring to John Faso as trailing by 50 percentage points, it made it very difficult for the challenger to ever gain any momentum. We hope this is one of the lessons learned from our review of the campaign.

Because of the lack of competitiveness in the governor's race, we decided to add to our review an office that doesn't normally attract much attention, but in 2006, it was the one to watch.

Jeanine Pirro, the former Westchester County District Attorney, was the only candidate for the Republican nomination. She switched to the attorney general's race after some initial stumbles in her attempt to take on Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton. Pirro was popular with Republicans statewide—she was moderate on social issues, telegenic and articulate, and her tough-on-crime rhetoric appealed to suburban voters. But she also had baggage in the form of a convicted felon husband. His past and present mistakes came back to haunt her again and again on the campaign trail.

The Democratic primary featured two well-known candidates—former New York City Public Advocate Mark Green and former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Andrew Cuomo. The race also featured Charlie King, a longtime Democratic Party activist who had worked under Andrew Cuomo at HUD, and a first-time candidate, Sean Patrick Maloney—an openly gay lawyer who had also served in the Clinton administration. Cuomo led in the polls in the period leading up to the primary and general elections. But there was a sense among reporters covering the race that his fortunes could change, and that if he ended up with the party's nomination he would face a spirited challenge from Pirro.

Pirro did indeed run an aggressive campaign but she was severely hobbled by the announcement of a federal investigation alleging that she had illegally attempted to wiretap her husband in order to uncover whether he was having an extramarital affair. Pirro's private life served as fodder for the tabloids for days, while

Andrew Cuomo remained quiet, largely refusing to engage on the topic. Pirro confronted the allegations head on and demanded an investigation into the source of the information that had been leaked to the press. Ultimately, she didn't lose much ground in the polls, but the distraction prevented her from closing the large gap that stood between her and the first-born son of former Governor Mario M. Cuomo.

What follows is a transcript of the two roundtable conversations (edited lightly for comprehension). We hope that you find the dialogue as informative, useful, and thought-provoking as those of us around the table and in the room did.

—**Dean Fred P. Hochberg**  
**Milano The New School for Management**  
**and Urban Policy**

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# PROGRAM

8:00–8:30 a.m.

**Continental breakfast**

8:30–8:40 a.m.

**Welcome, Dean Fred P. Hochberg**

8:40–10:15 a.m.

**Roundtable I: The Race for Attorney General**

10:15–10:45 a.m.

**Break**

10:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.

**Roundtable II: The Race for Governor**

## ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS

**MODERATOR** Mark Halperin, ABC-TV News

**CAMPAIGN REPRESENTATIVES** **Andrew Cuomo for Attorney General**

Jefrey Pollock

**Faso for Governor**

Dean D'Amore • Susan Del Percio

**Mark Green for Attorney General**

Mark Benoit

**Sean Maloney for Attorney General**

Erick Mullen • Tony Suber

**Jeanine Pirro for Attorney General**

John Gallagher • John Haggerty

**Spitzer-Paterson 2006**

Christine Anderson • Jon Silvan • Ryan Toohey

**Friends of Tom Suozzi**

Paul Rivera • Harry Siegel

**Weld for New York**

Walter Breakell

**JOURNALISTS AND COMMENTATORS** Wayne Barrett, *Village Voice*  
Elizabeth Benjamin, *Albany Times-Union*  
Dominic Carter, *NY1 News*  
Maggie Haberman, *New York Post*  
Patrick Healy, *New York Times*  
Ben Smith, *New York Daily News*

# ROUNDTABLE I: THE RACE FOR ATTORNEY GENERAL

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## WHO'S WHO

### *Moderator*

Mark Halperin, ABC News

### *Campaign Representatives*

#### **Andrew Cuomo for Attorney General**

Jefrey Pollock, Pollster

#### **Jeanine Pirro for Attorney General**

John Gallagher, Communications Director

John Haggerty, Campaign Manager

#### **Mark Green for Attorney General**

Mark Benoit, Senior Staffer

#### **Sean Maloney for New York Attorney General**

Erick Mullen, Campaign Manager and Media Consultant

Tony Suber, General Consultant

### *Journalists*

Village Voice

Wayne Barrett

New York Post

Maggie Haberman

New York Daily News

Ben Smith

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**FRED HOCHBERG:** I want to welcome you to the 2006 review of the governor's and attorney general's races. The Kennedy School has covered presidential races for the last four, five, or six cycles, and I thought it would be important to do something similar here in New York City. We began in 2001. We actually tried to do this in 2002. But at the last minute the Pataki folks pulled out of the conference so we did not have a record of that campaign.

I'm happy that we were able to restart this program last year here at Milano and really have an opportunity for an in-depth conversation with the campaign managers, the strategists and the journalists who covered the races. We really want to have a historical record so that we can look back and compare and contrast strategies and learn from them. At your chair we have a transcript of the 2005 campaign and we'll be publishing a companion to that piece at the end of today and hope to have that out to you early next year.

Since this is a university, I want to ask our panelists in particular to put aside their normal reservations about being forthcoming and candid. Today is a day for learning. Today is a day that future campaigns will be

able to look back on to study what happened in 2006. I believe we really laid a good cornerstone for this last year and I am looking forward to adding to that with today's proceedings.

I have to tell you that when we planned this event it was very lonely. I didn't feel bubbling enthusiasm from the staff about covering the 2006 race. It was a sense, frankly, that this governor's race was going to be a bit of a dud. That's not a commentary on the candidates, who are all excellent, and in fact one of them is a board member here at Milano.

But it was a factor that Elliot Spitzer had such a huge head of steam that it did not look like there'd really be a race. So I hope that one of the things that we'll be able to learn today is how that juggernaut came to be. What was it that made Spitzer such a formidable force? And why did other candidates have such a hard time getting traction? And what does that say about the future in terms of having uncompetitive races?

I'm also hopeful we can get some idea about the future plans of those who were hopeful about running for governor and did not succeed. And some idea of what the Republican Party will be doing to pick up the pieces after this year's election.

I did speak to John Faso just yesterday. He called me. We had a dinner for the panelists last night, and he regretted he couldn't attend, and he said to me, "Well Fred, it was a really lousy year to run as a Republican in New York." And I said that certainly was an understatement. I did suggest in retrospect he might



*Milano Dean Fred P. Hochberg opens up the day's program.*





*Mark Halperin, ABC News political director, moderates the day's discussions.*

have had a better shot at running for comptroller and on that subject he was silent.

Mark Green did join us last night for dinner. There was wild speculation that he would also be hovering today, perhaps incognito, in disguise. I have not spotted him yet, but there's always that possibility. Sean Maloney also joined us for dinner and promptly left for Paris this morning. So I am hoping we get a better understanding of the governor's race and its aftermath.

The other thing we did this year that is different was to expand the format to include the attorney general's race. Normally the down ticket races don't attract much attention. But I think the reporters and those of us who watched the campaign will tell you that the attorney general's race was the one to watch in

2006. In retrospect we might have also included the comptroller's race, but we just ran out of time on that.

And I think that the attorney general's race first attracted a field of candidates in large part due to the job that Elliot Spitzer did. The way he transformed the office of the attorney general made this a far more compelling and interesting position for people to compete for. This race for attorney general was also marked by a bit of drama. We'll let the panelists get into that. This campaign for attorney general also marked the reemergence or resurgence of a political family in New York State, with Andrew Cuomo's election as the attorney general. So I think there's a lot to discuss and a lot to learn.

I want to do a couple of thank yous before we start. First and foremost I want to thank our moderator Mark Halperin and his associate David Chalian of ABC News. I want to thank Mia Lipsit and Andrew White of the Center for New York City Affairs; Vandana Nagaraj and our three students who worked on this, Antoine Wallace, Linda Silver-Thompson and David Howe. I also want to thank our development director Louis Dorff, my assistant Tracy Jackson, as well as the folks at the Glover Park Group: Howard Wolfson, Gigi Georges, and Molly Watkins.

Lastly, I want to thank our sponsors, Bernard L. Schwartz and Robert Dyson, for their kind, bold, and generous support of this. And I want to remind you that as a companion to this we'll be hosting a panel here on December 12 entitled Governing Change: Politics, Policy and the Spitzer Administration. So I hope you will join us for that as well.

So with that, let me turn this over to Mark and we'll have a good day.

## CAMPAIGN TIMELINES: ATTORNEY GENERAL

HOW THE RACES WERE PORTRAYED IN THE NEW YORK PRESS

### December 22, 2005

In the face of lagging fundraising and a reportedly inevitable defeat against incumbent Hillary Clinton, Jeanine Pirro drops out of the U.S. Senate race and instead announces her candidacy for New York State attorney general.

### March 31, 2006

Quinnipiac University Poll: Cuomo 37 percent; Green 25 percent; undecided 26 percent. Denise O'Donnell, Richard Brodsky, Sean P. Maloney and Charlie King all poll in the low single digits.

### May 11, 2006

Assembly Member Richard Brodsky withdraws from the race in order to donate a kidney to his 14-year-old daughter.

### May 29, 2006

On the eve of the Democratic State Convention, there are five party candidates for attorney general: former HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo, former New York City Public Advocate Mark Green, former U.S. Attorney Denise E. O'Donnell of Buffalo, former lieutenant governor candidate Charlie King and former Clinton administration official Sean Maloney.

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**MARK HALPERIN:** Thank you, Fred. We are covering two races today—the attorney general’s race and the governor’s race. And we are also covering the primaries, where they existed. In every case but the governor’s race on the Republican side, the better-funded Democrat won and won relatively easily. Money always matters. It was a great Democratic year, and that will be mentioned repeatedly today.

The question at the heart of what we’re going to explore today is could someone besides the ultimate winner have won? Fred said everybody knows the campaign is over. This is the time when you all can talk honestly and freely about what happened, in order to leave a historical record for academics, for other people who practice politics and for the public.

It’s a chance to learn about politics generally in New York State and also about the state of the Republican Party in New York. We can learn about the new attorney general and the new governor—their styles, strengths and weaknesses. We can also talk about the newly reelected comptroller and what that episode teaches us about the state of New York politics, as well as the people who were running for office. And then, as always, we can learn a little bit about the unique way that the press operates in New York.

So let me just tell you a little bit about how we’ll operate. My colleagues will do the bulk of the questioning of the campaign folks. We want as free-flowing a conversation as possible, so if you’re representing a campaign and somebody says something you want to ask them about, feel free to step in. But the reporters will drive the questioning to a large extent. And then at the end we’ll take questions from anybody not sitting here at the table.

So let me start if I could with Mark, representing the Mark Green campaign, and ask you that basic question: Given the facts of who the candidates were and what the year was like, could the outcome have been different in the Democratic primary for attorney general? Could someone besides Andrew Cuomo have ended up winning?

## THE DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY: COULD THE RESULT HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT?

**MARK BENOIT:** Absolutely. When we first came into this race our polling showed that we could definitely win. A lot of things would have to break our way, but it was a winnable race. In our mind it was always a two-person race: Mark Green and Andrew Cuomo. And I know we were reminded to not always speak about the money factor. But of course, we were out-raised rather considerably, and that has a great deal to do with the result.

Andrew Cuomo learned more from his defeat in 2002 than any other candidate from any other defeat. That clearly showed. He put together a great team. I think he played the humble card rather well in courting the leadership immediately after the debacle in 2002.

Mark is always and remains a very headstrong person. A very committed dedicated politician, a public servant. We thought, naively perhaps, that we would win if we based our campaign on the issues. We felt that Mark had a better record than any of the other candidates at that time. And we thought that if we could get the press to push the issues, Mark Green would come out on top. Obviously that didn’t happen.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Mark, let me stop you because I want to get everybody in on this one. But the basic answer is yes, if things had gone differently, a different outcome was possible.

**MARK BENOIT:** Yes. Right.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Erick Mullen, the same question to you, representing Sean Maloney. Could have there been a different outcome?

**ERICK MULLEN:** Sure. I mean look at the numbers. You had two household names, these iconic figures. Neither one of them could put this thing to bed. You had 25 percent undecided—which you shouldn’t have had with almost universal name ID. So clearly the arithmetic said if you could present a case to enough people, there would be room for a third candidate.

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### May 30, 2006

Cuomo receives the endorsement of the state Democratic Party, receiving 67 percent of the delegates’ votes at the Democratic Convention, followed by Green.

### May 31, 2006

Running unopposed at the Republican Convention, Jeanine Pirro officially wins her party’s nomination for attorney general.

### June 3, 2006

After placing third in the prior week’s Democratic Convention vote, O’Donnell withdraws from the race without giving an endorsement to either Cuomo or Green.

### July 22, 2006

In a Quinnipiac University Poll, Cuomo leads Pirro 66 percent to 30 percent.

In addition to existing endorsements by the Sergeants Benevolent Association and the Uniformed Fire Officers Association, Cuomo gains the support of the Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association.



*Jef Pollock, pollster for Andrew Cuomo, analyzing Cuomo's numbers.*

First and foremost, to put a fact out there that needs to be reiterated—this notion that there were a lot of problems with Andrew Cuomo in the Democratic primary is just not true. Less than one in five Democratic primary voters had a negative opinion of him. If you look at his numbers, his favorables were in the high 60s.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Did that change at all over time?

**JEF POLLOCK:** It only changed in the general election, which we'll get to later, but his favorabilities did not change during the primary. This is one of the reasons why I never understood Mark's strategy to go pretty harsh on Andrew and keep going. At some point one would think that you'd see some results or see something working. The reality of the data that we saw when we first did a poll in May is that Andrew was up by 16 points. I never had Andrew losing. I never had the gap anywhere smaller than 16 points. It just grew and grew. In fact, over the course of time, even after the *New York Times* endorsement, the race did not shrink. We never had a low lead in the race. Andrew always had a very significant lead.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Let me ask the Johns. Just from your perspective and speaking for the party generally, did it seem as if, from your point of view, anyone could have been the nominee but Andrew Cuomo?

**JOHN GALLAGHER:** I think Mark Green had a shot at it but I think it was a little bit, say too little too late, not enough money. I think he didn't really engage Cuomo until very late in the game and we were standing on the sidelines watching that. But I think that Jef's analysis of Cuomo's numbers is very accurate, particularly for the primary. I think Andrew had negatives but they were much more general election, upstate-downstate type of negatives.

**MARK HALPERIN:** John do you want to add anything?

**MARK HALPERIN:** Tony, do you agree with that?

**TONY SUBER:** Yes. I totally agree about the money factor. If either Sean or Mark had the resources—because of the high dissatisfaction with some of the things that Cuomo did in the past—I think, yeah.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Jef Pollock, your colleagues believe that you could have lost. Do you think the conditions were such that if you had run a worse campaign and they had run a better campaign you could have lost?

**JEF POLLOCK:** It's hard to say. It's hard not to say that anything is possible. I mean we've all been in this game long enough to see various scenarios whereby you think a race is a fait accompli and all of a sudden things change. The comptroller's race is just one example of where we thought there certainly could be a seismic change.

#### August 8, 2006

*The New York Daily News* reports that Pirro is picking up steam against her Democratic rivals. A Siena Research Institute poll shows Cuomo's lead over her shrinking from 25 points to 15 points, with Cuomo at 50 percent and Pirro at 35 percent.

#### August 21, 2006

U.S. Representative Charles Rangel endorses Cuomo and joins other prominent Democratic leaders in criticizing Green for his almost daily attacks on Cuomo, saying, "If you're not going to win, don't hurt the winner." Green calls it a "comparison campaign."

#### August 27, 2006

*The New York Times* endorses Green, while delivering a scathing critique of Cuomo.

#### September 2, 2006

Cuomo unleashes his first attack ad against Green, calling him a "perennial candidate" who held a "useless post." It comes in response to attacks from Green that Cuomo didn't go far enough to protect children from pesticides while HUD secretary.

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**JOHN HAGGERTY:** Our first ad, which I think went up in late July, actually named Andrew Cuomo—so obviously we always really thought it was Andrew Cuomo. We didn't even pretend that it was going to be anybody else.

**MARK HALPERIN:** And did you assume he'd be the strongest general election candidate?

**JOHN HAGGERTY:** Well, we thought that his record had certainly left him open to attack. But we also knew that he was obviously the most well-funded candidate and that he had the organizational support from the SEIU and from the Democratic Party.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Let me ask one more question of you. During this period, during the Democratic nomination fight, were you all doing opposition research on the other candidates, on the Democratic field?

**JOHN HAGGERTY:** Not really.

**JOHN GALLAGHER:** In our campaign we were very focused on Cuomo because he was such a strong frontrunner, and I think John's right, I think that being the blessed candidate was critical to that. In terms of opposition research, we said that if Mark Green wins the primary we'll deal with it then.

*... this notion that there were a lot of problems with Andrew Cuomo in the Democratic primary is just not true. Less than one in five Democratic primary voters had a negative opinion of him. If you look at his numbers, his favorables were in the high 60s.*

*—Jef Pollock*

**MARK HALPERIN:** Were you doing research on Cuomo?

**JOHN GALLAGHER:** Yes.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Did you come up with anything good that you would have been smart to give to the Green people?

**JOHN GALLAGHER:** No, because I think so much of Andrew's record had been out there already in 2002. I think that a difficulty for us was trying to deal with the press on Cuomo's record because it was all rehash. He had been a statewide candidate before so there was no new news to make.

## FRAMING THE FRONTRUNNER: CUOMO, HUD, AND TOBACCO

**MARK HALPERIN:** Wayne Barrett, *Village Voice*, over to you.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** One of the things that happened in the primary was that any critical examination of Andrew Cuomo's record at HUD was regarded as a smear, and treated as one by Sean Maloney at the debates. And Jef mentioned last night that the cornerstone of the campaign was his HUD record. Why is it that the press and you guys got away with essentially portraying many legitimate issues about his performance at HUD as a smear? How did you manage to achieve that, Jef?

**JEF POLLOCK:** The first thing is that Democratic primary voters absolutely felt they knew Andrew Cuomo when you looked at the name identification numbers. They also felt like they knew Mark Green to some extent. Mark's favorable/unfavorable numbers were quite good. But the notion that Mark Green was attacking was something that was easy for a voter to accept. This notion of attack politics was something that had been around. Mark had been so familiar, particularly in New York City, where the free press drives so many things, that the instant you even talked about it as an attack it was like, "Oh yeah, that makes sense, a Mark Green attack."

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Maloney, King and Green tape a debate and criticize Cuomo for being a no-show. Says Maloney, "I think he's playing it safe and he's got a good last name."

### September 5, 2006

Quinnipiac University Poll: Cuomo 53 percent, Green 31 percent, Maloney 18 percent.

Hoping to unite the party, King drops out of the race and endorses Cuomo. Al Sharpton then transfers his endorsement to Cuomo, criticizing Green for what he deems divisive campaign attacks and "crash-and-burn" tactics.

*The Village Voice* publishes an article on the connections between Cuomo and a top financial supporter who had previously been the target of a probe by HUD when Cuomo headed that agency. The investigation was settled in an allegedly questionable arrangement brokered by Cuomo. This claim is quickly seized on by Green's camp.

### September 6, 2006

Cuomo, Green and Maloney engage in a debate sponsored by the New York City Bar Association.



So that's the first thing. The second thing is that there was to some degree an element of—it felt like an element of vitriol. Even when an attack is leveled, Wayne, as you know, it can be leveled in an even-keeled way or it can be leveled with a heightened level of vitriol. And I think this added to the perception of negativity.

You also have the other candidates, in particular Sean, who was a wonderful asset at the end of the day for Andrew, especially when he was out there saying, "You've got Mark Green attacking," instead of talking about himself and his own record.

Finally, Andrew had a number of validators on his side who were pretty damn good, from Bill Clinton to Louis Freeh, et cetera. And the voters were going to believe those validators, in particular somebody like a Bill Clinton or a Louis Freeh, over another candidate. And I think that's why they fell on some deaf ears, Wayne.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** Was Sean an accidental wonderful asset?

**JEF POLLOCK:** I wish I could tell you that there were great internal conversations.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** After all, he's at Mario's firm.

**JEF POLLOCK:** He's at Mario's firm, but when asked who the greatest governor was he didn't say Mario Cuomo, so just to be clear, I can't speak to that. I am almost certain there were no private conversations. You'll have to ask those guys from the Maloney campaign, but I do not believe that Sean was out there as a stalking horse to help Andrew Cuomo.

If you looked at the data, Wayne, in a two-way race when you took away everybody else and it was a Mark Green/Andrew Cuomo race, Andrew was winning by 25 points from a very early time period and that never changed. And he was above 50 percent.

**ERICK MULLEN:** You know, Wayne, this is the second time. When I did Golisano, I was accused of being a stalking horse for Cuomo, too. Look, I'm a gambler but I'm not an idiot. When those two guys began to fight

and Mark began to engage there wasn't a lot of room left. You guys like to run to the kids fighting the fire. So that change in atmosphere did not help what we were trying to do. The premise of our race was to present better ideas with more passion to the voters and you can't do that when everybody's obsessed with the fight between these two guys. So we tried to break it up.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** How do you win a race by defending the frontrunner?

**ERICK MULLEN:** I'm not sure we defended the frontrunner.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** You did it again and again.

**JEF POLLOCK:** No, they didn't actually defend Andrew.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** When the death penalty came up in the debate.

**ERICK MULLEN:** Yeah.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** He goes after Mark even though Andrew was the guy who just spoke about the death penalty.

**ERICK MULLEN:** But Mark started it.

**JEF POLLOCK:** As I recall from the debate, the reason that he attacked Mark on the death penalty was because there was some reasonable question that was asked and somehow Mark turned it into an attack. I'm just trying to remember—

**WAYNE BARRETT:** You remember better than I do.

**MARK BENOIT:** We always thought that one of the reasons Sean Maloney got into the race was to be a stalking horse for Andrew Cuomo based on Mark's record. Particularly in the lesbian and gay community. He had the best record out there. So looking at the poll numbers we figured if it's a tight race, Sean's in there, he pulls three, four, five points from Mark and therefore Andrew Cuomo's the winner.

Mark started a year out from the primary talking about his record and did that consistently for months. And so it's

#### September 9, 2006

A *Newsday*/NY1 poll shows Cuomo leading Green 46 percent to 30 percent, with Maloney garnering 9 percent.

#### September 12, 2006

Cuomo wins the Democratic primary with 53 percent of the vote. Green garnered 33 percent and Maloney received 10 percent.

#### September 27, 2006

Jeanine Pirro admits to being under federal investigation for plotting to secretly tape record her husband to find out whether he was having an affair. She denies any recordings were ever made.

#### October 7, 2006

*The Daily News* reports that Cuomo has nearly twice the campaign cash of opponent Pirro. He is reported to have \$2.4 million in his campaign chest, compared with Pirro's \$1.26 million.

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*As soon as we would bring something up, a gap in Andrew's HUD record that you could drive a truck through, we were attacked by the Cuomo campaign. It was the mean Green attack machine.*

—Mark Benoit

not accurate to say that Mark didn't speak about his own record and his own qualifications. Anyone who knows Mark Green knows he will speak about his own record and his own qualifications. He does so rather eloquently.

When you're looking at the polling numbers, we had to engage. We had to engage when we did in order to drag Cuomo down and pull us up. We did it in a comparative fashion. We didn't do a personal attack at all.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** Mark, let me be a little rude for a second. Would you address the question that I raised at the beginning? How was it that any critique of the HUD record was turned by Sean and by Jef into a smear? How was it done? How was it pulled off?

**MARK BENOIT:** Rather successfully, I might add. It was frustrating for us because again we wanted to engage simply, purely, and singularly on the issues. We didn't want to bring personalities into that. As soon as we would bring something up, a gap in Andrew's HUD record that you could drive a truck through, we were attacked by the Cuomo campaign. It was the mean Green attack machine. And I think Jef makes a valid point, going back to the 2001 mayoral race where some people reported Mark Green being mean and attacking.

So that had some resonance and I think the press picked that up. It was very frustrating for us to have a press conference. And again, we're a down ballot race. We had to do something a little heightened, a little

accelerated. It had to have a balance to it in order to even get press there in the first place. I can't tell you how many press events we had where no press showed up.

**JEF POLLOCK:** But do you remember what the first ad was? The first comparative ad, the subject of it?

**MARK BENOIT:** Our first ad?

**JEF POLLOCK:** Yeah.

**MARK BENOIT:** Yes. Yes.

**JEF POLLOCK:** Which was?

**MARK BENOIT:** Well, let me go back. Our first ad was going to be—our first ad was upstate and it was sort of warm and fuzzy about Mark Green.

**JEF POLLOCK:** I'm sorry. The first comparative ad in the city.

**MARK BENOIT:** The first comparative ad in New York City, I believe we went after him on pesticides?

**JEF POLLOCK:** No.

**MARK BENOIT:** Or was it HUD? It was tobacco.

**JEF POLLOCK:** Smoke shops. Right.

**MARK BENOIT:** It was the smoke shops.

**JEF POLLOCK:** But here's the problem with the smoke shop issues. Essentially Mark Green was accusing Andrew Cuomo of stuffing cigarettes into the mouths of kids. I mean that's how the attack translated. The facts are weird and discombobulated, but it's just a patently ridiculous charge. That somehow Andrew Cuomo is essentially in favor of giving smokes to kids.

And I think that added, in my opinion, to some of the people in the press corps saying, "You know what, you may want to call it comparative, you may want to say it's on the 'issues,' but it just doesn't smell right." And I, personally, thought that was a mistake.

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#### October 7, 2006

A Quinnipiac University poll indicates that Cuomo leads Pirro 50 percent to 31 percent, compared with 52 percent to 29 percent in late August.

Forty percent of respondents indicate they didn't know enough about Pirro to form an opinion, and 33 percent said they were unaware of the federal wiretapping probe

focused on her alleged plot to record her husband's reported infidelity. Women were no more likely than men to support Pirro. Cuomo leads 53 percent to 27 percent among women, as compared with his 54 percent to 25 percent lead in August.

#### October 11, 2006

Cuomo agrees to debate Pirro in two venues.

#### October 14, 2006

Cuomo and Pirro square off in the first of two televised debates.



*Wayne Barrett, from the Village Voice, ponders the way that Mark Green came to be portrayed as a perennial loser.*

that Mark Green was a person who'd been there, done that. Who had been around the block and run a bunch of times.

Elliot Spitzer had never won elected office either, Wayne. I mean that's not a prerequisite.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** Every time I talked to Andrew he himself discussed Mark as a perennial loser.

**JEF POLLOCK:** I can't speak to your private conversations with Andrew, obviously.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** No. I'm just saying you guys did pump this up and work this.

**JEF POLLOCK:** But I'm telling you that I talked to real people, voters who don't pay attention and read things every single day, and there was already a belief out there that Mark had been a candidate who had been around many times. And yes, he had won a couple of times—but Wayne, he'd also lost.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** Did you do that anecdotally or did you do focus groups?

**JEF POLLOCK:** There were focus groups.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** Which communities did you do them in?

**WAYNE BARRETT:** The other great anomaly to me was that Mark Green has won three citywide races including a Democratic primary. Your candidate had never won any election in his life and somehow he managed with the help of the press to convey that Mark Green was the perennial loser. How did you pull that one off?

**JEF POLLOCK:** Well again, I can't say how we convinced all the great New York City press corps of these things. There are a lot of very good reporters out here who can defend themselves. But the notion of Mark being a perennial candidate was also something that people felt when you went and talked to them. When you went north of the Mason-Dixon line, and you went to places upstate in particular and you asked about Mark Green, it was as if—I remember when I was doing focus groups for John Edwards in Iowa and we were talking about Dick Gephardt, and they were like, "Didn't he run in 1972?" And there was an absolute feeling out there, forget about what the Cuomo campaign did, but

*But here's the problem with the smoke shop issues. Essentially Mark Green was accusing Andrew Cuomo of stuffing cigarettes into the mouths of kids ... it's just a patently ridiculous charge.*

—Jef Pollock

#### October 17, 2006

Cuomo and Pirro trade sharp language in the final of two scheduled debates.

A Siena poll indicates Cuomo's lead over Pirro has shrunk from 17 to 13 points since last month. In a somewhat predictable fashion, both candidates are polling high negatives. The percentage of voters with an unfavorable opinion of Pirro grew in the last month from 32 percent to 41 percent; Cuomo's negative rating rose from 35 percent to 42 percent.

#### October 18, 2006

In yet another political twist, *The New York Sun* reports on allegations that surfaced about the substance and nature of Republican U.S. Senate candidate John Spencer's complaint to New York Attorney General Spitzer's office about Pirro's conduct. He alleges that she shielded corrupt officials from prosecution and retaliated against her political critics in 2000.

#### October 20, 2006

A Quinnipiac University poll finds that Cuomo leads Pirro 55 percent to 34 percent among likely voters.

*... was there ever a discussion about what was seen as a potential real problem with Andrew Cuomo, his personal life?*

*—Maggie Haberman*

**JEF POLLOCK:** I was upstate. We did focus groups upstate and we did focus groups in the city. Both.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** And what were the kinds of things you learned about Mark Green that you didn't know before?

**JEF POLLOCK:** As you know focus groups are anecdotal at best, but I do think there was some notion that Mark had seen his time pass in terms of his time for office. I think that there was, amongst Democratic primary voters, an actual liking for Andrew Cuomo. And let me take it one step further. I wasn't with Andrew in 2002, I wasn't part of the campaign. But at the end of the 2002 campaign, even though it didn't go particularly well for Andrew Cuomo, his numbers were never bad. There's always this myth that African-American voters were very angry at him for running against Carl McCall. It's not true. The numbers for him were actually quite good.

The difference is that in 2002 people thought Carl McCall should be the candidate. And therefore he was going to win. Carl McCall was always winning in the primary in 2002 by double digits. It was the same thing for Andrew Cuomo this time. Voters thought and believed that Andrew Cuomo was going to be the nominee. And they were behind him. That's why he ended up winning two-thirds of the convention with a lot of political support and a lot of muscle.

*Maggie Haberman, from the New York Post, asks whether the Green and Maloney camps ever considered using Cuomo's personal life as a tactic in their campaigns.*

## ENGAGING THE FRONTRUNNER: POLITICS WITHOUT PERSONAL ATTACKS

**MARK HALPERIN:** Maggie Haberman of the Cuomo family's favorite newspaper, the *New York Post*.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** Thanks, Mark. I'm going to start with Benoit but I'm going to actually ask Maloney this as well. You were saying—John Haggerty touched on this before—you were saying that you knew you had to engage early. I think the perception among the rest of us was that no one engaged Andrew Cuomo very early in the Democratic primary at all, on his record or anything else.

And everyone was talking behind the scenes and off the record about the fact that Andrew's HUD record was the big problem for him. But no one really presented it well. So I guess my question for you is two-part: one, why did Mark wait so long? There was a perception



### October 22, 2006

The *New York Times* offers a tepid endorsement of Cuomo.

### October 29, 2006

The *New York Times* reports that the candidates have set a record for fundraising in the race, raising a combined \$12.4 million, most of which has come from individuals.

*Newsday* endorses Cuomo.

### November 5, 2006

In a *Newsday*/NY1 poll, Cuomo leads Pirro, 61 percent to 33 percent.

### November 7, 2006

Cuomo handily beats Pirro, 58 percent to 40 percent.



that his heart really wasn't in this race—so was it? And number two, was there ever a discussion about what was seen as a potential real problem with Andrew Cuomo, his personal life? Was there ever a discussion about using that?

**MARK BENOIT:** Let me answer the second part first. We made a decision early on not to engage Cuomo regarding his personal life. That's something that Mark refused to do, steadfastly. Believe me, I brought it up. And it was brought up more than once. Because that's what you do in campaigns. He refused to engage on that level.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** Tell us about how you made the case.

**MARK BENOIT:** Please, Mark. We're down 16 points.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** Was there an argument made that there was a legitimate issue in something like the child support issue? Did that come up at all?

**MARK BENOIT:** Again, it came up, as part of our research. And again, Mark Green shot it down before five words were uttered out of my mouth. It was just cut out. That's just the way it was. We chose to engage after the convention because it was all we could do to try to get that 25 percent at the convention at Buffalo. All our time, energy, and resources were spent toward that goal. So in the meantime, obviously, our researchers are going through the HUD record, the pesticides issue, this issue, that issue. They were all being brought up. They were all being researched. They were all being cultivated. But again, you're looking at a campaign that had a bit of a money gap. We were short staffed. We just had to focus on getting that 25 percent. That's why we didn't engage really in a hard-nosed fashion until after the convention.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** And was Mark's heart in this race?

**MARK BENOIT:** Absolutely. Absolutely. When he called me, I was sunning myself in Florida back in March and he said, "Benoit you've got to come up here, we're going to win this." And he gave me a 20-minute spiel on why he could win. And I've known Mark. I did his race in '97. I've known him for years. His heart was definitely in it. Now, was there some erosion once the fundraising numbers started coming in, and we saw that there was clearly donor fatigue in our case? I'm sure. That's inevitable. But I still think his heart was in it until the last. It wasn't easy for him to call Andrew on the night of the primary. That was a heartbreaking moment for him. But he did it. No, his heart was in it.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** Why would the man who did "kill it, kill it" in 2001 shrink from Andrew Cuomo's personal life?

*Why would the man who did "kill it, kill it" in 2001 shrink from Andrew Cuomo's personal life?*

—Wayne Barrett

**MARK BENOIT:** Boy, that's an interesting question. I think that's one that Mark Green has to answer. Mark did tell me, what he learned from the mayor's race was that he had to go with his gut more and not all the consultants and all the people around him in 2001 saying, "You have to do this. You have to do the 'kill it'. This is the only way you're going to do it. The only way you're going to win other than Bloomberg being abducted." And we didn't have the money to do that.

So that's what happened. He felt he was burned in 2001, and so in 2006 he was going to listen to his own instincts, perhaps his own family. Obviously, he listened to us because we're paid to give him our opinion but he went with his gut.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** Ask the same question of Erick about Sean. Sean had raised money. He held very few, if any, that I can remember real press events. He was not seen very often. Why did he not engage more? Why did he not go after the frontrunner more early on?

**ERICK MULLEN:** A couple of things. First of all Wayne, the thing about Mark Green being a perennial candidate—I don't think that's even subjective. I think there's got to be some sort of definition. Mark's going to fall into that.

And in terms of attacking Andrew or either one of these guys early on, it didn't make any sense. Our theory of the race was to present an alternative, to talk about issues and things that were of concern to people. We thought that there was a gap with the absence of Giuliani and with Pataki leaving, and that the security moms would be looking for somebody to go to. So we used a lot of the YouTube. We did do a lot of events. We focused on things like Internet predators, and violence against women, and respect and protect agenda, and about women and girls. And that was the theory of the race—it was never for the third place guy to get in and try to tear down the first place guy because I don't think anybody would have even listened to us. And that would have disqualified Sean as a serious candidate.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** And was there ever a discussion about going after Andrew on the personal issues, or no?

**ERICK MULLEN:** No. We had Mark Green, the “kill it” guy, in the race. We didn’t even spend the time or money thinking about it. Which is a personal disappointment to me, but—

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** Why is it a personal disappointment to you?

**ERICK MULLEN:** Well, because it’s so much fun and easy to go after people. And Sean didn’t want to do it.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** Let me just rephrase the last question. Was there any discussion about a legitimate corner of this where it wasn’t strictly a personal issue, given the nature of the attorney general’s job?

**ERICK MULLEN:** It was a very short discussion and more academic, but with Mark Green in the race we just didn’t spend any time or money on it.

**MARK BENOIT:** Maggie, let me just say I could visualize the headlines on your paper and others if we would have engaged in a personal fashion. In fact, it gave me some sort of solace late at night to see, “divorce” or something like that. I probably wouldn’t have hesitated to go there. But Mark Green did not allow me to do so.

**JEF POLLOCK:** Let’s also not forget that Maggie’s paper had a number of those headlines during the actual divorce period, for Andrew Cuomo. So again the voters actually were familiar with some of that stuff and what it meant. And when we talked to them, they told us it was largely irrelevant.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** How much testing on that issue did you do?

**JEF POLLOCK:** Very little, actually. It was a matter of what came up in the focus groups when talking to people and asking. And people would say, “Yeah, they had some marital problems.” I mean, come on. I remember your paper Cuomolot, the end of Cuomolot. Living through that here as a New York City resident. So people did have some notion of it and also thought it was totally irrelevant.

**MARK BENOIT:** I will say one thing. I mean we did try to get Mark’s wife with him as publicly, as much as possible, obviously to build an advantage.

*Our theory of the race was to present an alternative, to talk about issues and things that were of concern to people.*

*—Erick Mullen*

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** Were you surprised, was the Cuomo campaign surprised that this didn’t come up earlier? Were you preparing for it to come up at all?

**JEF POLLOCK:** Not necessarily from the opposing campaigns, actually.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** From your own campaign? Whose campaign is going to bring it up?

**JEF POLLOCK:** No. We thought you would, Maggie, of course. Because we know you. We did not expect it necessarily to come up from the other campaigns.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** Why not? Has something changed in New York politics? I mean if it were 15 years ago, I think it would have come up.

**JEF POLLOCK:** Because it was played out. Because it had already been there. I mean, all the stories about Andrew Cuomo’s personal life had been strewn across Page Six over days and days for the voters. So one of the things that we do know about New York politics is people like to cover things that are new. And when things are old and rehearsed people tend to look at it and say, “You know what, we’ve been down that road. What are we covering that’s new here?” So we were preparing for a lot of things, but I’m telling you that Andrew’s personal life wasn’t the thing we were overly concerned about.

**MARK BENOIT:** I think if had it come up, you would have had headlines for a couple of days and it would have been damaging.

**JEF POLLOCK:** I don’t agree.

**MARK BENOIT:** I think I based this on the number of times I was questioned by the press on that particular issue.

**JEF POLLOCK:** Well, yeah.

**MARK BENOIT:** So obviously they had an interest. And they would have pushed this story.

**JEF POLLOCK:** You guys are all smarter than me. Tell me what the headline would have been?

**WAYNE BARRETT:** Mark, be more specific in response to what Maggie was getting at. Had the candidate been willing to go there, how would you have framed it? What would the message have been? What would the facts have been?

**MARK BENOIT:** The message would be, “Can you trust this person to be attorney general given his personal history?” Simple. Plain and simple. End of story.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** Which parts, though, of the personal history?

**MARK BENOIT:** The divorce.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** Just being divorced?

**MARK BENOIT:** Just the divorce.

**JEF POLLOCK:** No. I mean that's—who cares?

**MARK BENOIT:** No, no. Just the divorce, the coverage it got. The court papers, the documents, all of it. But it's a moot issue because we chose not to go there.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** You'd have to detach yourself almost from reality to make this impactful. You'd basically have to call him a deadbeat dad on television and at a press conference with a caricature blowup here to get anything. And you'd have to reinforce it with 1,500, 1,800 GRPs, which is why it was a waste.

You can't back yourself into a successful attack. You can't hint at it by bringing around the wife and mentioning the wife at almost every opportunity. It's too subtle. You need mass casualty ordinance in New York City to make this attack work. And so you'd have to be willing to shake hands with the devil, cross the line and go after Andrew on that, to be impactful.

**MARK BENOIT:** And again, our candidate just wouldn't allow it to happen.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** A man who shakes hands with the devil every day.

## BUILDING A CAMPAIGN: LESSONS FROM THE PAST

**BEN SMITH:** This is really a question for Jef and for Mark, about what your guys were doing for the last four or five years. Because it seems to me, really in retrospect now, that Andrew had won the campaign by last December. And that the most important things happened before then. I don't really have any idea what Andrew was doing all day. And I only have some idea of what Mark was doing all day. But I guess I'm interested in what Andrew was doing right and what Mark was doing wrong from both of you.

**JEF POLLOCK:** I think Mark wrote like 18 books in that time or something.

**BEN SMITH:** Two.

**JEF POLLOCK:** I can't speak to everything that Andrew was doing as I wasn't there that whole time. I do know that the lessons of 2002 were the same lessons that Elliot Spitzer learned in 1994. You lose a primary, the Democratic primary voters tell you that they're looking for you to give them a different level of communication, a different level of touching. So Elliot Spitzer goes and

*You can't back yourself into a successful attack. You can't hint at it by bringing around the wife and mentioning the wife at almost every opportunity. It's too subtle. You need mass casualty ordinance in New York City to make this attack work.*

—Wayne Barrett

runs around the state from 1995 to 1997 doing every rubber chicken dinner in the state. And it pays off.

Well, Andrew Cuomo did the same thing and worked very, very hard. And there are lots and lots of county chairs who will tell you that they were touched, meaning a phone call or physical visit by Andrew Cuomo during this period of time. So the politics definitely paid off. Certainly it would be silly for me to underestimate the 1199 [SEIU United Healthcare Workers] endorsement, which was a huge signal to political insiders that Andrew Cuomo was clearly the person to beat.

And finally, one of the most significant moments for me was when the Westside Reformers, who in theory were Mark Green's core constituency, part of his base—Jerry Nadler, Scott Stringer, Eric Schneiderman—these guys came and endorsed Andrew Cuomo. That was when it was clear that there was a tectonic political shift toward Andrew.

**BEN SMITH:** How long after 2002 did he start running for this job? Did he start doing dinners?

**JEF POLLOCK:** I don't know that. I would not be able to give you the right answer, Ben.

**MARK BENOIT:** Day after the defeat, I would think. 1199 was the big kahuna. When that happened we all sort of sagged a bit. And 1199 played a significant role in the fact that Cuomo got Nadler, Schneiderman, Stringer. Clearly, Dennis Rivera and Jennifer Cunningham were engaged in this campaign. This was not a paper endorsement. This was a mission for Andrew Cuomo. And it bears out in the number and strength of endorsements that he got. Most of them delivered via 1199. So 1199 is immensely powerful and we wish we would have had them. Then maybe I'd have a different answer for your question.

As I said in the beginning, Andrew Cuomo learned most from his defeat and started almost immediately to repair the situation. And it's almost easier when you lose in a rather spectacular fashion to go to people and be humble and be contrite. And I think he did a very good job of that.

Mark Green, of course, did the same thing. He went around in the state. He talked to the county leaders. He did all the homework and legwork necessary. I can only say that Andrew Cuomo had a more compelling story. With 1199, with Mario, he just had more firepower. We didn't. We had the strength of Mark Green's convictions and his personality and that didn't work out.

**BEN SMITH:** Do you think Mark was contrite enough?

**MARK BENOIT:** Yes. I don't think it's so much a fault, but when you have five, ten seconds or two minutes or even five minutes with a person you don't really know, you have to get your message out. So Mark will talk about himself. He'll talk about, "This is what I've done. Consumer advocate, blah, blah, blah, Nader." And sometimes there's not enough room for, "How are the wife and kids? How are you doing? Hey you look great, nice tan." That's a problem. When you're running for office and you only have a limited time, you talk about yourself. You've got to remember the other person. And perhaps Andrew did a better job at that, I don't know. He didn't talk to me.

**BEN SMITH:** And more specifically on that point, both of these guys came out of races, Mark in '01 and Andrew in '02, where they were seen as being critically damaged with African-Americans. I'm not sure in either case that necessarily translated to the mass of voters. But certainly black leadership in Manhattan was angry at both of them. And I guess I'm interested in how Mark failed to repair that and Andrew repaired it.

**MARK BENOIT:** Our polling didn't show that Mark was really damaged that much by it.

**BEN SMITH:** I don't mean in the polls.

**MARK BENOIT:** There was no absence of African-American leadership for Mark Green. Again, I think once you get a Charlie Rangel, you get all his team, too. And all of a sudden there's this appearance of a groundswell of support for Andrew Cuomo. But we worked very hard, and Mark worked very hard since 2001 to repair any rip. He met, he called, he did everything he could, and I think the fact that we got those endorsements shows that he was quite successful.

**JEF POLLOCK:** But I do think that Mark had been around this block a number of times. And there's only so many times that you can redo the thing. Andrew had lost one race. And that's it. And so he had not been going back and forth to people and having to redo these relationships again and again and again. So I think that certainly there was a great deal of outreach. Again, I wasn't a part of a lot of it.

The Charlie Rangel endorsement was significant. More significant to me were some of the things Charlie then said. As we all know, Charlie is as unscripted as they come. So Charlie himself said, "Mark, another attack." And when it comes out of Charlie's mouth it has a different ring and a different tone to it. And also it brings up some of the past stuff.

So there was not anger from the voters' perspective. But I think that obviously Andrew did a very, very good job of working the politics. And it'd be silly to say that 1199 didn't help. The notion that 1199 delivered the endorsement of people like Jerry Nadler, I think, is grossly overstated.

**MARK BENOIT:** I think that Nadler actually said, "Please stop attacking." Just one more thing, quickly. Obviously the endorsement of Carl McCall would have been huge for any candidate in the race. And believe me, we chased, and we thought he would eventually come over to us and we were quite surprised that he didn't.

**BEN SMITH:** Do you know why he didn't?

**MARK BENOIT:** I do not know.



*Mark Benoit, senior staffer for Mark Green for Attorney General, discusses campaign strategy.*





*Tony Suber, general consultant for Sean Maloney for Attorney General, describes the way that communities of color were taken for granted in the election.*

**JEF POLLOCK:** Well, he was with Denise.

**TONY SUBER:** My take on Ben's statement and the African-American community is a little bit different. Jef, I think you're dealing with the numbers. My take comes from talking to people and living in those communities and going through the city with the communities. I don't think that there was a real effort to engage in the black community. I think a lot of it was just taken for granted. Like in a lot of elections, the minority community is taken for granted in terms of outreach.

I think both camps, on the surface, reached out to elected officials for validation. But the average black voter was not really engaged in this election. They knew Cuomo. They knew his father. And he had the resources to get a message out. And black folks are very, very forgiving—in a lot of instances to a fault. So yes, there was anger about the '02 race. Yes, there was anger about the '01 race. Yes, Andrew ran a very, very good race. He was better than Mark in terms of the perception that, "Hey, I could have done better in '02." And Mark was unable to get that message out, or challenge the perception that he was as arrogant as the papers portrayed him to be. I'm sorry, I think Joe Voter, the average voter in central Brooklyn and southeast Queens and Harlem had no real stock in this race. Of course there wasn't enough engagement in the race.

**JEF POLLOCK:** But the average voter on the Upper West Side didn't have any engagement in this race. The average voter upstate didn't have any engagement

in this race. One of the things about a race that is a presumed blowout is that voters assume it's a blowout and therefore don't get engaged. So I don't know that it's any different for a voter upstate than for one in central Brooklyn. And I do think that Andrew Cuomo made a concerted effort. The contrition thing that people have talked about with Andrew Cuomo and the outreach he did was something that people—political leaders I'm talking about—felt was very real. And I believe was very real and a different approach.

I can't say how they received those calls from Mark Green. I don't know. But clearly they were not received the same way when you look at the results.

## REPUBLICAN EXPECTATIONS: LIMITED PARTY SUPPORT

**MARK HALPERIN:** All right, there's a lot of stuff on the table here and we will return to the primary when we go to audience questions at the end, but I think we need to move on. I want to start with the Johns, and ask you this. Much has been made of the notion that this was the one race that seemed winnable, before the comptroller's race came into play for the Republican Party. What were your expectations given the help you would get from Governor Pataki, from the state Republican Party, from the national Republican Party, to try to win this race? And where did you get those expectations from?

**JOHN GALLAGHER:** I think first it's important to know that John and I came into the race late in the game. John at the end of July and I very near the end of August. She had had the false start with the Senate race. I think her attorney general's race at the time was adrift. And that would have been more damaging except for the fact that the primary was going on, and the focus was on that. So she had the ability to recover from being adrift.

I think everybody knew that because of the condition of the state party we weren't going to get any help financially. They would say—Steve Minarik, who I have a lot of respect for, would say, "Look I'll do

*I don't think that there was a real effort to engage in the black community. I think a lot of it was just taken for granted.*

—Tony Suber

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*I think everybody knew that because of the condition of the state party we weren't going to get any help financially.*

—John Gallagher

everything I can.” And I would say, “Well there’s really nothing you can do. You have no money; you don’t have staff.” They were struggling to get by. So we knew that we were flying solo.

**MARK HALPERIN:** What about from the governor?

**JOHN GALLAGHER:** The governor’s endorsement was about all he had the ability to do. I think he treated all the Republican candidates equally. He raised money for Faso. He did do a fundraiser for Jeanine. I think that it’s very important to point out that particularly in New York, the deck was very much stacked against any Republican candidate from the lowest level to statewide races this year—so aligning yourself with the party, or with major players in the party, wasn’t necessarily going to be helpful. And so Jeanine Pirro was much more about personality and the individual than the party.

**JOHN HAGGERTY:** By the time I’d got on to the race, we had already given up on the national party because it was clear they weren’t putting any resources into any New York races. Obviously when they did finally do that it was going to be for congressional races only. But Jeanine was actually raising money on her own and doing a pretty respectable job. She had raised about \$2,800,000 by the July filing, just for the attorney general’s race, which was pretty impressive.

But again, like John said, we really never counted on party support and I think that gave us a certain level of freedom to position Jeanine more in the center and to talk about the fact that she, like Elliot Spitzer, was a prosecutor. And people said you’re going to anger certain chairmen upstate. But who cares? We weren’t getting the support financially and in other ways that we needed from them and we knew that.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Wayne.

## CHAUFFEUR-GATE: THE HEVESI ISSUE

**WAYNE BARRETT:** I want to go back to something that you said at the outset and talk a minute about the comptroller’s race in connection with your race. The Hevesi issue became an issue in the course of the

general election. Andrew Cuomo, peculiarly as far as I can tell, never endorsed Alan Hevesi. From your end Jef, why is it that he never endorsed Alan Hevesi, even before this issue came front and center? Then would both of you comment on how the Hevesi issue impacted the attorney general race?

**JEF POLLOCK:** I actually don’t know why. I don’t think there’s any great plot there, Wayne. I actually think it just didn’t happen. Alan actually popped onto the stage on primary night when I think Andrew was supposed to give a speech and the family was supposed to hug and everybody was supposed to walk off. And then on walked Alan and gave a victory speech on primary night. I don’t think there was any intentional lack of endorsement. It just never happened.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** Did Andrew resent that? That Alan did that?

**JEF POLLOCK:** No, I don’t think so. There was never any discussion of resentment. Alan was going to win by 80/20. Alan was a very popular comptroller. I did Bill Mulrow’s race against Alan in the primary where I learned just how hard it is to be an underfunded candidate running against somebody who has a lot of name ID. It’s very, very hard to win those races. And Bill Mulrow ended up winning every county upstate or something like that. And still you can’t win. It shows how hard it is to beat candidates with New York City name ID. If I had to guess, Wayne, it was more accidental than anything, on the Cuomo/Hevesi side. It ended up giving him an ability to say I never endorsed the guy, which was true.

It wasn’t going to impact Andrew, I think, until the Pirro folks put up a clever boxing match with newspaper headlines and Cuomo/Hevesi. It was a very clever attempt to tie Andrew to Alan Hevesi.

There were a couple of problems with it. Number one, I think you guys had about a nickel to put behind the ad so nobody actually saw it. And secondly, Andrew had, throughout his campaign, done a very good job of making sure he was seen as the best heir to Elliot Spitzer—whether that was through the Spitzer endorsement commercial, or through all the discussion. And voters believed that Andrew Cuomo was the best person to take on the fights of Elliot Spitzer. That was the single most important thing that they wanted. They wanted somebody to clean up Albany and carry on the big fights of Elliot Spitzer.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** The Cuomo failure to endorse Hevesi was an accident?

**JEF POLLOCK:** That’s my knowledge, yeah. I mean I can’t say for sure, but to my knowledge—in the same way that it just doesn’t happen because somebody doesn’t need endorsement. Somebody who’s going to

win 80/20, it's not like they're calling around asking for a lot of endorsements. And so that's my knowledge of it, and I don't think I'm wrong.

**MARK HALPERIN:** In a campaign that seemed to revolve a lot around sex, at least at your end, I don't want to refer to these guys as the two Johns. But what would you say was the impact of the Hevesi issue as you guys saw it? I'm interested in Andrew or Jef's comments on this too. Did you guys regard this as an authentic governmental question, or did you see it simply as a piece of political strategy?

**JOHN GALLAGHER:** First of all, the one thing that Hevesi did do was get all of Jeanine's personal stuff off the front page of the newspaper, which was a good thing. On the downside, the Republican Party at that time didn't have anything to rally around, and was just kind of hanging out there. Even though the investigation about Jeanine deflated her candidacy within the party a little bit, there were still people who viewed her as the best candidate and she energized people personally.

And what Hevesi did—all of a sudden people in the party jumped on Callaghan. And I said to people in the party, "Who are you kidding? The only difference is he's going to lose by 6 or 16 instead of 60." Alphonse started raising money for Callaghan. So for about ten days there was everybody jumping on the Callaghan bandwagon. And I didn't think that he was a serious enough candidate or that there was enough time—even if they did raise enough money—to catch up with Hevesi.

So it had that negative effect. It took the attention off of Jeanine within the party. I think it was a serious governmental issue in the campaign, particularly since he was the comptroller. I think for other elected officials it wouldn't have been such an issue, but he was supposed to be the watchdog against these things.

Andrew never really took a position on it. Spitzer made a very clear decision to revoke his endorsement. Hillary made a clear decision, very black and white, to stand by Alan Hevesi and that was the end of that. What Cuomo did was never take a position either way. He said he would wait for a referral.

So we were able to take that and club him over the head with it. Jeanine used the aggressive prosecutor position and said, "I wouldn't wait for a referral, I would investigate. That's what prosecutors do, that's what attorney generals do." And Andrew just hung out in that position and never really changed it. And so the whole world's taking a position on it and Andrew just kind of stood there.

**JEF POLLOCK:** But the problem with that position was that Jeanine in the past had said that the attorney general didn't have the authority to investigate public

## *The Cuomo failure to endorse Hevesi was an accident?*

—Wayne Barrett

corruption and had gotten into a pissing match with Elliot Spitzer over the issue. And so the charge was preposterous on the face. It may seem nice, I'm a prosecutor, I'm going to prosecute, da-da-da-da-da a big shot. But she had said that the attorney general didn't have the power to do it.

And so even if there had been the weight of dollars to put behind it, I think we could have beat back that charge incredibly easily as we did during the debate. I think Andrew performed very well by and large in the debates with Jeanine. And that was part of it. So I think Jeanine was frankly a little bit screwed on that level.

## REPUBLICAN STRATEGY

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** How involved was Al Pirro in informally advising Jeanine (who the Cuomo campaign pointedly started calling Mrs. Pirro during the general election) in the campaign prior to the investigation becoming public? And without the investigation existing what was the strategy going to be for the final five weeks of the campaign? How were you going to go after Andrew Cuomo?

**JOHN GALLAGHER:** Al's involvement, as far as I know, prior to when I got there and after I arrived was zero. I don't think anybody viewed him in any way as a positive. I can't tell you what went on at home. But he did not come to campaign headquarters. He never appeared with Jeanine. He did not participate in any meetings. I mean, just about everybody realized that he was radioactive in terms of politics.

As for the strategy before the investigation, I think that it was that she provides balance. There's been a long history for decades of having elected officials from the other party in statewide office for balance. And also she's more qualified as a lawyer. Some people will say, "Oh you know, the attorney general is much more than being a prosecutor," and I would agree with that, highlighting her prosecutorial experience. Andrew's overall legal record is very, very thin. So his experience was always part of the plan.

She's a woman from a key suburban county with very high media exposure on Fox TV, Court TV, talking about all these issues. And also she was the only candidate in terms of looking at the Democratic Party who wasn't from New York City. She was born and raised in Elmira. She went to college in

Buffalo. She went to law school in Albany and settled in Westchester. So you could make an argument, particularly outside of New York City, that this is balanced politically and geographically. It's balanced in gender. It's balanced as prosecutors are a little bit of a different kind of politician because they're lawyers first in a lot of cases. So I think the strategy before the investigation was to make all those contrasts.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** In retrospect, do you think it was a mistake for her to keep talking publicly about the investigation? To do the ad?

**JOHN GALLAGHER:** I'll let John answer the majority of that, but let me just say no because I think she had to tackle it head-on to deal with it effectively. And I don't think any other one candidate or any other communications director would have been as successful, because both the candidate and John are enormously talented in terms of the press. And once the issue went away, and it took a good two to three weeks to get back on track, she stopped talking about it. And even when she was asked about it, she always said, "Let's talk about the race, let's talk about whatever." But you couldn't avoid talking about it for two or three weeks.

**JOHN HAGGERTY:** I obviously don't think it was mistake, even in retrospect, because if I did we would have stopped. We didn't have a choice. One of the interesting things about the Callaghan/Hevesi race when all the stuff swirling around the driver broke, was that it was good in that it got Jeanine off the front page. But it was also bad that it got Jeanine off the front page. Because we were getting to a place where we could have gone back to talking about the campaign. And we could have had Jeanine herself talking about Andrew's record at HUD. And you would have covered it.

The problem, obviously, became that everybody was writing about Callaghan and Hevesi. For the three weeks after September 27, you weren't going to write about anything else. Nobody was going to do anything else and we just had to confront it head-on and she had to be everywhere talking about it.

The other thing is when Jeanine's on TV, there is really nobody more effective at talking to a camera. There was a decision to try to go live at 5 o'clock the day the investigation broke. And that was also why she went on Diana Williams and why she did Gabe Pressman in the immediate aftermath of that. And I know some of you thought this was overkill. She was everywhere. But again, I really don't think we had a choice and definitely in retrospect I think it was the only thing we could have done. And the fact that we were able even

to finish the race and stay in the race, that's evidence that it worked because somebody last night was talking about being roadkill. We really should have been roadkill on September 28, and we weren't.

## AIDING, ABETTING, OR ABSENT: MARIO CUOMO AND AL PIRRO

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** For Jef, in terms of informal advisors, you mentioned 1199 and the role it played, but you didn't mention the role that Mario Cuomo had in terms of lining up support for Andrew and helping out. Mario Cuomo was very much, publicly, a part of Andrew's 2002 campaign, much to Andrew's chagrin, as he has since said publicly.

He was very rarely seen this time. I'm wondering if you can describe how that played itself out, because there were a few blips where Mario did talk, like when he resurrected the coat holder comment at a Westchester dinner.

**JEF POLLOCK:** That was early.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** It wasn't that early. It was over the summer.

**JEF POLLOCK:** That's early to me.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** It wasn't last year. I mean two years ago.

**JEF POLLOCK:** Okay. Maggie always knows it all. I don't—not having been a part of the Cuomo family the way many other advisors are. The Cuomos are very good. They're people who are extraordinarily loyal. And I'm new to this game. So I can't speak to the old stuff. Was Mario around for briefings, and discussions, or coming to campaign meetings? No, he wasn't.



*Jeanine Pirro's campaign team, John Gallagher and John Haggerty, describe their candidate's strengths.*



**MARK HALPERIN:** Conference calls?

**JEF POLLOCK:** No, he wasn't. Not on the strategy conference calls, the stuff that we were doing. I know that he and Andrew spoke all the time.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Did Andrew invoke his name ever? And say, "My dad says do this," or "Mario says we should do this?"

**JEF POLLOCK:** You mean in like a strategy way?

**MARK HALPERIN:** Yes.

**JEF POLLOCK:** Not to my knowledge. Governor Cuomo's biggest impact on the campaign, in my opinion, was that there were more people devoted to policy and what the attorney general's office could do, and working on policy ideas, than there were field people on the campaign staff. And I think that his biggest impact was this notion that the attorney general's office needs to think big and continue the fight of Elliot Spitzer.

I know Andrew and Mario talked all the time. So I can't speak to any of those conversations. As to his arm-twisting abilities, this is something that I've said. This is something that he's said. It's something that the governor himself has said which is, if you were that good at arm-twisting, 2002 would have been a lot different. And I do think that's true. Obviously a different race, a different environment, but I think people put too much emphasis on all of those things. It's a different point in time. I think obviously



*Governor Cuomo's biggest impact on the campaign ... was this notion that the attorney general's office needs to think big and continue the fight of Elliot Spitzer.*

—Jef Pollock

Governor Cuomo's name is an incredibly valuable name and a great brand.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** Was it your sense that Governor Cuomo wanted to be more involved than he was?

**JEF POLLOCK:** It was not my sense. In fact there was a period of time for a couple of weeks when you were relatively miserable because I was the press secretary.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** That was true.

**JEF POLLOCK:** And thus you had to deal with me. And during that time period, Governor Cuomo would receive phone calls from the press and would call over to the press office and say that the press is calling me. So to my knowledge there was not the great Machiavellian push that people want to talk about or want to think that there was. To my knowledge it wasn't there.

**MARK HALPERIN:** I would think that the governor couldn't be on those strategic conference calls because he was busy calling potential supporters.

**JEF POLLOCK:** I hope so.

**BEN SMITH:** So Maggie, I just want to follow up with one thing that you may remember better than I do. It was either right after the primary or right after September 27 when Jeanine became Mrs. Pirro?

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** It was after September 27.

**BEN SMITH:** Can you just tell me about that decision?

**JEF POLLOCK:** Again, honest, I don't remember.

**BEN SMITH:** Was that just Andrew or was that a campaign decision?

**JEF POLLOCK:** There was no discussion on a conference call where we said we're going to start calling her Mrs.

*Ben Smith, from New York Daily News, asks about the management of the Cuomo campaign.*

Pirro. To ignore the effects of page ten, which we have so far ignored, is ludicrous. Her numbers were significantly impacted by the botched run for U.S. Senate. And these guys weren't there, so they can't talk about it.

But when you look at her numbers before September 27, she had a favorable rating of 34 and an unfavorable rating of 28, an almost one-to-one favorable to unfavorable ratio. Not good. After September 27 they flipped, with more people negative towards her than positive. But the botched Senate race started things off.

And in terms of the person who was seen as most likely to take on the fight of Elliot Spitzer, it was Andrew Cuomo. And the issue of integrity was something that was very important to people.

**BEN SMITH:** So was switching to calling her Mrs. Pirro a conscious thing?

**JEF POLLOCK:** I don't know. I don't know. There was never a conference call or meeting where we said we're going to start calling her Mrs. Pirro—like there was to call him Andy in 2002 by certain people, for example.

**BEN SMITH:** Yeah.

**JEF POLLOCK:** It was a good decision for the record.

**BEN SMITH:** Just a couple of other little things. I was looking forward to seeing more of your people today.

**JEF POLLOCK:** I came. I wish I could tell you.

**BEN SMITH:** What happened? Was there a conference call about that?

**JEF POLLOCK:** I wish I could tell you.

**BEN SMITH:** And also, who ran the campaign?

**JEF POLLOCK:** The day-to-day manager was Joe Percoco. I mean, it wasn't his title per se, but Joe really ran the operation. He would have been here today but he's on vacation with his family.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** Why didn't anyone have the title campaign manager as most campaigns do?

**JEF POLLOCK:** He may have actually had the title. But—

**WAYNE BARRETT:** No.

**JEF POLLOCK:** I don't think he did. But Joe ran the day-to-day operation. Andrew was very involved in the campaign. Andrew is a very hands-on kind of guy, as many people who have worked for him at HUD and at Health and other places know. And Andrew's run campaigns before. So this is a guy who knows his stuff. Why there was no titular campaign manager, I don't know.

**BEN SMITH:** Do you think that you handled the press right?

**JEF POLLOCK:** Me? Brilliantly.

**BEN SMITH:** Both during your stint as press secretary, and generally. I mean there was a fairly combative relationship between the campaign and the press. There were a lot of questions that just never got answers. Phone calls that just never got returned. Was that the right way to do it?

**JEF POLLOCK:** I don't know. I think that there are always ups and downs with the press during a given campaign. On balance, I'd say that there was good and bad. I have a few complaints about it, the way that many of us who have been in this room before have talked about the press and the coverage of things.

The *New York Post* was obviously the Cuomo campaign's best friend as it relates to the Pirro campaign. Although *New York Magazine* was pretty damaging. The story could have been a 10-day story but it became a 30-day story, or whatever it was.

**BEN SMITH:** And actually for you guys, I was curious about the decision to let *New York Magazine* into the home. Was that a campaign decision or did Al just like—

**JOHN HAGGERTY:** No way. Al Pirro did not clear his decision to speak with *New York Magazine* with me.

**MARK HALPERIN:** How did you learn of his decision?

**JOHN HAGGERTY:** I was on a train and I got a phone call saying there's a *New York Magazine* reporter in Al's office. This was from one of Al's partners. He had called the office, had called the headquarters' office, just to let us know. And they should have those defibrillator machines on trains. I almost had a heart attack. It was Metro North and a lot of people heard me screaming into my phone. We obviously didn't sanction his speaking to *New York Magazine*. And the only reason Jeanine sat down with *New York Magazine* was because we needed to try to find out what Al said.

*I was on a train and I got a phone call saying there's a New York Magazine reporter in Al's office.... I almost had a heart attack.*

*—John Haggerty*

**JOHN HAGGERTY:** And obviously Al and Jeanine also spoke to people like Cindy Adams going back.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** Aren't there other ways, John, to find out what he said?

**JOHN HAGGERTY:** Well, no. We did have a sense of what he said but let's face it, Al Pirro could not be the sympathetic figure in this story. And if he's speaking to *New York Magazine*, my thoughts are he's setting himself up as a sympathetic figure.

On the day when the *New York Magazine* story became front-page fodder, it was the day of the debate. And I think that should have been a good day for Jeanine relatively speaking. I think she performed well in the debate. I think Andrew and Jeanine both did what they needed to. She was as aggressive as she could be. And he didn't really lose his cool, a few chinks in the armor, but nothing major. But the *New York Magazine* piece was obviously not something we wanted. And it was not something we were happy about.

**BEN SMITH:** One other real quick thing. There is a brilliant spin, which I never actually got from each of you, but just when that story broke, people were saying that this was actually great for the Pirro campaign because it was going to get—

**JOHN HAGGERTY:** Right.

**BEN SMITH:** Did either of you ever believe that for a second?

**JOHN HAGGERTY:** I actually thought Kieran Mahoney may have planned this whole thing from the start and wasn't even telling us. But no, I never really thought it was helpful.

## THE ASCENT OF THE NEW YORK STATE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

**MARK HALPERIN:** Unless Fred stops me, what I'm going to propose is in just a minute we're going to go to the audience questions. We've got some excellent ones and I want to try to get to as many of them as possible.

I just wanted to ask one question myself and then wait for a few more audience questions and then go to those. We talked about the lack of financial resources for the state party. But it seemed to me that the Republican Party did not drive a message for your candidates as well as the Democrats did, which is something of a change over not so long ago. Both the Glover Park Group and the state party seemed to do a very good job of working to define all the Republican candidates.

So I'll just go around and maybe ask all of you to comment, thinking not just about 2006 but going

forward, what is it that the Democratic Party apparatus has figured out? Statements from the press secretary, from the chairman, how did they work to help you? How did you coordinate with them? And what do you think the chances are that this disparity will exist in future races in this state?

**JEFF POLLOCK:** I think it's a great question, Mark. And I do give the folks at Glover, Gigi, Howard and Molly, great credit for working with the state party. But at the end of the day I also give a tremendous amount of credit to Blake Zeff, who is aggressive and clever and funny—all the things that you want in a spokesperson, in particular for a party. And he was just getting stuff out there all the time. And it wasn't just about New York City stuff, and it wasn't just about New York State. He was helpful on Mike Arcuri's race and on Kirsten Gillibrand's race.

And I think that also, there was this feeling of momentum. Now it helps that you felt like the party was going to win. The press knew that there was going to be an uptick, not necessarily a tsunami, but an uptick for the Democrats. So I think that helped us.

**MARK HALPERIN:** How is it coordinated though?

**JEFF POLLOCK:** There was certainly coordination with the state party after the primary. The state party would take on things and put out some of the harsher messages.

**MARK HALPERIN:** So just going forward do you think the asymmetry is going to continue? Do you think anything's built that is lasting?

**JEFF POLLOCK:** I don't know about that. I would wait and see what Governor Spitzer wants to do with the state party. But I think he believes that it can be a real apparatus for change and empowering Democrats across the state. So I think he will put energy into it.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Two men formerly known as the two Johns, how big was the disparity from your point of view, just in messaging from the two state parties?

**JOHN GALLAGHER:** I think that the state Democratic Party, for the first time in a long time, really had their act together. I think people were willing to help Andrew this time a lot because there was a sense that Spitzer was going to win. That there was going to be change in the party. That Democrats were sincere about unity.

I think Republicans have kind of lost their way. There was no strong leadership in the party. No one was standing up. There was some bitterness, I think, about the Weld/Faso thing. It got complicated and got blown way out of proportion early on when Jeanine was asked about endorsing Faso and she didn't say anything.

*I think in their hearts, their major miscalculation was that they thought they were going to be able to pull off something from behind closed doors at the convention.*

—Tony Suber

There was no message from the Republican Party in this state. And I think everybody as a candidate was flying solo on that front.

**JOHN HAGGERTY:** The only thing I would add from a press relations perspective was that the state party was very slow to react. If Andrew Cuomo puts a filing with the Board of Elections, they should have been going through it and responding. We really had to point stuff out and ask for a response, and sometimes that took 24 or 48 hours and the story was done. And we could have used more help if they had some rapid response.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Any of you want to comment on that?

**MARK BENOIT:** I'd like to jump in real quick. We fell, I think, in the coordination and the aggressiveness of the communications, the Schumer factor. You had an executive director, the communications director at the party, and principal at the Glover Park Group all being former Chuck Schumer communications directors. So you had a certain style that worked and they all knew each other's feel. So it was like a basketball team that had been playing for a while. That certainly helped with the coordination.

And it's interesting to know because there's a certain chromosomal thing with these guys—when you have a lot of them in the same place at the same time, I mean. I think it worked really well.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Any of the three reporters want to comment on the difference from past campaigns in terms of the disparity between the parties and being communications aides to the candidates?

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** Typically in the state these parties are thin to the point of nonexistent. It's a couple of people in a room. And it's just all about how much they want to work and how hungry they are. And I just

think in this cycle the fresh, hungry people were on the Democratic side.

## THE O'DONNELL FACTOR

**MARK HALPERIN:** Right. Okay let me go to the audience questions. And I'll ask you because we want to get in as many as we can to try to keep your responses as short as you can. And maybe start with Tony or Erick on this. Several people wanted to talk about Denise O'Donnell's withdrawal from the race and how that affected the dynamic of the primary. You guys want to address that?

**TONY SUBER:** Absolutely. Denise O'Donnell had a great profile. From the West, a woman, a prosecutor. On paper she was great. Her persona matured and developed over the course of the campaign. But I think in their hearts, their major miscalculation was that they thought they were going to be able to pull off something from behind closed doors at the convention.

The Cuomo folks were not going to leave things to chance. They did a very good job of locking up as much support and more than they needed. And I think that that was the O'Donnell campaign's miscalculation. They felt they were going to go into the convention, get a ride, and be present. And when they failed to do that, they didn't have a contingency plan. So clearly it opened up, at least gave us a little room, and it was very good for the Maloney campaign to have another Irish person out of the race.

**ERICK MULLEN:** Our polling showed that O'Donnell was never going to be a serious factor in the race at any time. Having said that, we thought that we would



*Erick Mullen, campaign manager for Sean Maloney for Attorney General, describes how O'Donnell's candidacy affected the Maloney campaign.*



get some of her support from the convention. In fact we had some lined up. We thought we had enough to get over 25 percent. And the Cuomo campaign did a magnificent job of persuading people to stay with Cuomo so there would be a groundswell. But we were actively pursuing and actually in my tote column I had several O'Donnell delegates listed for us, and that vanished on the day of the 30th.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Want to say anything?

**JEF POLLOCK:** We thought Denise was going to be a potentially powerful candidate but we doubted the money, actually. That was, we doubted that the money was going to come, and it didn't. And I think at the end of the day she would have needed money. But she was a very good candidate on paper. And so we were certainly concerned about her.

**MARK HALPERIN:** All right. Linda. Where's Linda who submitted a question about Mario Cuomo. Why don't you go ahead and ask it?

## PRESS STRATEGY

**FEMALE:** Since I'm new to New York, I've been sitting here and listening to the dialog about why the personal problems of Cuomo didn't come up. And it seemed like the press is saying to the candidates, "You didn't bring it up." But I would like to know what are the rules with the press in terms of bringing up issues that need to be brought up?

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** It's a really interesting question that I'm probably going to have to refrain in large part from answering. There are no hard and fast rules. The papers tend to have different strategies. The tabloids are very aggressive, particularly about personal issues. I think Jef touched on something when he said there was a sense with a lot of issues with Cuomo, and to some extent with Mark Green, that we had been there, done that. Especially with the 2001 issues with Mark Green, which were racially related and potentially very inflammatory. I didn't pursue these, and I think others didn't for the same reasons.

It's also true with the personal issues. So, I think the feeling was that if the candidates are going to make these things an issue themselves, then we will cover them. I think there was not a large push to do this ourselves. In fact, the only story that I saw related to the Cuomo divorce was by Kate Lucadamo, one of Ben's colleagues who covered the campaign. And she interviewed the other man in the Cuomo divorce who gave an endorsement to Andrew Cuomo.

**BEN SMITH:** That was actually a good story for Cuomo.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** Ironically, it was a good story for Cuomo.

**JEF POLLOCK:** He had no reason to dislike Cuomo.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** Right. And it made Andrew look like a victim and so I think it worked out well for Andrew. But I don't know that Andrew would have necessarily wanted that story out there either. And I doubt it was a good morning for him or at that campaign when it came out. So there's no rule. I think we were all trying to be, as weird as this will sound in a campaign that was all about a sex investigation on a boat and all sorts of other stuff, I think we were all trying to be as responsible as we could. And I think that's why you didn't actually see a lot of this stuff come up. It was definitely floating out there in the atmosphere.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** Well the critical fact was that the Kennedy family shut down. And I certainly tried to penetrate that side of the story.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** And that is true, too.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** And if the other side of a very difficult divorce, only one side of which was actually presented at the time of the divorce, if the other side is still determined to be silent, then there is very little that reporters can do.

**JEF POLLOCK:** Which is why I asked the question back to Maggie, which is—even though Maggie is asking the question about child support, for example, the notion that that would have somehow been effective—

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** The child support thing I would disagree with you on.

**JEF POLLOCK:** I know you would.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** No, no, no, no, no. But that's not what you were going to say that I'm saying. The child support thing I don't think is as been there, done that, as the other elements of the Cuomo divorce. It was covered in one paper.

*... there was a sense with a lot of issues with Cuomo, and to some extent with Mark Green, that we had been there, done that.*

—Maggie Haberman

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*But at the end of the day, is my time better spent talking to a reporter from the Brooklyn Ledger or is it better spent talking to Wayne or Ben or Maggie, where more people will see the message?*

—Tony Suber

**JEF POLLOCK:** No, no. I understand. I'm talking about what Wayne said, that the other side was going to come out at some point—the two sides of the story. And the question is, at the end of the day would that have been a net benefit for any of the campaigns. And I have no idea, but I hypothesize that it actually would have been a loser.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** Well, not really, it depends on what the facts are.

**FEMALE:** It depends on the facts.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN:** Yeah, exactly. And how they're presented.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** One thing about your question about the Democratic Party was their utter failure to do anything on the Senate side. I think this should be computed in. Were they supportive of very strong candidates who had 20 to 50 point leads? Yeah.

**JEF POLLOCK:** I don't agree with that Wayne.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** But what did they do in the critical race in which parties should be effective?

**JEF POLLOCK:** In the state senate races?

**WAYNE BARRETT:** Yeah.

**JOHN GALLAGHER:** I think they spent more energy on the congressional races, which worked less.

**JEF POLLOCK:** The state party wasn't effective?

**JOHN GALLAGHER:** They spent most of their energy in the last days on the congressional races, which were really close.

**JOHN HAGGERTY:** I wouldn't even say last days, I mean through the summer.

**JEF POLLOCK:** I would agree with that, because those state senate races were not winnable. Efforts were put into state senate races. We're all professionals, we know the races that are winnable and that some are not. And some of those state senate races that you all are talking about were unwinnable.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** Well, one of the roles of the party is to find candidates. What if some of those races were not winnable because real Democrats who could have run in them and won chose not to?

**JEF POLLOCK:** I don't agree with that, Wayne. We're not here to talk about the state senate, but look at Brooke Ellison on Long Island, who is a fabulous candidate for all sorts of reasons. But incumbency is still an important thing, and it's even more important in a truly down ballot. An incumbent congressman from upstate got beat this time. That doesn't happen.

## ENGAGING ETHNIC AND SPECIALTY MEDIA

**MARK HALPERIN:** All right, just let me stop you because we're going to get tied. We can't do every race. Nationally the issue of specialty media and ethnic media is a big issue. It's obviously a big issue in the city and to some extent in the state. So let me go around and ask everybody from the campaigns to say something you learned that worked or that didn't work, or that you hoped would work in terms of dealing with ethnic or specialty media in this race?

**ERICK MULLEN:** I'm happy to start. Our placement, a distant third, led to difficulties getting the Irish media engaged. The LGBT media, however, did engage and I think we developed a good rapport with them. But getting the community papers and ethnic papers engaged from our angle was a very difficult task and we tried, but with little success.

**TONY SUBER:** It was difficult because of time and resources. You need to go with the biggest bang for the buck. And we did engage certainly with the LGBT press, the Jewish press. But at the end of the day, is my time better spent talking to a reporter from the *Brooklyn Ledger* or is it better spent talking to Wayne or Ben or Maggie, where more people will see the message? So that was just it. In terms of priorities, mainstream media had to be first.

**JOHN HAGGERTY:** We probably did more to reach out to ethnic press than most Republicans usually do. But again, it is a resource issue and we had 12 people working on the entire campaign.

## USING GUBERNATORIAL CLOUT

**MARK HALPERIN:** You guys talked a little bit about Governor Pataki but there's another question here and I want to bring you back to it—did the candidate ask him for more than he gave? I mean you said there wasn't much he could do because he wasn't all that popular, but he certainly could have spent more of his time trying to help her raise money, for instance.

**JOHN HAGGERTY:** Showed up in person.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Yeah, could he have showed up in person in places he was still popular? He could have gone to the national party. Did they have communication or not?

**JOHN HAGGERTY:** We had communication and I think we made a decision not to use the governor because, again, we were running much more of a candidate-driven campaign about the individual as opposed to about the party. I think just about every Republican put distance between themselves and the President. I think the governor's numbers weren't necessarily going to be helpful. When we asked the governor, he always did what he was asked, but we didn't ask for a whole lot.

**MARK HALPERIN:** You didn't want him to raise more money for you than he did?

**JOHN HAGGERTY:** Well, I think for the governor it's a question of if he's raising money for Pirro, he's also got to raise money for Faso, and I think he did an equal amount for each candidate.



**MARK HALPERIN:** Did he seem really focused on making sure a lot of Republicans got elected?

**JOHN HAGGERTY:** I think he was as focused as he could be. Given the circumstances, I think he understood better than anyone how bad—and in fact I think the governor thought it was going to be an even worse year in New York.

**JEF POLLOCK:** Republican denial is what you're talking about, right?

**MARK HALPERIN:** Say that again?

**JEF POLLOCK:** Republicans in Iowa and New Hampshire, you're talking about?

## PIRRO AND THE CHEWING GUM INCIDENT

**MARK HALPERIN:** John Gallagher, here's a good question. What was with Jeanine and the chewing gum?

**JOHN GALLAGHER:** Well, on September 27 we were in the car writing a statement, practicing a statement and we knew there were going to be 50 reporters in the room, which there were. It was more like, "What color suit are you wearing?" and it was not, "Give me the chewing gum out of your mouth," which, because the *Daily News* spent so much time on it, I probably should have caught, but I didn't.

And obviously Jeanine likes to chew gum. I should have caught it and I didn't, but it was just—there was a whirlwind going on at that point. It was getting the candidate to midtown in under two hours to give a speech that was either going to keep us in the race or sink us. And the chewing gum was not really on my mind.

## GREEN, MALONEY, PIRRO: THE POLITICAL FUTURE

**MARK HALPERIN:** All right. One last question, again, culled from the audience questions, for the five of you. What would you say, either based on discussions or on your own intuitive sense, is the political future of your losing candidates?

**TONY SUBER:** I think Sean has a great upside. Every person that we've spoken to talks about him as being the future of the Democratic Party. He's bright. He's articulate. He understands the issues and he has a passion to do this work. So I think the sky's the limit as

*Tony Suber, general consultant for Sean Maloney for Attorney General, discusses his candidate's political future.*

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long as he does not get frustrated, like some other good candidates, and leave the playing field, which I don't think is going to happen.

**ERICK MULLEN:** I think what helped Sean the most outside of what we all like about him is that at convention time he did not enter into this whiner's campaign about getting waivers and getting in and getting to speak like some of the other candidates. This sort of constant carping about how the rules weren't mah-mah-mah. Sean sort of shooed that and I think that was interesting, because he'd been the anti-establishment guy for a while. And so in one fell swoop he brought in a whole bunch of these chairmen guys who said, "You know what? That guy's all right."

**JEF POLLOCK:** That's true.

**ERICK MULLEN:** And I think that's going to help him.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Mark, will perennial candidate Mark Green be a perennial candidate?

**MARK BENOIT:** I think that Governor Green—Mark Green ... no, I think given his long history of community involvement and his involvement with consumer advocacy, he needs to stay in the game. Not necessarily as a candidate, that's his personal choice. But I think he brings a lot to the table. And I think people should not dismiss him. He's got energy and commitment. If you work with him, he is a bit of a micromanager. But that's a good thing because it shows his dedication. He strives for excellence and I think he should remain engaged.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Guys, has she been there done that, or will she run again?

**JOHN HAGGERTY:** I think the best way to put it is she can live to fight another day. I think in the end she got back to where she started. She learned a lot. I don't think she's ruled out or ruled in doing anything, particularly. But I think she wants to remain politically involved. Whether she'll run again is a different story.

But I think she can live to fight another day and I think she learned a lot of lessons about real serious political campaigns from this race. The stop and start of the Senate race, how key it is to structure your campaign for the office you're running for, with the right kind of experienced people.

I think she saw the difference when John and I came on in terms of having people who have a lot of campaign experience versus other smart people who really didn't have a lot of campaign experience. And I think she learned a lot from it, so I think she can live to fight another day if she chooses to do so.

**MARK HALPERIN:** John Gallagher, did you get my "been there, done that" reference? Okay. Do you think she'll be more likely to run for a federal office or a state office if she runs again?

**JOHN GALLAGHER:** You know I haven't even talked to her about that and I'm not going to speculate, obviously. Yesterday's *Times* did a little speculation. People were talking about it. But I still think back to September 27 and the TV appearances that followed that. And even prior to that you never felt worried. I was never uncomfortable putting her on TV because even when the questions were tough, she could handle them. She's really got a TV persona.

And I think that's one of the reasons, no matter what the polling situation was or the money situation was, she would always have earned media, because we would have put her anywhere. And obviously, the Cuomo people didn't put him anywhere. He doesn't have the same persona on television. And I think that makes Jeanine a viable candidate or a viable personality in New York State in the future, regardless.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Thank you, everybody—the panelists in particular, for being so forthcoming about their candidates.



# ROUNDTABLE II: THE RACE FOR GOVERNOR

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## WHO'S WHO

### *Moderator*

Mark Halperin, ABC News

### *Campaign Representatives*

#### **Faso for Governor**

Dean D'Amore, Campaign Manager

Susan Del Percio, Communications Director and  
Campaign Spokesperson

#### **Friends of Tom Suozzi**

Paul Rivera, Senior Advisor and Campaign Manager

Harry Siegel, Policy Director

#### **Spitzer-Paterson 2006**

Christine Anderson, Communications Director

Jon Silvan, Campaign Research, Direct Mail, and  
Media Buying

Ryan Toohey, Campaign Manager

#### **Weld for New York**

Walter Breakell, Campaign Manager

### *Journalists*

Albany Times-Union

Elizabeth Benjamin

NY1 News

Dominic Carter

New York Times

Patrick Healy

**FRED HOCHBERG:** My name is Fred Hochberg and we're going to continue with part two on the governor's race. I want to thank you all for joining us. Thanks to those of you who were here for the first half. With that I'm going to turn this back over to Mark Halperin.

**MARK HALPERIN:** All right. Thank you. We're talking about the governor's race in New York, and the format will be the same as it was this morning, largely driven by my colleagues' questions and then some audience questions. The audience is free to submit questions on the cards at any time. Sign your name to them and write legibly, and we'll have time at the end for them. You're welcome to submit them throughout this session.

We'll be dealing with this in three segments: the Democratic primary, the Republican primary, which is where we're going to start, and then the general election. And I want to start by asking the same question that we asked in the beginning of this morning's session. And let me start with you two, representing the Faso campaign—could the outcome of your primary have been different? Is it possible that Governor Weld could have won given the circumstances?

## THE REPUBLICAN PRIMARY: COULD THE RESULT HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT?

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** Actually yes, I think he could have won. It's possible that the Weld campaign relied too much on a non-existent party operation. I think it could have been different. Or it could at least have not ended at the convention but gone through a full primary.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Dean, do you agree with that?

**DEAN D'AMORE:** I agree. He could have won, and maybe he should have won, and if he did win he probably could have waged a much different kind of campaign. The party could have been more coalesced and raised more resources.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Walt?

**WALTER BREAKELL:** Yeah, we could have won. But we didn't, obviously. I think we realized way too late that there was no more party left in New York. John, who had been through several convention fights and had gotten screwed several times, realized that it really comes down to having lunch with every delegate. So he did lunch, breakfast and dinner with every delegate at least twice throughout the state. And that was

*Mark Halperin, ABC News political director, begins the second half of the day's proceedings.*



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*I think we realized way too late  
that there was no more party left in  
New York.*

—Walter Breakell

something that Bill was not set up to do. He ran as an incumbent governor in many ways, which was not going to get him the nomination.

Now if it went past the convention and to a primary fight, then we would have won. But we would have been broke and gotten beaten horribly by Spitzer. At the end of the day, Bill looked around and said, “Yes, we have more money. We raised more money and we’ll win this primary. But I didn’t run to be the Republican nominee for governor, I ran to be governor.”

**MARK HALPERIN:** I’m going to turn this over to Liz Benjamin in just a second, but I want to remind the campaign folks that one of the most valuable ways to bring out the kind of information that people are looking for is to ask your colleagues in the other camps what they were thinking at a given time. Did you consider doing X? Or, you could offer up things that you were considering at a given time but did not do. And with that, Ms. Benjamin, the floor is yours.

## THE FUTURE OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY IN NEW YORK STATE

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** Are we focused on the Republican primary?

**MARK HALPERIN:** Just the Republican primary.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** At some point, and this is for the Faso folks, at some point during the convention it

became very clear that there was no party operation, that Minarik didn’t really have control. There’s a lot of talk about getting rid of him and you guys had a really sterling opportunity to do it then. And there was talk about maybe Ed Cox and maybe Randy Daniels and maybe Bob Smith. Why didn’t you do it? Did you think it wouldn’t benefit you? And also why aren’t you doing it now? Because John is the guy that everybody’s looking to for leadership since he was the gubernatorial nominee.

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** I’m going to answer the second question first. Tomorrow they are, in fact, electing a new state chairman. So I think that takes care of that question. And it looks like it will be Joe Mondello from Nassau County.

As far as trying to remove Steve Minarik, it wasn’t something we were looking at. I mean we were really just trying to hold onto our delegates. We were fighting for every single one we had, and at the point when we got closer it became about securing the nomination, not getting the 25 percent. That dialog changed just a tad about two weeks out. And that’s what we were really focused on. We wanted to win the convention. You can’t run for governor and build a party at the same time. So that responsibility was not something that we wanted to take on.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** But did you ever really believe that Minarik was behind you? The party apparatus that he controlled worked for Weld, despite the fact that there was a primary going on, ostensibly if not officially. Did you believe that he was actually supporting you? And also, if he had not been there and someone else was there, could it have been better for you?

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** I don’t think it would have changed the fact after the convention. I think Walt saw it from the pre-convention point-of-view, and we saw it afterwards. There wasn’t a party apparatus to be had. You have to rebuild one—it can’t just be developed

## CAMPAIGN TIMELINES: GOVERNOR

HOW THE RACES WERE PORTRAYED IN THE NEW YORK PRESS

### December 7, 2004

Democratic New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer announces his candidacy for governor in an unusually early move. It is rumored that this announcement was timed to coincide with Senator Charles Schumer’s public statement that he would not seek the nomination.

### January 22, 2005

Spitzer gains the endorsement of the Working Families Party.

### July 27, 2005

Three-term Governor George Pataki announces he will not seek re-election.

### August 19, 2005

Former Massachusetts Governor William Weld officially announces his candidacy for Governor of New York.

overnight. So I don't think it was a matter of whether he was 100 percent behind us. I think he was. He was behind all the statewide candidates. But what he was able to offer was very little. So as was mentioned in the previous panel, each campaign really ran on its own.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** Just to follow up on the Mondello thing, yes it's true that they're going to be voting in Joe Mondello tomorrow, unless some lightning strikes. But you've certainly heard that there's a division that became very clear between Weld and Faso with a grassroots versus a top-down approach. So why wouldn't John speak out about that?

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** The division wasn't among the grassroots people. Those were delegates that we really went after one by one, like Walt said, sometimes three, four, five times, if not more. So it really was a little bit of a referendum on Pataki. I think people were tired of being told what to do for 12 years and this was an opportunity not to do what the party bosses dictated. And they had their own voice and they knew John. It wasn't about the personalities, I believe, of either candidate. It was about the fact that they didn't want to be told what to do again.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** So does the party have a future considering how divided it is right now?

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** I don't think the party's necessarily divided; I think the party's just completely disorganized, which is different. If it were divided there would be a struggle for control. Right now it's for control of what, to be perfectly frank.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** Well then, what kind of future can you have with no operation?

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** You have to build one. It's clear, and again it doesn't come from a division within the party, but you have to build one.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Mr. Carter? Just on the Republican primary. Pick up wherever you wish.

**DOMINIC CARTER:** I thought Dean—he wanted to say something.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Oh, I'm sorry.

**DEAN D'AMORE:** I think the party has a strong future. I don't think it was for John to do it all. He had to work very hard to put a program together for a campaign for governor, from the primary going forward to the general election. And it's not that I think it was a big mistake to sit around and think that the party apparatus is going to do something for you. Clearly, the party was a product of Pataki, and it ran before because there was a governor and 12 years of that system. And it didn't know how to act or get behind a new candidate for governor.

So basically we weren't going to waste a lot of time trying to build the party because there was nothing that we could do there. We needed to really focus on getting our own act together. I think that the party has a strong future. It's got a reason to be and it has got a lot of work to do. And there are a lot of problems in New York and there are a lot of good solutions on our side that we need to develop and bring forth.

**WALTER BREAKELL:** Can I just jump in for a second really quick on the party? I hate to be the skunk in the garden party but we—I think Republicans have lost the right to control their own destiny. External events

*I don't think the party's necessarily divided; I think the party's just completely disorganized, which is different. If it were divided there would be a struggle for control. Right now it's for control of what, to be perfectly frank.*

—Susan Del Percio

#### September 30, 2005

In a Marist Poll, Eliot Spitzer leads Republican candidate John Faso 64 percent to 20 percent.

#### January 24, 2006

Spitzer announces state Senator David Paterson of Harlem as his choice for lieutenant governor. The move throws off a number of prominent Democrats, including former New York City Mayor David Dinkins and U.S. Representative Charles Rangel, who had previously committed their support to candidate Leecia Eve.

#### January 30, 2006

Democrat Leecia Eve withdraws her name from the race for lieutenant governor.

#### February 14, 2006

Former New York State Assembly Member John Faso launches a statewide ad campaign announcing his intent to run for governor.

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*I think Republicans have lost the right to control their own destiny ... we're a party that represents roughly 25 percent of the voters ... until you are able to communicate to a broader electorate ... it comes down to money. And there's no way to raise the money in the foreseeable future.*

—Walter Breakell

will make the party organize itself, move forward, and get well-funded candidates. But the only person left is Jeanine and I don't think she can raise the money for another statewide race in the next two cycles. There's just nothing to raise money with. And until that happens, we're a party that represents roughly 25 percent of the voters. You can't leverage that into anything by better organization, better grassroots, better anything. You still lose by 70/30.

And until you are able to communicate to a broader electorate, whether it's independents or ticket-splitting voters, it comes down to money. And there's no way to raise the money in the foreseeable future. That's going to be the biggest problem for Republicans unless, of course, Governor-elect Spitzer completely steps on himself and gives us an opportunity to raise money and go after him. But I think focusing on the party apparatus is wrong. Focusing on individuals and personalities going forward is the right way to look at the state. That's my ten cents.

*Walter Breakell, campaign manager for Weld for Governor, talks about the future of the Republican Party in New York State.*

## WELD'S CAMPAIGN: RUNNING AS INCUMBENT

MARK HALPERIN: Mr. Carter.

DOMINIC CARTER: Thank you. I find it amazing, Walter, that you said Mr. Weld ran the campaign as an incumbent. And that goes basically to where my question is. It seems like there was a great disconnect in the primary between Mr. Weld and voters in the state. His personality may have worked in Massachusetts, but it didn't seem to really connect here in New York. So here's the question. Why didn't you guys borrow a page from, for example, Hillary Clinton and do a listening tour across the state to introduce him to voters?

WALTER BREAKELL: Well, because they are different races. Hillary's race is about Hillary. So she was able to define the entire coverage. Our race was about Elliot Spitzer from way before Bill Weld decided to run. And so our strategy early on was a little different—it



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### February 25, 2006

Nassau County Executive Thomas Suozzi announces his intent to run for the Democratic nomination.

### March 5, 2006

A straw poll conducted by the Democratic Rural Conference of New York State shows Spitzer with an overwhelming lead over Suozzi among rural voters.

### May 17, 2006

In a Quinnipiac University Poll, Spitzer leads Suozzi, 73 percent to 13 percent.

### May 22, 2006

Faso picks C. Scott Vanderhoef, a moderate Rockland County executive, as his running mate.



was to raise the money and then go tell the story. Our polling showed that if we made it a choice between an accomplished record of creating jobs, cutting taxes, all the talking points that every campaign puts out ad nauseum, there was a fighting chance. And we totally disregarded the Faso camp.

**DOMINIC CARTER:** You really did? I mean you didn't consider the fact that Faso might out-hustle you and out-work you?

**WALTER BREAKELL:** No. I mean, listen, John Faso, with all due respect to Faso, isn't the most respectable guy in the Republican Party. He is now, but at the time it was like, well he runs for everything. He's always around. Don't worry about it. We've got the state chairman, the implicit backing of the governor, that's locked down. And by the time we realized that that meant nothing, it actually was a detriment not a help. We couldn't put Humpty Dumpty back together again.

**FEMALE:** Did he want to be governor? He barely—it seemed he had no fire in the belly.

**WALTER BREAKELL:** I think he really wanted to be governor, but I think he misread how different New York is from almost any other state. I mean California, New York, Florida, and Texas are in a class of their own in terms of how you campaign. In Massachusetts \$1,000,000 buys you 1,000 gross rating points for a week. In New York that buys you 500 points in New York City for a week.

He thought, "I can just be Bill Weld, just this outsized personality. I can leverage this and people will know me." At tops 18 percent of the people knew Bill Weld by the time he got out. And of those, it was split whether they liked or hated him. And that's where we were focused on raising the financial resources to introduce him through TV to the voters, not through a grassroots organization or anything like that. We had stipulated that we were going to have that, and it was our failed assumption.

**DOMINIC CARTER:** This is my last follow-up. So even though Mr. Faso, four years ago gave Alan Hevesi a serious run for his money, you guys took Faso

*I think he really wanted to be governor, but I think he misread how different New York is from almost any other state.*

—Walter Breakell

for granted and there was no one telling Bill Weld, "Governor, we have to get out there." We would say, "How come we can't get Weld on. Why is it so difficult?" I guess that's why I find it amazing that you say you ran a campaign as an incumbent because that's exactly what an incumbent would do.

**WALTER BREAKELL:** Right. I decided to join the campaign on December 18. On Saturday morning I called Bill and said, "Okay I'll do it." That afternoon Pat's article on Decker College came out, which put us immediately on the defensive with the press. Normally, Bill would go on New York 1 seven times a week if he could. But all you would ask about was Decker College. And that's something that as a campaign we didn't want to have and that really cut to Bill's person. He's a very ethical, straight, upfront person, and he thought it was ridiculous that he had to be asked these questions. And it came through when you asked, I mean anybody who—

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** And we totally jumped on that.

**WALTER BREAKELL:** Oh, of course.

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** And because Weld was so quiet during the fall, really into February and March, we put John on all the time. We had him speak directly. We never used me as a spokesperson for the campaign. Reporters called John and he took the calls himself. So we really tried to use that as a way of showing a difference between the two candidates. John is going to be one of you guys. He's going to be one of the people who is going to talk directly to you and not necessarily go through a spokesperson on everything.

#### June 1, 2006

The Republican State Convention votes 61 percent to 39 percent to endorse Faso over former Massachusetts Governor William Weld.

#### June 5, 2006

Stephen Minarik, the chairman of the state Republican Party and formerly Weld's most prominent backer, calls on Weld to withdraw from the race in the name of party unity.

#### June 6, 2006

Weld announces his withdrawal from the race, and his support of Faso.

#### August 25, 2006

Spitzer is endorsed by the League of Conservation Voters.

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*Patrick Healy from the New York Times asks questions about the Weld campaign.*

**PATRICK HEALY:** Walt, tell us what the discussions were like between you and Bill Weld and Russ [Schriefer] and Stuart Stevens and the brain trust early on about Decker. I mean there was some talk in the camp that this would probably be insurmountable, that it would just hang over him even if no actual legal action was taken against him. It would just be something that would loom and he would never be able to come out of it. Tell us what those discussions were like.

**WALTER BREAKELL:** I mean obviously just the storyline of Decker is horrible, shaking down poor kids, defrauding the government, and pocketing the cash.

**PATRICK HEALY:** And making a lot of money at it.

**WALTER BREAKELL:** And making a lot of money, \$100,000,000 or \$200,000,000. I mean, the 30-second ad writes itself. And we knew that automatically cut his potential votes by 20 percent, 25 percent. I think we mishandled that early on in that Bill was really offended. I honestly believe he didn't know what the Woodcox brothers, who were really the driving force when he went in and invested this, were doing to the full extent. They used his reputation to their advantage. He kind of sussed that out too late. And no one had the adult conversation with him until about February when we finally set out our own little unit within the campaign. We had separate lawyers go in and do their own analysis, and we had a full grasp of the facts because Bill wouldn't talk to anybody about it.

So we were basing all of our assumptions off of Bill saying it's going to be fine, and what we read on the blogs. I mean the Kentucky blogs were all over about it, and some of those union guys came up to New York and were on Ben's blog every day. And we really—I mean we fumbled that, although I don't know if we could ever have counteracted that.

**PATRICK HEALY:** But was Bill's approach to take sort of a muscular proactive, "Let's take care of this," or was



he sort of like, "There's nothing here, and I'm offended to be asked"?

**WALTER BREAKELL:** It's the latter.

**PATRICK HEALY:** Yeah.

**WALTER BREAKELL:** And this was one of the few splits within the camp. We didn't speak with one voice in that myself, Stuart and Russ wanted to just go out and clearcut everything. Let's go and take care of this. Let's do a full-page out of Jeanine's book, which is stand up there, be offended that this is even an issue and march forward. But we didn't have the confidence that we had all the facts. And we thought maybe we were leading with our chin on that until we were able to get it out of Bill.

I don't know if anybody actually remembers the op-ed that he wrote, which was like a legal brief. It took me seven readings to actually get all the information out of

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**August 27, 2006**

*The New York Times* endorses Spitzer.

**September 3, 2006**

*Newsday* reports that Spitzer has \$12.2 million in campaign funds on hand, compared with Suozzi's remaining total of \$1 million.

**September 8, 2006**

*The New York Post* endorses Spitzer in the Democratic primary.

**September 11, 2006**

Zogby Poll: Spitzer 61 percent, Faso 26 percent.

it. He went home, he wrote it, he wouldn't let anybody edit it and he put it out there. And then, in a moment of candor in June right after he got out, he was like, "That was a really bad idea." And we were like, "Yeah."

**PATRICK HEALY:** But if you could turn the page back and start at the beginning of the campaign, knowing the very bad facts as you agreed, what could you have done differently? It sounds like the only thing to do would have been to confront the candidate to get more facts and get him to go with a different strategy.

**WALTER BREAKELL:** Right. We would have been a little bit more—I mean I had only known Bill since October so I wasn't comfortable enough to go in and say, "Are you going to jail?"

**PATRICK HEALY:** But the consultants had.

**WALTER BREAKELL:** Russ and Stuart had known him for over a decade and a half. But they really respected Bill and idolized him in a lot of ways. And no one had that conversation with him. In retrospect, we would have had that conversation. And also we would have just scapegoated the Woodcox brothers. We would have blamed it all on them, cut bait, and run away and made them the story, not Bill. But again, it was all about commanding the facts early on, and we didn't have enough command of the facts then.

**PATRICK HEALY:** Just one thing related to that. I heard, and I'm sure Liz and Dominic heard as well, that a growing number of county chairs and delegates were saying, "Look, we don't know Bill Weld to begin with and then we're hearing these things out there about him. But we're hearing nothing from his camp." They know you Walt, as Walt in the state, but they don't know who he is.

And I guess it just goes again to what Liz was saying about how much he actually wanted to be governor. So many of these delegates saw him as this condescending figure who thought, "Well I'm a governor, I deserve this. And I'm not even willing to get on the phone or do the listening tour or some version of it."

**WALTER BREAKELL:** Right.

**PATRICK HEALY:** Did you ever tell him, as the New York guy, "You've got to be running this in a different way?"

**WALTER BREAKELL:** Yeah. I mean, well, first of all, I'll admit I'm not strong in the grassroots. Everybody has their niche and I'm not a county dinner guy. But I think we're missing a point here, which is this is really about Elliot Spitzer. And that there was no penalty for—I mean, Decker prevented us from locking it up early and gave Faso the ability to run free on most of the delegates. It gave everybody the reason to say, "Well he could go to jail." And that was the biggest short-term problem of Decker. Most of the donors hadn't heard of it. They didn't really care. His Massachusetts donor base was strong. They knew him. They loved him. So we could still raise the money. We could still do that.

We knew there was going to be a nasty ad, but what happened is that Bill didn't like going to these dinners. He was the last to get there and the first to leave. But John would go there the night before, stay the entire time and then call everybody individually afterwards. And that was an important factor, but it wouldn't have mattered if they thought the race was winnable from the Republican side and if there was no placeholder for them to buy time to wait until the convention.

**PATRICK HEALY:** Just to follow up with Susan and Dean, it was so interesting coming out of the convention—Weld came out damaged but he still had support. I'm just curious, in a contested primary after you've had a contested convention, how did it come about in the talks between your camp and the Weld camp that Bill Weld stepped aside?

*Decker prevented us from locking it up early and gave Faso the ability to run free on most of the delegates.*

—Walter Breakell

#### September 12, 2006

Spitzer is nominated over rival Thomas Suozzi in the Democratic primary with 81 percent of the vote.

Faso receives the Republican nomination.

#### September 25, 2006

*The New York Sun* endorses Faso.

#### September 29, 2006

A *New York Times*/CBS News poll shows that Spitzer leads not only in traditionally Democratic areas, but in heavily Republican suburbs and upstate. It also shows him leading on traditionally Republican issues such as improving the economy, holding taxes steady or lowering them, and on terrorism preparedness.

#### October 2, 2006

*The Buffalo News* reports that campaign contributions for Spitzer have come from 45 different states and that \$24.5 million of his \$39 million raised comes from the New York City metro area (including NJ and CT) alone. By contrast, Upstate New York only gave him 18 cents of every dollar, which raised questions about Spitzer's commitment to that economically challenged region.

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And maybe, Walt, if there were no direct negotiations you could speak to this, too. How is it that Bill Weld, who thinks of himself as sort of a peer, sees the writing on the wall? Do you guys have any leverage to move him out of the race?

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** Let me just go back to a point that Walt brought up because it plays into this. While Governor Weld was not going out there to all the county dinners, we were—but we also weren't raising money. And that was a big issue for us. And Walt raises a good point. They were running against Elliot Spitzer and ignoring us and raising their money and doing what they had to do. We were running against Bill Weld trying to take away those votes.

And I think it's also important to realize that Governor Weld and John Faso got along. They knew each other. Bill helped him in his comptroller's race so there was a healthy respect there. This was done through intermediaries. I don't know what happened on Weld's side obviously, but there were really only a few conversations before it really fell into place. Governor Weld was so gracious and he just moved on and he went full on with support for John. So what could have come off as an icky situation, for lack of a better word, was really a very simple and graceful departure for Weld.

**PATRICK HEALY:** And Walt, was there a "come to Jesus" moment for Weld?

**WALTER BREAKELL:** Yeah. We spent two days discussing it. And it was ten to one, the one being Bill Weld, to get out of the race. Everybody else was like, you know, their adrenaline was pumping. Let's just go wipe the floor with this guy. Finally we get to take the gloves off, which I prefer. Bill Weld's much more of a gentleman than the rest of his campaign staff.

But Bill, again, this goes back to the question of whether he ran to be the Republican nominee or to be governor. And after he was beaten in the convention and there was absolutely no shot of getting the Independents' party line, he couldn't win.

And the money—we had to halve our fundraising projections because there was about \$2,000,000 or \$2,500,000 of Republican money that would only go to Weld and be picked up immediately after the convention because he had a better shot at winning than Faso. And then we would get about \$10,000,000 by the fall. At our primary we would raise \$5,000,000 total and be broke afterwards. Because of our ideological bent within the Republican Party in New York we'd have to outspend John two to three to one to beat him.

Then, the Spitzer campaign is very smart and they would have just pummeled us even before the primary and made sure that we wouldn't get over the 30 percent kind of base point.

**FEMALE:** Even on the conservative line.

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** Right.

**PATRICK HEALY:** Let me go back. You said you had a candidate who didn't want to deal with the big problem in terms of Decker. It must have become clear at some point that your candidate was not making as many phone calls and wasn't working as hard. Did you ever go to him and say, "We're falling behind in contacting delegates; you've got to work harder." And did he ever respond to that?

**WALTER BREAKELL:** Yeah. I mean, about three weeks out, everybody—you know it's a very transparent marketplace in terms of delegates, everybody knew the counts, regardless of what we told the press. We all knew exactly where every delegate was and what party chairman controlled what, and didn't control what. And we went and said, "Bill you've got to make these 27 phone calls today." And he'd do them. But it would be one call to Faso's five, plus a meal. And it was too late. On the grassroots level if you're too late it's very apparent. And everybody resents that. And we weren't able to—

**PATRICK HEALY:** But even at the staff level it was only three weeks out before anybody had an inkling of that, and raised it to you or anybody else?

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#### October 5, 2006

*The New York Daily News* reports that a whopping 73 percent of voters don't know enough about Faso to form an opinion about him, according to a Quinnipiac University poll.

#### October 7, 2006

*The Buffalo News* reports that Faso has \$972,000 in his campaign account, compared with \$8.6 million in Spitzer's. In all, Spitzer raised \$39 million, compared with \$3.4 million raised for Faso.

#### October 12, 2006

Faso and Spitzer engage in their final debate. Fighting a 50-point deficit in the polls, Faso assails Spitzer as self-aggrandizing and politically timid, while Spitzer denounces Faso's "angry, extreme rhetoric."

#### November 5, 2006

A *Newsday*/NY1 poll indicates Spitzer is poised for a potentially historic landslide, with a 72 percent to 22 percent lead over Faso.



**WALTER BREAKELL:** Yeah. I really think that about a month or three weeks out is really when—I mean you guys probably had no inkling that you were going to lick your plate to win it, until probably the week out.

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** A little before that. But I think we had some numbers down firm that you guys just didn't realize that we had.

**WALTER BREAKELL:** Right.

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** Which put us around 38 at that time.

**WALTER BREAKELL:** Right. I think I had about two days before the convention. I think both of us had about 40 and it was going to break one way or the other. You guys were clearly on the ballot. We knew that going in. But it would have taken an act of God to get you guys below your 25 by the time the convention rolled around.

**PATRICK HEALY:** Was one factor, Walt, that Bill was told by Pataki, "Don't worry about the convention, I'll help you there"?

**WALTER BREAKELL:** I don't know what both governors said to each other about not worrying about the convention, but one of the assumptions was that we'd have the Pataki muscle and the state party apparatus behind it, and there was no muscle and there was no apparatus.

**FEMALE:** And Giuliani, you should talk about it.

**WALTER BREAKELL:** Well I mean that's—

**PATRICK HEALY:** Let it go Walt. Let it break.

**WALTER BREAKELL:** We're on the record, right?

**PATRICK HEALY:** Yes, we are.

**WALTER BREAKELL:** Yeah. All right, between us kids. I mean Bill announced from the Giuliani Partners basically in August of '05. Then Rudy and he didn't talk after that. That's pretty much the story.

*We were waiting for the day when Pataki was going to get involved. And we waited every week. We were like, "Okay is this going to be the day?" And that's what we were really preparing for. And by the time it happened at the convention—well, it didn't ever really happen.*

—Susan Del Percio

**PATRICK HEALY:** Because?

**WALTER BREAKELL:** I don't know.

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** Well, can I—Rudy typically doesn't jump and get involved in primaries, as a general rule. You're not going to see him, especially nowadays, getting involved in a Republican primary. And we pretty much knew that he wasn't going to come out and wrap his arms around Bill Weld, just because he doesn't get involved in primaries. We were waiting for the day when Pataki was going to get involved. And we waited every week. We were like, "Okay is this going to be the day?" And that's what we were really preparing for. And by the time it happened at the convention—well, it didn't ever really happen.

**WATER BREAKELL:** Right. It was implied that it was going to happen but it never happened. I think there's two things. One is that the Decker story hurt the Rudy issue too because it was the chairman of Leeds Weld's investment fund who invested in Decker. Well, actually he didn't invest in Decker, it was another fund, but it was close enough for an ad. We all know that.

And then, with the governor's actions, he should either have not got involved or gotten involved—to be half in, half out really hurt us. It became a press drag real quickly because everybody was writing, "When is it happening? It's happening. It's not happening. Why isn't it happening? Why hasn't it happened yet?" And then the governor did a very good job of hijacking the race a week before the convention and made it about him and the problems with Weld. Every bad thing came out and then the Faso campaign very effectively mailed to everybody, or faxed it or emailed it, or put it under the doors. And we were just treading water and swallowing more than we were treading.

## November 7, 2006

Spitzer scores a record percentage win against Faso, beating him 70 percent to 29 percent. This tops the previous record-holder Mario Cuomo's 1986 win of 64.6 percent.

*Dean D'Amore campaign manager for Faso for Governor, talks about rebuilding the Republican Party in New York State, while Susan Del Percio, communications director for Faso for Governor, looks on.*

**MARK HALPERIN:** Let me just close with the two campaigns for the primary. Again, when you talk about Governor Pataki, you talk about the state party apparatus being nonexistent. What lessons would you draw from the primary about the state of the Republican Party in this state and what could be done differently in the future to make the party stronger?

**DEAN D'AMORE:** That basically the grassroots cares about and is looking realistically at what's really wrong in the state and needs to be changed. They were trying to find a voice and trying to find a vehicle to express that, and they were very much going to be a part of the rebuilding of this party—and they need to be considered.

**MARK HALPERIN:** What are the issues that would help rebuild the party? Besides taxes.

**DEAN D'AMORE:** Jobs, investment, keeping our young people, improving transportation, access to capital, tourism, education, especially really leveraging our great university system. Those are probably to me the main issues. And reforming the health-care system, Medicaid, and all that stuff.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Walt, also speak to the potential electoral future for your candidate in New York or whatever other state he chooses to move to.

**WALTER BREAKELL:** Well, on the first part, about the Republican Party, it has a critical decision to make. It's either got to go into preservation mode, i.e. preserving the Senate, or into growth mode. And if you go into preservation mode it's like a prevent defense in football—you lose most of the games when you go to prevent defense. You have to be aggressive and grow. And by doing that, you're going to have to do that one race at a time.

Again, I don't think in the next two cycles we'll have a statewide Republican just because the resources aren't there. Because the Republicans in New York State aren't ideologically conservative, you don't have



national money that will come in or anything like that. You have to write in from New York, and it's more of a pragmatic marketplace where people are like, "Well, can you win? Okay, I'll give you money. If not, yeah, I'm a Republican but I don't care."

I don't know about Bill's electoral future. By giving a lot of his money away to other candidates this year I think he's indicating that he would like to have the option. If Senator Clinton becomes President Clinton there'd be an open Senate seat. Looking over Bill Weld's history, he's a man who after about two years gets a little anxious and wants to move. He'll probably run for something at some point. It could be mayor of Essex, New York, or it could be U.S. Senate.

I can't predict what will happen, but he's a guy who cares deeply about public policy and also about the game of politics. He really just loves the game of politics. And he is in a position, financially and stature-wise, to dabble and jump to the head of the line in whatever he wants to do.

**MARK HALPERIN:** More likely to become senator, governor or go to jail in the Decker matter.

**WALTER BREAKELL:** Oh, more likely to be President than go to jail on the Decker matter.

## THE DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY

**MARK HALPERIN:** We're going to move now to the Democratic primary—thought for a long time to be more competitive than the Republican primary,

*I don't think in the next two cycles we'll have a statewide Republican just because the resources aren't there.*

*—Susan Del Percio*

though it wasn't in the end. And I'll turn it back over to Liz.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** Before there was a primary, I mean, before Suozzi actually got in, there was Chuck Schumer. And so this question is for Ryan and for John because, Christine, you weren't there at the time. What was it that you guys did to keep Chuck out of the race? Would Elliot have run had Chuck gotten into the race and could Elliot have won, had Chuck run?

**JON SILVAN:** Well, first of all Elliot absolutely would have run. There was never a question about that and clearly Chuck would have created a lot of problems for Elliot. But at the end of the day Elliot prepared for Chuck the way he prepares for everything—he takes risks. He plays very aggressively. He is absolutely a subscriber to the belief that the best defense in life is a good offense and he plays very strong. If Elliot was intimidated by this, he never showed it to me. I don't think he even showed it to Jeffrey. And remember, there was a point where we were intimidated, frankly, because we might have Chuck in a primary and Rudy in a general. And the world turned out a lot different.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** To what degree was there maneuvering to try and get Chuck out, or was it just a matter of waiting for him to make a decision? I mean there were a lot of people lining up very early. Elliot announced in what, December 2005?

**RYAN TOOHEY:** December 2004. I think it's similar to what Walt was talking about with regard to Faso and having people locked down. There wasn't maneuvering; there weren't negotiations. Elliot went to the grassroots. He'd really done this from the time he lost his first run for AG in '94. And he'd made a connection with people all over the state. Chuck got a lot of headlines and still does, and he's a good senator bringing a lot back for the state.

But Elliot was out there meeting New Yorkers for ten years. I think it caught most people by surprise that he had forged such a connection with the rank-and-file Dems out there, and with county committee members and folks like that—as well as with members of the Assembly and Senate and other elected officials.

Elliot had really done a lot of legwork there. At last night's dinner, Mark Green told me a story. When he was beginning to campaign for AG, wherever he'd go and do an event he'd take an informal straw poll asking folks, if you had to vote for governor today would it be for Spitzer or Schumer? This is hearsay, but Mark said it was four to one for Elliot. I honestly don't know this because I wasn't fully in Elliot's world at that time. But when and if Chuck went to the grassroots, he didn't have the support that Elliot had.

*Elliot was out there meeting New Yorkers for ten years. I think it caught most people by surprise that he had forged such a connection with the rank-and-file Dems out there, and with county committee members and folks like that—as well as with members of the Assembly and Senate and other elected officials.*

—Ryan Toohey

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** But were you relieved when Chuck decided not to do it?

**RYAN TOOHEY:** Well, you look at the Silvan scenario of Chuck followed by Rudy, sure. I mean Elliot could have faced an extremely expensive primary followed by an extremely expensive general, and that would have been a burden.

**JON SILVAN:** Chuck's a tremendous candidate. Everyone remembers what he did in 1998. And so I don't think anybody would underestimate Chuck's ability to run a very strong campaign. That being said, I honestly don't think any of us at the end of the day believed that Elliot wouldn't win that primary. And we think that Elliot was absolutely in the right place at the right time to move up.

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** We were disappointed.

**PAUL RIVERA:** Don't overlook the fact that it probably still would have been—Suozzi would have been in that race, too. It would have been a three-way campaign. The outcome probably would not have been any different as it relates to Tom, but the race would have been covered in a very, very different way, and the way in which the candidates would have had to execute their campaigns would have been very different.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** Tom's connected to Chuck. Would he actually have run against him?

**PAUL RIVERA:** This is the Democratic Party, and everyone's connected to everyone. It's no secret that from the beginning of this race the numbers never really changed. Tom looked at numbers in December and January that showed him down 65 points, yet still

*Dominic Carter from NY1 News asks questions about Tom Suozzi's campaign.*

decided to run. That wasn't based on personal animus, it was based on a measure of both ambition and confidence. In a race with Spitzer and Schumer, Tom had taken on the machine before and beaten them. In his mind he would have done the same thing.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Dominic?

**PAUL RIVERA:** It would have been a lot of fun.

## EXPLAINING SUOZZI'S CANDIDACY

**DOMINIC CARTER:** Paul, you touched on exactly my question as it relates to Mr. Suozzi. In any other year, and any other race, Suozzi would be a strong, attractive candidate. To this day I still don't understand why in the world he would go to war with his own party and take on this train that no one could stop called Elliot Spitzer. Why? I don't get it.

**PAUL RIVERA:** All right. Well, the election is over so we're not going to re-litigate the campaign. I think it's hard to say with a straight face that the outcome could have been different, given the ultimate margin and the fact that it's very hard to point to a major gaffe or something that was destructive as it relates to Tom's campaign. I believe that Tom is a very unique person. If he suffered from anything during this campaign it was a lack of familiarity with the state, with the media, and how it works—the city-centric aspect of how political decisions get made—and the power and influence that the Democratic Party in New York City ultimately has over the result of a Democratic primary.

Coming from his perspective in Nassau, he ran against every statewide Democrat who endorsed his opponent in 2001, with a Democratic machinery which wasn't

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—Dominic Carter



particularly strong. And he won on the merits and won on the basis of an argument that as mayor of Glen Cove he turned it around. He fixed it. He took over a mess that the Republicans had left and rebuilt it. Now he's running as a county executive and New York, you've got a mess statewide because George Pataki, sorry guys, left the state a mess, so he can fix it. And he can do it because he's done it. And running against a machine where, again, Elliot had done his work and done his spadework. That was the rationale that he was trying to push.

You find people in your career, and you guys certainly cover a lot of them, who always have some great idea, have some great thing. I think Tom's a little different in the sense that he had done it before. So in his mind there was still hope. Over time that became less clear.

**DOMINIC CARTER:** So you're admitting he's guilty of being overconfident? And I would ask him this off the record, when the lights went off, "Tom, what the hell are you doing?" That's exactly what I would ask him. Bob can vouch for this.

**PAUL RIVERA:** They know.

**DOMINIC CARTER:** And he would laugh like that. And so I would also say to him, "When are you getting out?" Whatever he would say publicly, I would say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. When are you getting out? You're committing career suicide. Well, Tom, when are you going to get out?" And he never did. Why? The handwriting wasn't on the wall? I'm just curious. I'm just trying to understand.



**PAUL RIVERA:** I understand that. I don't necessarily accept the premise of the first part of your question. And as far as it relates to getting out, it would have been malpractice for us not to raise it with him and discuss it. He rejected it pretty flatly. Not a quitter. Felt that it was important when it became apparent that there was no movement, nothing was changing. There were still some things that he felt were very important that needed to be discussed and raised.

We were off the record last night, so I'm going to say this for the benefit of the record today. We take some measure of pride and a measure of relief in that we were able to make this election not be about polling and not be about process. There was a serious amount of policy discussed in this primary. The fact that we have a governor-elect who will do something about high property taxes, who will do something about funding our schools, and who will do something to fix our economy gives me great hope.

Elliot has these ideas, too. Tom tried to do his best to keep it on that level. So getting out was not something that's part of his constitution. And therefore it really wasn't in the cards. When it became apparent that it was time—certainly not you, but certainly Patrick and Liz and many others were always asking, “When's it happening?” But there were still things that he wanted to say, so he made a point of saying them.

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** He never came upstate.

**PAUL RIVERA:** That is demonstrably not true.

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** Well he very rarely—



*We take some measure of pride and a measure of relief in that we were able to make this election not be about polling and not be about process. There was a serious amount of policy discussed in this primary.*

—Paul Rivera

**PAUL RIVERA:** That isn't true. Don't get me wrong. He was upstate a lot, and I actually like the work that he did in upstate New York. I think we did a lot more in the west. We didn't go to Albany a lot because we were running against Albany. We were peeing on it a lot so it didn't make much sense for us to go to a place where most of the Democrats and public employee union members were not going to be for us.

If there was a theory behind this, it was that we were going to have to do well in western New York where there is just tremendous dissatisfaction with the status quo. We did not do the job of lumping Elliot in with the status quo, and that's okay. I mean hindsight is what it is. But we spent a lot of time in western New York.

And the times that we were in Albany tended to be at the conferences. Tom gives great speeches but some either weren't recorded or were at weird times or were happening at other moments—when the budget was being settled, for example. He was doing things when it was difficult to get press to come to them. And this is not a criticism of the press, it's a criticism of the campaign. We needed to do a better job of working to get press.

Another thing that I said last night, which I'll say again here, was that we got far better coverage than our polling ever deserved. And a lot of that is because of the quality of the candidate and to some extent the work that we tried to do in our campaign. Some of our campaign staff did not have a great relationship with members of the press. And we're deeply appreciative of the fact that a number of you still gave us a fair shake.

And then we also raised more money than a candidate in our position should have. So we had some resources

*Paul Rivera, senior advisor and campaign manager for Friends of Tom Suozzi, discusses the relationship between the Suozzi and Spitzer campaigns.*

and had some abilities—a lot of that is a tribute and a testament to the work that Tom did.

## DERAILING SPITZER: A POSSIBILITY?

**DOMINIC CARTER:** Question for the Spitzer folks. And this may sound like a weird question. I'll just throw it out there and whoever wants to respond can. But you had to be in a very uncomfortable position in that you start this race up with what, 46 percent? Was there ever a point when you were afraid, or how often were you afraid that the dynamics of this race could change? Perhaps Elliot might lose his temper. Something could happen on the stump that might start a downward spiral and change the dynamics of the race. How worried were you about that?

**RYAN TOOHEY:** Well, not that worried. Elliot is a professional. I spent a lot of time with him in 1998 traveling around the state, seeing him day in, day out, campaigning a little bit in the AG's office. He has grown as a leader, as a person, as a governor. And into the role that he now has as governor-elect.

Elliot doesn't make a whole lot of mistakes. Jon said before that Elliot is the guy who prepares for things thoroughly, diligently. Elliot's an impressive intellectual figure who's unlikely to make a mistake. Our plan during the campaign never really changed in terms of policy, in terms of putting him out there to talk about things. Whether it was going to be Tom Suozzi or somebody else, our plan was to put him out there and have him talk about issues. We did that really from the first speech Elliot gave in this cycle—it was a substantive address on homeland security in October of 2005. Then he gave a reform speech, and he just kept going. And by the time Tom entered the race, Elliot had already laid some track out there, policy-wise, and we never really deviated from our plan, even on property taxes.

**DOMINIC CARTER:** My last follow-up here. What happened during that first debate at, I forgot where that was?

**RYAN TOOHEY:** It was at Pace.

**DOMINIC CARTER:** Pace. What happened when—I was a little surprised sitting in my chair to see Spitzer go on the attack.

**RYAN TOOHEY:** Right.

**DOMINIC CARTER:** It was a question. I thought that he might just play it safe and deflect everything away from what Suozzi threw at him. What happened that night? What about the incident about the notes or talking points?

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** A couple of questions there. I think all of us were advising Elliot on the debate prep, and I think we definitely advised a slightly different course.

**RYAN TOOHEY:** Swing on the third pitch not the first pitch.

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** Not the first. He didn't need to engage to the extent that he did. That said, this is one of those instances when looking back afterwards you realize it's classic Elliot. He's not one to stand back and to let things go by. He wants to hold someone accountable. He wants to make his argument, and he did. And I think it worked. I will say the story from debate prep is that Elliot was like a bull behind the gate. He'd not been engaging. We'd really not engaged with Tom, and that was our strategy from the start.

So I think when he's back behind this gate, he is so ready to finally be able to engage. I think our fear was that it would be too hot. That said, I think Tom was hotter than we were to some degree. I think he launched out at the very first question. We were surprised. We thought Tom would probably take a slightly different approach.

I don't know if you guys view it as a mistake or not, but whatever good will or whatever you gained by that debate was lost in the press afterwards, which seemed completely wrapped in the debate book.

**PAUL RIVERA:** And the process.

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** Yeah, that's right.

**PAUL RIVERA:** And not the message. Right. It became pretty clear to us at one point, this is before the debate, in around June, after the convention, that they're ignoring us, they're going to continue to ignore us. He won't agree to debates. So now let's start the whack-a-mole moment. And it became a series of little hits, little things. And constant press releases and attacks. Substantively not particularly effective, the goal was in a sense to try and bait them. We needed to force a mistake. And they exhibited a tremendous amount of discipline during that period. I could see Christine's fingerprints on that in a way that was different from the earlier part of the campaign.

There was actually a *Times* article that Patrick wrote which was illustrative of a potential direction for the race that ultimately didn't play out. He did an interview with Tom, and Tom was of course undisciplined and said some things. And then he calls Elliot and gets Elliot on the phone, the candidate talking to the *New York Times*, the frontrunner talking to the *New York Times*, where in his answer he accepts the premise of the question, repeats the charge and then says, "Well, it's not a big deal, you know, in terms



*Ryan Toohey, campaign manager for Spitzer-Paterson 2006, discusses the idea of Elliot Spitzer as a fighter for New Yorkers.*

of Tom's profanity." And I could just think to myself, "Well, if he's going to keep doing this, then he's going to be in trouble because Tom will get him." Well, then they hired Christine and that stopped.

So, the mistake of the rage backstage and focusing on that stuff—it was big. Ultimately it would not have had any impact on the outcome. Focusing on process stuff like that instead of the real different, choice elements that we tried to push by talking about record vs. reality—that was part of what we talked about last night. We didn't get there, and we didn't follow up effectively on a strong debate performance by both candidates. We felt Tom did very well there, and that's what he needed to do in a debate like that. We needed about 84 of them for that to actually make a difference. But it was a missed opportunity, by far.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Pat.

**PATRICK HEALY:** For the Spitzer camp, in December of '05 you've got Ken Langone giving a speech saying I'm going to go after Elliot Spitzer. You've got John Whitehead saying Elliot Spitzer's temper is a problem. These are real issues. You've got Tom Suozzi looming out there. You've got Tom Golisano looming, perhaps. I'm just sort of curious what you saw early on, about a year ago now, I guess, or really what Elliot saw. If there was a threat out there, what was it? What might have been the biggest threat and how did you guys talk about that?

**RYAN TOOHEY:** Well, you should have come to Fred's for dinner last night because that was what I talked

about. We were up 40 points, but there were things that we considered. Most notably, the anti-business, U.S. Chamber kind of independent expenditure thing that could happen. There was obviously some thought that a Langone/Golisano/U.S. Chamber alchemy plus a very hot entrance by a guy like Tom Suozzi could lead to a more challenging race.

What we considered at first in talking with Jon and Jeffrey was that maybe this idea of Elliot as a fighter for New Yorkers could be too much. That he's too aggressive. Well, it turned out, and Elliot wouldn't have had it any other way, that we ran a race where we stayed aggressive, just as aggressive as he had been as AG. And I think it worked for us.

We didn't back down from this idea, and we didn't fear the notion that, hey, maybe some people will say Elliot was bad for business or maybe Langone is going to be out there, as he was. About midway through the primary he kind of receded a little bit, but he was out front and Tom was saying, "He's a good man," and Langone was saying, "I'm all for Suozzi and I'm going to work as hard as I can against Elliot."

But we pursued the same course and stuck with this. He's a fighter. He's a fighter for New Yorkers through the whole race, I think.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** But Patrick, actually you wrote this story about Jimmy Segal, the post-election story in which Jimmy talked about your ad strategy. You did talk about some seeking to soften aggression to passion, anger to fighting. I mean obviously he said it, so I'm on the record.

**PAUL RIVERA:** It worked.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** And obviously it worked. But did you—you didn't back away, but wasn't there some kind of retooling of the message to say that anger is not such a bad thing and we can make it work for you, New Yorkers?

**RYAN TOOHEY:** Not really. I mean Elliot is, as anybody in this room who's spent any amount of time with the guy, he's not an angry man. He's not—he's tough. And

*... he's not an angry man. He's not—he's tough.*

*—Ryan Toohey on Elliott Spitzer*

*One of the things we knew was that after 12 years of milquetoast in Albany, this state was ready for somebody who had some moxie. Somebody who wasn't afraid to step on some toes and who was going to get the job done.*

*—Jon Silvan*

he won't deny that. So we didn't really back away from it. If you look at ads through the arc of the campaign, you'll see that throughout it, in between the Judy Collins songs and the beautiful images, were notions about being a prosecutor.

Elliot talked about being a DA and what he learned there. We had an ad with a bunch of newspaper headlines. Spitzer cleans up. Spitzer fights. Spitzer puts in jail. All these tough verbs. So we didn't really retool the message. Obviously in the course of the campaign you're going to talk about things that are unrelated to fighting. You're going to talk about broader things like taxes and education and health care. And when we did in our ads, we tended to do it in a softer way. Frankly, I think that was a function more of the creative direction that Jimmy headed in, rather than any kind of message retooling that we did.

**JON SILVAN:** I think this notion of Elliot's temper being a liability has been overstated. We had no shortage of advice over the years, and I can't tell you how many people came in and said put Elliot in a sweater, put him on the farm, put him on the fence. One of the things we knew was that after 12 years of milquetoast in Albany, this state was ready for somebody who had some moxie. Somebody who wasn't afraid to step on some toes and who was going to get the job done. Frankly, we were never worried about our candidate losing control. This is a guy who is very disciplined and very prepared. And we knew that voters were going to respond to somebody who was going to go out there and fight for them. If he displayed some irritation at times, so be it. And I don't think there was ever a question about who this candidate was going to be.

**RYAN TOOHEY:** If I can jump in for a second, I think you guys did really well if for the last eight years Elliot

was in Albany, too, and no one knew that. You had all the advantages of basically being the incumbent governor—you had the money, you had the ability to work the grassroots and line it all up—with none of the downsides in the change year. You guys were the agents of change and the incumbent at the same time, which is a neat trick.

**JON SILVAN:** There was no roadmap for Suozzi in this case. He couldn't run a campaign saying, "I cleaned up Nassau." Elliot's too close to Shelly Silver so it just wasn't going to work. Elliot had this tremendous record of accomplishment for reforming Wall Street. And nobody was going to buy the argument that Elliot wasn't a reformer. Nobody was going to buy the argument that Elliot was going to get co-opted by an institution in Albany.

**PAUL RIVERA:** That's the point of contrast that we talked about last night. There is no contrast in saying, "Well, I'm a reformer and he's a reformer, but we're different kinds of reformers." It's just like killing yourself as you say the thing.

The campaign's over, and we're talking about how things could have been done. If you're trying to create a contrast between an established brand like Elliot Spitzer and your own, it's pretty difficult unless you have Golisano-type money. Or some massive independent expenditure that's going to do a hard negative on you. You talked about how Republican money only plays when someone's viable. If Tom had any whiff of viability, that might have materialized in an uncoordinated fashion, of course. And then we could have had a different conversation. The space for contrast was on the left. And the space was in December when Elliot said, "Howard Dean is dead wrong on the war. Of course we can win that war." And with his support of the PATRIOT Act and of the death penalty in New York. There was space on the left for someone to attack him.

Again, given his credibility with the electorate, it would have been a very hard sell for any candidate. But if there was ever a path for anyone, it wasn't going to be from the Republican side, given the staleness

*Jon Silvan, campaign researcher for Spitzer-Paterson 2006, talks about Elliot Spitzer's public persona, while Christine Anderson and Ryan Toohey look on.*





and essentially the death of their brand. And it wasn't going to be from a suburban candidate who was pretty moderate, who was going to try to skin that cat.

**PATRICK HEALY:** And that's where I think you made a strategic error on the post-debate front. You guys scored some points on Elliot's left on the death penalty in the debate. And the next day you did a press conference in Albany releasing the contents of the debate book. To me, that was crystallizing, right there. You had a chance there, closer to the end to see some momentum and—

**PAUL RIVERA:** But I think that your research and ours showed the same thing. That it was not going to be a decisive issue. Part of it comes down to framing. We got the great curtain-raising articles. We got the great entry stuff. A lot of that stuff was done well. It wasn't followed up on effectively. We haven't talked about the very bad ad, the only ad that was put up, and the massive resources that the campaign wasted in terms of treasury on that effort.

It's like you've got to put something up. It'll help raise more money. It'll help move the numbers a little bit. The movement itself will become the story. And you can hear it because you can see it. And losing candidates tend to go up early. Candidates that have \$19,000,000 in the bank go up early and stay up all the way throughout and define the race about their brand and do very well with that without even talking about how—

**MARK HALPERIN:** How extensively did you test that ad and what else did you consider putting up?

**PAUL RIVERA:** Well, I wasn't in the campaign at that point. But as I mentioned last night, we went forensically, and Harry of course was around in that window, so he can speak to some of it. That ad was not tested. And it was not effectively developed. I think I'll just leave it at that. It was terrible.

**HARRY SIEGEL:** Let me say something about that. What we were saying before was that running in New York State is different. And I think Elliot Spitzer probably found some of that out in 1994 and ran a really solid and disciplined campaign. And Tom has something of a learning curve there. And I think the ad was really demonstrative of that.

This was something that was half-winged. There were a few different edits. This was the one Tom personally liked best. And it was a key moment. Not only did it go up very early but there wasn't at that point a plan around it, a full sense of where the race was going. Tom had just announced and was putting this plan together, and the ad went up, and it wasn't part of any broader strategy. And a lot of money went into it. The hope was that more money would come in. And this would

generate momentum. And when that didn't happen and when Elliot went up soon after that with—

**RYAN TOOHEY:** He went up first.

**HARRY SIEGEL:** Yeah. No, no, he went up first in a very technical, "steal-the-story" sort of way. You guys know. He did a tiny buy in New York so that the ad would go up first, and he was up.

**RYAN TOOHEY:** No that's not true. We spent a lot of time on that. But okay, continue.

**PATRICK HEALY:** Who's accountable for producing an ad that you all thought was not good and spending a lot of money on it? Who's accountable for that?

**PAUL RIVERA:** That's a good question.

**PATRICK HEALY:** What did your forensic research show?

**PAUL RIVERA:** Well, my professional experience tells me you shouldn't speak ill of the dead. So the people who were in the campaign at that point in time made a series of decisions and gave the candidate bad advice. Let's just leave it at that.

**PATRICK HEALY:** What was that relationship like, because a lot of us were dealing with it? It was Tom Suozzi, candidate, and campaign manager Kim Devlin. They were a dysfunctional married couple that had been together in politics for a long time. Was the candidate well served by the campaign manager? Was he well served by himself? He was brash. He thought that he could run the table with the press corps to some extent by his own rules.

What about that relationship? Was that a destructive one?

**PAUL RIVERA:** You would have to go back a couple of years to raise more money, develop a better profile, introduce yourself to press more effectively before even getting in the race. I think that there was an element to just reading it, because I wasn't in the campaign at that point. Looking at some of the things that were written, you could read between the lines that there was a lot of curiosity on the part of the press corps—who is this guy? And wow, he's really talented. He's running against Spitzer, and he's down. So when you first started asking the question, it was more, "What are you going to do?"

And then it became, "What the hell are you doing?" And I think that dwelling on the relationship, there were dysfunctional elements in that campaign. Clearly when you lose by 60 points there were a lot of things that went wrong. I don't think it was a determinative factor as it relates to this specific campaign.

In a weird way, when everyone says, "in any other year," or "this year against a different candidate," those

*Elizabeth Benjamin from the Albany Times-Union asks about the relationship between Suozzi and the press.*

kinds of things are more a function of the way in which we run campaigns in a place like New York. If it wasn't Elliot Spitzer and if we were running against Attorney General-elect Cuomo or any other sort of big Democratic name, Tom would have won because of the issues he ran on and his abilities and skills. So if you look at it that way and ask whether the campaign manager really makes a difference in this race, then the answer is no. The jokes are, you could have had Carville running this campaign. The race would have been good on contrast, and you would have had a lot of good stuff—but it wouldn't have made a difference given the strength of Spitzer's brand.

So I don't want to get into the personalities part of this too much just because that doesn't help anything.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** Do you feel like he was seduced by the press, at all? It seemed to me that before he got into the race there were all these positive stories, because certainly the press was hungering for a contest and it seemed like there wasn't one. The Schumer thing died. Golisano not so much. We didn't really know what was going to happen. And so he had a lot of puff pieces come out, and then he came in and the first thing that happened was he got the Pat Healy treatment.

**PAUL RIVERA:** Yeah.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** And it just seems to turn on him, and he was so not disciplined. He was surprised, it seemed to me, taken aback by the fact that the press was maybe not as friendly to him as he thought.

**PAUL RIVERA:** Welcome to the big leagues, buddy. This is the business we've chosen. We got great treatment. And this is New York. You've got to work it. And he got the coverage early in part because that's the way the



press is. You like to create races, and you like to talk about races.

The belief was that if there was movement, then that would have been a process story and fueled more movement. We never primed the pump. We never did the things that we needed to do effectively. Could a better ad at that point in time have moved numbers? I don't think so. And I certainly wish I had the \$4,000,000 toward the end of the campaign as opposed to at the beginning of the campaign.

**PATRICK HEALY:** Really, really quick: The Spitzer camp, would you rather have run during the primary against Weld or Faso? Did you have a preference? And did you do anything to try to influence the Republican primary?

**RYAN TOOHEY:** I think our calculation was that we knew Elliot was poised to win this. We didn't particularly think that either candidate could beat him unless they really had a perfect storm.

Each guy had elements that we found tainted him. As Walt pointed out, Decker would have been a TV spot if we needed it. And as Elliot pointed out in debates and as Christine has pointed out a number of times on the record, we felt that John Faso was just too right-wing for New York. So we weren't concerned one way or the other.

## THE GENERAL ELECTION

**MARK HALPERIN:** We're going to move to the general election and then again to audience questions if you've

*If it wasn't Elliot Spitzer and if we were running against Attorney General-elect Cuomo or any other sort of big Democratic name, Tom would have won because of the issues he ran on and his abilities and skills.*

—Paul Rivera

got them. But continue with what you were saying as you saw who your opponent would be. What are some of the things you would have done to create a bigger contrast between you and Faso? Did you produce ads? Did you do story boards? Did you do a lot of opposition research on him? Or did you never turn to any of that?

**JON SILVAN:** We never produced a negative ad against Faso. In our own minds we certainly did our research. We had the luxury of time and resources to prepare. So we did our research and we knew what we could do, if necessary.

John's best day was after he won the convention. But I don't think the campaign was ever really able, through no fault of the campaign but through the conditions, to get out of the box.

And so I don't think we ever saw a scenario where we were going to have to take a shot at this guy or take this guy down. It was really never seriously contemplated, except in circumstances where we were doing just the most unbelievable "what-ifs," because, frankly, that's our job.

**MARK HALPERIN:** With all that lead-time did you consider helping other Democrats in a way that most top-of-the-ticket candidates don't do? Or laying the groundwork in an unusual way for victory and transition in the administration? What kind of decisions did that involve?

**JON SILVAN:** I'll take the second part first. Beginning in about January of '06, people treated Elliot as the governor-elect. Because of that he was held to an

*John's best day was after he won the convention. But I don't think the campaign was ever really able, through no fault of the campaign but through the conditions, to get out of the box.*

—Jon Silvan

unbelievably high standard for his policy proposals. In retrospect, that was a really great thing because it put him in a position to be prepared to govern in a way that most governors, I imagine, don't enjoy. So that's where he stands today, or did on November 8.

What was the first part of the question?

**MARK HALPERIN:** Did anyone ever say to you, why don't you figure out how to help these U.S. House candidates or help Senate candidates?

**JON SILVAN:** Oh, we did. We worked hard to help, most notably, state senate candidates. We feel very proud of the work that Elliot did through just casual conversations as well as some campaigning with Andrea Stewart-Cousins in Westchester County. That was a big win for us, taking out a very long-serving Republican member of the state senate. Elliot appeared in television advertisements for at least three congressional candidates. And three state senate candidates. So we lent his image and his time and our money, the campaign's money. So there was a belief at a certain point, let's try to take back the Senate. Let's be helpful to congressional candidates.

**PATRICK HEALY:** Dean and Susan, from the convention forward, what were your two best days?

**DEAN D'AMORE:** Winning the boilermaker.

[LAUGHTER]

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** One of the first good days was in fact not the convention, just because of what we had done with Weld, but it was the first day that Elliot Spitzer engaged and used our name. We actually existed. We weren't just some little-known candidate. I think that was what we were called for most of the race, until it became "the candidate who trailed by 50 points."

*Susan Del Percio, communications director for Faso for Governor and Dean D'Amore campaign manager for Faso for Governor, talk about John Faso's commitment to issues.*



But that was certainly a good point. The other point was at the end of the first debate, when they asked the question, “What do you think of Alan Hevesi?” and he said, “Stupendous, honest public servant.” That was a day we thought we could capitalize on. At the end of the day it turned out that everyone else got more advantage out of it than we did. But it was probably another day that we thought there was something of an opportunity.

You have to wake up and fight the fight every day. But you also need to see where you are. And they branded themselves superbly and never took the bait. We watched Suozzi every day, saying, “Will they do it? Can you get them? Can you get them?” Which would have helped us a bit. But you have to get up and fight every day. And you also have to realize where your strengths are and where you can play them.

**PATRICK HEALY:** How much focus grouping did you do to look for vulnerabilities that may not have been apparent? And what did you find if you did that?

**DEAN D'AMORE:** Well, we tried everything we could. We talked with a lot of businesspeople. We did a lot of research. We didn't really have much as far as the man has an impeccable career, private life. He's a dedicated family man. But there were places where we thought we needed to tie him to incumbency in Albany. He'd been there during the state's problems. He didn't go after, in our view, Medicaid fraud. He didn't go after corrupt politicians. He went for headline-grabbing cases against Wall Street.

We tried to make that into a ruinous crusade. Something that was bad for New York, bad for business. And we rallied to try to get business people to stand for what their ideals are. Saying New York can and should be better by working together to build better business. So we really worked hard every day to try and find some leverage points. And either they didn't engage us or they co-opted us. They did their tax issues. They did their security issues. They did things that they were able to stake out as their ground, defend their turf, and not even give us the time of day.

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co-opted us.*

—Jon Silvan

## MORE CHAUFFEUR-GATE: FASO FOR COMPTROLLER?

**MARK HALPERIN:** Ms. Benjamin.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** I think that a lot of people are curious about the Hevesi issue. Was there a point after that broke, given what happened in 2002 with John, when he said to you guys, “I picked the wrong race?” Because the conventional wisdom was that he maybe could have beaten Alan Hevesi, given this whole chauffeur-gate thing. He would have been a better candidate by light years than Callaghan. Did anybody ever talk about this?

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** Not even a little.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** Nothing.

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** Nothing. John was committed. And you can't look back. This happened at the end of September, and he was focused and determined. No one could foresee what was going to happen with Hevesi, so you can't look back.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** But why did he run for governor and not run for comptroller again when he had come so close the first time around? You could argue that so few people—40 percent of people before chauffeur-gate—knew Alan Hevesi. Arguably it's not that he didn't do a great job or did do a great job, although that's all up for grabs. The question is that almost nobody knows the guy and he came so close the first time, so why not do it again?

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** Well, I'm not going to speak for John on this but if you look at the way that it played out, he raised \$7,000,000, a record number for that kind of race. And Pataki won big. And this was going to be a different type of year. It made no sense for him to run for comptroller, because it was a guaranteed no-start and he would have lost again. Sometimes people would say for the third time.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** Right.

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** And that wasn't the race that he was looking at. He really went forward and said, “This is what I want to do.” I think if things were a little different, it could have changed the dynamic with Bill Weld a little bit, end of December, maybe the first two or three weeks of January. But after the fact it really wasn't—

**PATRICK HEALY:** On a personal level too, didn't his wife, Mary Frances say to him, “If you're going to run again, you're going to run for governor. That's what you really want, or else you're going to make money in the private sector.”



**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** I am not even going to go into what happens between the candidate and his spouse during a campaign and the conversations they may have had. The fact was that this is where he was—he made that decision a long time ago. There was not a chance that he was going to think about changing.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** And when he says now that he has no regrets about the way that it all played out, do you believe that? And also the animus, if there was any, for the time that he stepped aside for George Pataki and then subsequently George Pataki didn't really do all that much for him. Does he look back with a lot of animus, basically? Sorry, Walt. Regrets, I guess. Does he look back and say—

**DEAN D'AMORE:** No, I don't think so. I think that he really got a chance to showcase his passion, depth, and intellect on all these issues, and he really cares about the state and its direction. And he really worked hard to put together programs that address every single one of those things. And I think the only way that he is probably disappointed is because the party and the resources didn't come together. That the environment and the climate just weren't there. But as far as his own personal output, what he invested with his time and energy and effort, I think he has to be extremely proud of what he's done and how he fought every single day when people were saying there's no hope. But he believed there was hope. And he tried and we tried every day to find something to gain leverage with. Something to turn this. And so, looking back, there just never was a question of why we're doing this.

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** And just to add on to that, if you looked at all four candidates, they all, early on, said, "These are my issues, and this is what I'm focused on." I remember sitting down with Pat in February, and I said, "If we're talking about issues, this will play to John's strength." And it actually played out for all four candidates. We're having debates about property taxes in March and April. I think for the press it probably put them to sleep, but the fact that issues were actually getting out there served every candidate in their own way to show their best side.

**WALTER BREAKELL:** I think if you look at the '02 election for contrast, there was not one policy or speech by either candidate really. Well, no one really covered you guys.

**PATRICK HEALY:** Was your candidate in the general election? I think this is the general election discussion.

**WALTER BREAKELL:** Oh, I'm sorry.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Just happy to hear from him. Dominic.

*I think he has to be extremely proud of what he's done and how he fought every single day when people were saying there's no hope.*

—Dean D'Amore

## LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION: FASO FREEZES

**DOMINIC CARTER:** At the end of the debate up in Ithaca, Mr. Faso seemed to have Mr. Spitzer somewhat on the defensive over the Hevesi issue, when the moderator at the time asked about Hevesi, and that's when all this stuff started. But my question is that in the first couple of minutes during that debate, Mr. Faso seemed very nervous. He seemed like he was sweating a little bit. And he also seemed like he was about to stop talking at one point. What happened? In mid-thought, it seemed like he was about to literally stop talking.

**DEAN D'AMORE:** He did.

**DOMINIC CARTER:** But okay, so what went through your mind at that point, and what was happening?

**DEAN D'AMORE:** Well, we asked him afterwards, because everyone was frozen, too, and feeling every nerve ending on their body tingle and wondering what's going to happen here. But he said that the lights just froze him. And that was basically about it. But we did change how we went into debate prep for the next time as a result of that.

**DOMINIC CARTER:** So he wasn't ready? He wasn't ready for the lighting?

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** It was the lights right above the camera that he said it caught off. And then also, this was his first debate for governor, and there was a lot of pressure. It's not an excuse. I'm saying he was nervous. This happens, and I think he started to gain his rhythm afterwards, but it happens.

**DOMINIC CARTER:** So, Susan, what went through your mind when he stopped talking for a second there?

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** "Talk! Start!" Actually it was a really difficult time. For a good portion of that debate I was really hoping he would have been more engaged, and as Christine said, we certainly changed our debate prep for the second time. But it was funny because watching it, I actually thought it was worse than how it was perceived. Because we actually did get a lot of good

feedback. I was terribly nervous until the very end, because in a second you saw the story change when he went downstairs and it came down to Hevesi and where Elliot Spitzer stood on that. And at that time he was “honest and stupendous,” and we couldn’t hope for more than that, to be honest with you. That’s where we were at least able to change it a little bit.

**DOMINIC CARTER:** Did Spitzer notice that Faso had screwed up, if you will?

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** We never talked about it. I don’t think we had. I don’t think we noticed. I mean we noticed it during the debate but it wasn’t a conversation afterwards. As Susan said, Hevesi was pretty much all we talked about.

**DEAN D’AMORE:** That was an intimidating room. That’s why I thought it was interesting that you asked the question, because you were there as I recall, and it was a hell of a theater, to stand on the stage, it was an impressive place.

**PATRICK HEALY:** Were you offered walk-throughs by the sponsors to let your candidates be up there and test the lights out?

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** We were.

**PATRICK HEALY:** Did you all do that and let your candidates—

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** Yeah, we did it. I don’t think they had the camera lights on. I mean, again, it sounds so silly to say, “Oh it was the lights.” It was just a moment in time. Do you wish it didn’t happen? Sure. But I don’t think it necessarily changed the way the debate went. I think he certainly caught it back right away.

**DEAN D’AMORE:** But he is also a very slow starter. And what we noticed working with him, is in all of our debate preps he gets warmed up after the first hour.

**PATRICK HEALY:** Who played Spitzer in your debate prep?

**DEAN D’AMORE:** William Weld.

**PATRICK HEALY:** And who played Faso in your debate prep?

**RYAN TOOHEY:** Who played Faso? Jeffrey.

**JON SILVAN:** Jeffrey and then Joe [unintelligible] at the end.

**PATRICK HEALY:** Jeffrey had a baby. On Hevesi, on “honest, stupendous,” was it planned to use those adjectives at that point, or how much did you guys discuss that?

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** We had discussed it beforehand, I think. Elliot was speaking with the information he had at the time and I think we found more information out in the days that followed and reacted appropriately. But of course, if I personally could have taken back those words, we would have. But I think that’s Elliot again—he will act appropriately and fiercely but wants to have the information first. And I think at that point he was basing his comments on a public servant who had served for 25 years and had quite a record, and we’re still waiting for the results of an investigation.

**PATRICK HEALY:** And help us get to know the governor-elect a little better. In terms of the evolution of the loyalty issue to Hevesi, how did it evolve to where he was ready to say, “Some would say throw him overboard; some would say just isolate him?” And how did he work through that?

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** It was worked through pretty quickly. Ryan and I were in the conversations where internally we discussed next steps. And it was a decision that was actually made fairly easily. If you’re Elliot Spitzer, there really isn’t another answer.

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** And candidly that was part of our problem. The decision—actually I shouldn’t say decision—the way the media moved and it became the Hevesi story. We tried very hard to keep positioning and make Elliot take a position. And I think there was actually one point where it took a little too long for the formal response to come out as to whether or how he supports him or doesn’t support him.

But the problem was that that became part of a second story. It wasn’t our story. And that actually was part of the issue, in that Elliot’s reputation and his brand—that was what we were fighting. And again, we weren’t able to chink that armor because no one questioned if he was trying to do something improper in supporting Hevesi even at the time. So that was the problem that we faced.

**MARK HALPERIN:** At this forum last year, a big part of the discussion was how do you run against an incredibly well-funded, popular candidate like Mayor Bloomberg. And the Ferrer campaign had a lot of anger toward the press corps. And I’m just turning it a little bit. Tom Suozzi was very much a bomb thrower during

*And I think at that point he was basing his comments on a public servant who had served for 25 years and had quite a record, and we’re still waiting for the results of an investigation.*

*—Susan Del Percio*

a good deal of the primary. You guys chose not to be, and I know that Liz and Ben and I and others noted that John Faso wasn't out there all the time—there were these fallow periods. Did you need a different kind of personality to go up against an Elliot, to throw bombs to get attention? It didn't work for Freddy necessarily in terms of getting press coverage, but could Faso have done something different or better?

**DEAN D'AMORE:** I'm surprised that Susan is not jumping at your throat on this one because every day we talked about our attack. And I thought that the first part of where you're going with this would give me a chance to say what I want to say, which is that I think it's borderline, very hurtful, I want to use the word irresponsible, for the media in every single story to put Faso 50 points back with no money.

Maybe this is naïve or idealistic, but shouldn't it be about ideas, about what people stand for, what they're trying to do? Does it always have to be polls and money? It just cuts things off. And it hurt us tremendously when we tried to do fundraising, and when we tried to go out there and generate interest in our message. But no, fighting against someone like Spitzer, John Faso had a very, very strict sense of decency and morals and integrity. He wasn't going to go on anything unless we had solid information, solid facts, a very clear and distinct message. And we sent Susan out every day. We had our 8 o'clock morning call. It's like, "What's our message today? What's our attack today?" Every single day.

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** But to add to that, we also didn't give you what you wanted, which was that fight. Like I said, he went from being John Faso, little-known candidate, to John Faso, 50 points behind Elliot Spitzer. We were actually pleased once in a while just to get his name in the headline.

And that's what we faced. And this was the struggle, at least for me. We knew what we needed to do to get more press and to get attention, because, let's face it, property taxes, Medicaid, and different levels of income tax reduction are not what gets people excited. We got very fair coverage in that I think that there were a lot of good stories written. But in August, I'm sorry, in October, 73 percent of people polled didn't know who John Faso was. So at that point it was hard just to break through in the press.

## THE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE QUESTION

**MARK HALPERIN:** Let me ask you about one issue in order to sprinkle in some of the audience questions. Elliot Spitzer is in favor of same-sex marriage, which is unusual among statewide elected officials. Why wasn't that a bigger point of contrast for you all?

*Maybe this is naïve or idealistic, but shouldn't it be about ideas, about what people stand for, what they're trying to do? Does it always have to be polls and money?*

—Dean D'Amore

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** Because it's not what John thought was one of the most important issues facing New Yorkers. And at this point when you're looking at all the polls and you're looking at the money ... John had a great respect for just simply being able to have the opportunity to run for governor and talk about what people really need to care about. What's affecting them? What he thinks the solutions are for the state. And he wouldn't go in and bait that. It wasn't what he thought was a priority for the state. Could it have got him more press? Could it become a more divisive issue? It really could have. I think polling on both sides shows that was something that could have moved numbers. But John just wouldn't go there.

**DEAN D'AMORE:** Did you try to convince him to?

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** No. Working with John for such a long time, you pretty much know where he puts a line in the sand. You don't try and cross that.

## RUDY GIULIANI AND THE NOMINATION FIGHT

**MARK HALPERIN:** We talked about Rudy Giuliani and the nomination fight. That he stayed out. What efforts did you make to get him more involved in the general election?

**DEAN D'AMORE:** We made a lot of effort. He was very gracious, and he was very good to us. We wish we could have had more of his time. And at the point when we were facing the fact that Faso was just not well known enough, even among people in his own party, it would have just been outstanding to have a Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Utica, Albany, Poughkeepsie, New York City, Long Island total effort. But the guy's tremendously busy, and he's helping all these candidates throughout the country. And then what happened to us is all these other races became super-hot national races. And that took him away.

**PATRICK HEALY:** So who said no to whom?

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*John had a great respect for just simply being able to have the opportunity to run for governor and talk about what people really need to care about. What's affecting them? What he thinks the solutions are for the state. And he wouldn't go in and bait that.*

—Susan Del Percio

**DEAN D'AMORE:** Well, Susan used to work for him.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Did you say no to yourself?

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO:** Blame me. I had this ongoing fight. No. I think it was a matter of what dates were available. The first thing we asked for was a fundraiser. And then a fundraising letter. I think the letter actually came first before the fundraiser. So those were provided and then it was, where is the time? And there really wasn't time. We had him do phone calls for us, record a phone call. Literally, when we were talking, it was like, "I know there are 100 calls that have to be made and we were just hoping to be on top of the pile," which we were, actually. So he was as supportive as he could be. There are time constraints.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Pat Healy, I can't respond to that so I'm turning it back to you.

*... at the point when we were facing the fact that Faso was just not well known enough, even among people in his own party, it would have just been outstanding to have a Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Utica, Albany, Poughkeepsie, New York City, Long Island total effort.*

—Dean D'Amore

## SPITZER AND THE PRESS

**PATRICK HEALY:** Just one point on the media coverage with the Spitzer campaign. I think it was Rich Baum who said to Ben Smith early on that in a profile of Elliot everything is known. There are not a lot of surprises. But did you feel—because I know certainly the Republicans were poking at us—Elliot was by and large given a free pass in the media, that the media helped coronate him early on. Looking back there were stories that were challenging and certainly others did poke at this or that. But largely the press corps was somehow with Elliot.

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** I don't know that that's entirely fair. I think that probably my answer would be that reporters grew bored with the race. And to some extent coverage tapered off a little bit for that reason, and they looked for other things. And certainly Pirro gave us a break for a while. The AG's race certainly had enough excitement that people could stay busy. And while I think there were tough stories and I think we tried to deal with each one of them as we could, there was still some tough press.

But by and large, when you talk about the *Times*' profile, for example, I remember Rich saying, "Why would they write a profile about Elliot? Everyone knows about him." His personal life, his family life, his background is largely unknown or isn't known. He's likely to be the next governor and there was still a lot to be told about him. So I think there were still stories that were out there that never got told.

There were things that we probably got lucky on and things that never became bigger stories, but I think all in all reporters got a little bit bored toward the end.

**PATRICK HEALY:** Did you think the old stories about his father's money and the loans were going to blow up in a way that maybe they didn't?

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** No. I mean they came back. You never quite get away from some things. But I think the story had been told. They had dealt with it well back then in terms of explaining it. And they gave the same answers now as they did back then.

## CHAUFFEUR-GATE: THE FINALE

**MARK HALPERIN:** I want to let Wayne Barrett drive the Hevesi story to the end of the campaign.

**WAYNE BARRETT:** Well, I think the Spitzer people already answered some of the questions.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Right.



**WAYNE BARRETT:** But what interested me most was that in addition to dis-endorsing him, he specifically said that he had compromised his ability to hold the position. That seemed to me to be a separate decision from dis-endorsing, and it goes way beyond withdrawing an endorsement in a political race.

You mentioned, Christine, that you and Ryan participated in the decision about the dis-endorsement. Could you discuss the process that led to the second phase of that? Who was involved in these discussions? And was this seen as a politically strategic decision as to how you were going to position yourself?

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** It was a small group of advisers, you all know. We're not a very big campaign. And the same people that made the decisions throughout the campaign were involved in the discussions. We had other things going on at the time. They weren't the only things we were working on. But I think we knew that we needed to act decisively and quickly.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** Do you think you acted quickly enough?

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** I've thought about that a lot. I think he could have maybe sped it up by a day, if you look at the timeline from when he got the results back from the investigation after the AG's office initiated their own investigation. And then Elliot recusing himself and withdrawing his endorsement, it was all within a very short timeframe.



*Elliot is not the type to just jump out there and say something without thinking it through a bit.*

—Christine Anderson

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** But why not do it then? When the ethics report came out and you guys went very quickly after the AG moved, and Elliot was clear in saying, "I'm recusing myself even though I feel like I could do a good job, blah, blah, blah and be impartial." Why not then say, "I have to recuse myself from all aspects of this situation" and say something nice about how long you've known Alan and then just get out? Instead of leaving—because it's true—I mean that happened on a Monday, and I just remember this because he was in our office on a Wednesday. You were there.

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** And the question didn't get asked.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** Yeah, I know. But he finally did it later that afternoon.

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** No. Liz gave us the hardest time I think of anyone that morning and had about 18 questions for Elliot.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** I'm sorry.

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** Some of which he was prepared for and some of which he wasn't. But Elliot is not the type to just jump out there and say something without thinking it through a bit. And I think, especially with this, where there was a relationship with Alan, I think he thought he owed it to himself, Elliot, to think it through and really make sure he had all his questions answered and information.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** Have they spoken since?

**WAYNE BARRETT:** You didn't really answer the question about saying that he had compromised his position to hold the office. I just wanted to see if I could get you to do that. Wasn't that a separate decision, separately analyzed, as opposed to just dis-endorsing? It goes way beyond it.

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** I view it in the context of the questions we were getting and those questions would

*Christine Anderson, communications director for Spitzer-Paterson 2006, talks about Elliot Spitzer's approach to chauffeur-gate.*

come hand in hand. We were dealing with it as an issue, one issue.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Did Hevesi attempt to contact the candidate directly or through intermediaries?

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** I believe some of the staff spoke at one point, but Elliot has not spoken to him and I think that's part of the refusal.

**MARK HALPERIN:** What were the staff's discussions like?

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** They were brief. Honestly they were brief and—

**MARK HALPERIN:** Who initiated them and what was the content?

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** I don't know who initiated.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Who were the players and what was the content?

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** They were at senior levels of the campaign. I think there were maybe, I think, two calls. Very, very brief.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Were they asking for something?

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** No, no, no. I think they were seeing where we were. And we were saying this is where we are.

## ADVERTISING STRATEGY

**MARK HALPERIN:** I was going to ask a little bit about the ad strategy. Obviously you had a lot of money to play with and not a close race. How many spots did you run overall?

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON:** Fourteen?

*... what we learned, which surprised some of us, and which was counterintuitive to conventional wisdom, was that our candidate in a general was going to win this race upstate, not in the suburbs.*

—Christine Anderson

**RYAN TOOHEY:** I was going to say about 13, 14.

**MARK HALPERIN:** And did you do anything unusual in terms of testing them? What was the process by which you picked what to run, where?

**RYAN TOOHEY:** We were confident in our candidate and confident in our creative and confident in our message, and we ran with that.

**MARK HALPERIN:** What did you learn about the best way to spend it?

**JON SILVAN:** We had actually conducted early on—I think it was a couple years out—a pretty sophisticated targeting document and an examination of it. And what we learned, which surprised some of us, and which was counterintuitive to conventional wisdom, was that our candidate in a general was going to win this race upstate, not in the suburbs. Conventional wisdom was you usually take downstate up, give the upstate to the Republicans and you fight in the 'burbs.

And we actually knew that our swing was upstate, which was good news for us because it was much cheaper to advertise up there. So we had always planned go to up very early and heavily upstate. I remember going up in April, and then when your campaign decided and we knew because we'd also spent some time and resources putting a tracking operation together, when we knew you were going up in the middle of March, we pushed things ahead quickly. We got up on the air.

And Elliot to his credit—and this goes back to his overall approach to life—said, whatever Suozzi is spending, we're going to outspend him three to two. So for every two spots that somebody sees of Tom, they're going to see three of ours. And I think that combined with the fact that the ad wasn't effective. The race, certainly the primary, if it was ever in contention, was over after that ad. And we reaped tremendous benefits from going up early.

## STRENGTHENING THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

**MARK HALPERIN:** I'm going to ask you one more question about the party. The same George Pataki figure we've been discussing, once upon a time, got elected governor and built his party up with a lot of effort here. During this campaign and going forward, how much do you think Governor-elect Spitzer sees part of his responsibility as being to build a strong Democratic Party in the state?

**JON SILVAN:** I think he sees it as a primary function of his role. The governor is the leader of the Democratic Party in the state. In his plans, Elliot puts a priority on

a strong infrastructure in the state party. During this race, we worked with the Hillary folks, the Cuomo people, and to some degree the Hevesi campaign to put together a field network around the state called the Neighborhood Network—part of the state Democratic Party which previously didn't exist.

And we certainly plan on keeping that in place and in fact adding to it with people who are helpful to our campaign, so that it's an "always on" operation rather than just an election-year thing. Elliot is committed to the growth of the party and will certainly be the leader of the state Democrats.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** Will you spend more time on creating a "back bench," if you will, and recruiting candidates?

**JON SILVAN:** I grew up in Buffalo, upstate New York. And I've always thought that the state Democratic Party did a good job of recruiting candidates to run in races around the city here. If you go 100 miles in either direction from Manhattan you see good candidates running. When there's a weak Republican, there's always a good Democrat in the race, or at least somebody with a fighting chance.

Elliot has spent a lot of time in the western part of the state, in central New York, and I think one thing that he has realized and that people close to him have realized is that the candidate recruitment operation gets exponentially worse as you move away from the city. There are a lot of Republican seats that are just not contested, and they are vulnerable incumbents. There is certainly some thought being put into this, and likely plans to develop a pipeline to generate enthusiasm among young people and also specific candidate recruitment operations. Particularly upstate.

## LIGHTNING ROUND QUESTIONS

**MARK HALPERIN:** Dominic, anything else? All right.

**DOMINIC CARTER:** I just thought about this. I'm curious. The lightning round questions. I know it only takes a couple of minutes, but Bob Hart and I and others would meet for hours, literally, to come up with these questions. And the conversation would go something like, "This is a great one." "Hell no, I'm not asking anything like this. Dominic, I don't like this question."

And then we would meet right before the debate would start for a final time and toss out some, or add some, depending on what was going on in the news that day. I'm curious as to how a candidate, particularly the frontrunner who has a lot to lose, prepares for something like that, when you have no idea, and you know that I'm going to be a pit bull and enforce a yes or no answer.

*Chuck Schumer not entering the race was really a great thing for the Democratic Party in the state. And for Elliot.*

—Ryan Toohey

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN:** What was the most outrageous?

**DOMINIC CARTER:** What was the most outrageous?

**BOB HARDT:** I think we had a cocaine-use question.

**DOMINIC CARTER:** Oh, yes. We did have a cocaine-use question that—

**MARK HALPERIN:** No reason not to answer it now.

**DOMINIC CARTER:** I said, "Bob are you sure you want to ask this one?" And he said, "I'm not sure." And I said, "Bob, I think we should kill this one." He said, "I agree with you." So that was probably the most outrageous.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Did you do a rapid round in your debate, Fred? Jon maybe you can talk a little bit to the lightning.

**JON SILVAN:** To be honest with you we spent a lot of time doing exactly what you and Bob did—all of us sitting around the table thinking about all the outrageous questions. And we asked the most outrageous questions that any of us had the guts to stand and—

**MARK HALPERIN:** Well let's hear those then.

**JON SILVAN:** Another time. So that's what we did. We went through it all, and I know that right afterward we went back and checked our notes. I don't think there was anything that came out that surprised us, with all due respect to your questions. We must have had 150 lightning round questions that we went through, meticulously. We wanted to make sure that he was consistent day after day.

**DOMINIC CARTER:** Were there any questions that you said you would answer under no circumstances?

**JON SILVAN:** I don't think so. I don't think so.

## SCHUMER VS. CLINTON

**MARK HALPERIN:** All right, lightning round for the three Spitzer people. Who was more helpful for your campaign, Schumer or the Clintons?

**JON SILVAN:** You mean post-Chuck deciding not to run?

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**MARK HALPERIN:** Sure. Yeah. Who was more helpful?

**JON SILVAN:** You guys answer that.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Karen's in the room. Karen's right there.

**RYAN TOOHEY:** I think Mark answered the question. Chuck Schumer not entering the race was really a great thing for the Democratic Party in the state. And for Elliot. So Chuck Schumer.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Oh, okay.

**RYAN TOOHEY:** Now remember Chuck didn't have a race. Hillary was part of a ticket with us and we worked collaboratively. I spoke to Karen frequently about things we were doing. And the state party, the operation I referred to before, was a Clinton/Spitzer driven process.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Did you ever see them do anything in terms of a technique or an experiment that appeared to be about future campaigns?

**JON SILVAN:** Don't answer that question.

**RYAN TOOHEY:** I'm not going to answer that question.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Really? That's not really in the spirit, and we're about to be done. You don't have to tell us what it is, just say yes or no. Jef, step right up to the table, fill us in.

**RYAN TOOHEY:** I think Hillary did a great job of running for New York State Senator.

**MARK HALPERIN:** All right. Pat, anything else?

**PATRICK HEALY:** Nope.

**MARK HALPERIN:** Thanks, everybody, for coming. We really appreciate it.



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## PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

**CHRISTINE ANDERSON** served as communications director for Eliot Spitzer's successful 2006 gubernatorial campaign. Prior to this, she was associate director of corporate communications at global financial institution UBS AG, where she served as spokesperson for the U.S. Wealth Management Division. She was deputy press secretary on the 2004 Kerry-Edwards campaign and also worked in the Clinton White House as director of press pool operations.

**WAYNE BARRETT** has been covering city and state politics at the *Village Voice* for 29 years and is the author or co-author of four books, including *Grand Illusion: The Untold Story of Rudy Giuliani and 9/11*, published last August by HarperCollins. His focus in the 2006 election was on the attorney general and comptroller races. Barrett also teaches a course on investigative reporting at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

**ELIZABETH BENJAMIN** is the *Albany Times Union's* lead political reporter and blogger. She was the driving force behind the creation, in December 2005, of Capitol Confidential, the *TU's* political blog. Benjamin joined the paper in 1997 and covered suburban governments and Albany City Hall before moving to the Capitol Bureau in 2001.

**MARK BENOIT** served as a senior staffer on Mark Green's 2006 campaign for attorney general. He writes, directs, and produces television spots and creates direct mail campaigns. Benoit began his political career in 1987 working on Rev. Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign, and since then has worked as campaign manager, senior staffer, or consultant on 31 campaigns, including those of David Dinkins, Geraldine Ferraro, Catherine Abate, Peter Vallone, Betsy Gotbaum, and Wesley Clark, as well as Anthony Weiner's 2005 mayoral bid.

**WALTER BREAKELL** served as campaign manager for William Weld's 2006 run for New York governor. He then ran Lynn Swann's 2006 gubernatorial campaign in Pennsylvania. From 2003 to 2004, Breakell served as director of strategic initiatives for New York State Governor George Pataki and in 2002 was director of research for the governor's successful re-election campaign. Previously, he was also vice president of Mercury Public Affairs, a New York-based public affairs firm, and in 1998 led the political research team for U.S. Senator Alfonse D'Amato.

**DOMINIC CARTER** hosts NY1 News' nightly political show, *Inside City Hall* and has been with the channel since its 1992 launch. In 2006 he received acclaim for his role as moderator for a series of New York statewide debates that included the races for U.S. Senate, governor, and attorney general. During the first debate with Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, he made national broadcasts, as Clinton admitted for the first time that she was considering a run for president.

**DEAN D'AMORE** served as campaign manager for Faso for Governor in 2006, taking a leave of absence from his duties as chief of staff for U.S. Representative Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY), a position he has held since 1995. He has worked on all of Rep. Boehlert's re-election campaigns, and prior to his career on Capitol Hill worked as a bicycle messenger in New York City.

**SUSAN DEL PERCIO**, a New York-based Republican strategist and partner at O'Reilly Strategic Communications, served as communications director and campaign spokesperson for John Faso's 2006 gubernatorial campaign. She has been a media spokesperson on many campaigns, both political and corporate, and regularly appears on television as a political analyst. Del Percio also served in the Giuliani administration.

**JOHN GALLAGHER** was communications director for Jeanine Pirro's 2006 attorney general campaign. Prior to this, he was vice president of communications for the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation. Previously he served as New York City regional communications director for the New York State Senate Majority under Senator Joseph L. Bruno, public affairs director for Senator Frank Padavan, and public affairs coordinator for former Assembly Minority Leader John Faso. Gallagher was just named first deputy press secretary for New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

**MAGGIE HABERMAN** is the City Hall reporter for the *New York Post*. She returned to the *Post* in 2006, where she had previously worked in 2001 covering Bloomberg's first mayoral campaign. In between, she spent three years at the City Hall Bureau of the *New York Daily News*, where she covered the 2005 mayoral primary, the Bloomberg administration, and rebuilding at the World Trade Center site. She also covered the Clinton-Lazio Senate race in 2000 and the 2004 presidential election.

**JOHN HAGGERTY** was campaign manager for Jeanine Pirro for Attorney General. He was also director of regional affairs for New York State Governor George Pataki. He is a veteran of several political campaigns, including Dennis Vacco's and Mayor Bloomberg's re-election campaign.

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**MARK HALPERIN** has been political director of ABC News since 1997. He manages the editorial coverage of politics throughout the ABC News universe. He joined ABC News in 1988, and previously covered special events, served as White House producer, and covered Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign. He is the co-author of *The Way to Win: Taking the White House in 2008* (Random House).

**PATRICK HEALY** is Metro political correspondent for the *New York Times*, covering state, city, and regional politics. Before joining the *Times* in January 2005, he spent five years as a reporter at the *Boston Globe*, where his beats included the Kerry presidential campaign, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the aftermath of 9/11 in New York City. His coverage of higher education for the *Globe* earned him a 2002 Livingston Award and other prizes.

**FRED P. HOCHBERG**, dean of Milano The New School for Management and Urban Policy, has more than 25 years of experience in business, government, civil rights, and philanthropy. From 1998 through 2000, he served as deputy and then acting administrator of the Small Business Administration. From 1994 to 1998, he worked as founder and president of Heyday Company, a private investment firm. Prior to that, he was president and chief operating officer of the Lillian Vernon Corporation. He currently sits on several boards, including the Citizens Budget Commission and the World Jewish Congress Foundation.

**ERICK MULLEN** served as campaign manager and media consultant for Sean Maloney's 2006 attorney general campaign. He was deputy campaign manager for Charles Schumer's 1998 Senate race, after which he served a year as Schumer's deputy chief of staff. Mullen was senior advisor to Senator Bill Bradley's 2000 presidential campaign and also served as an informal senior advisor to Hillary Rodham Clinton in her first U.S. Senate campaign. His firm, Mullen & Company, has represented General Wesley K. Clark and his political action committee, WesPAC, since 2004.

**JEFREY POLLOCK** is president of Global Strategy Group and was the pollster for Andrew Cuomo's successful 2006 campaign for attorney general. His other political clients include former presidential candidate and Senator John Edwards, West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin, New York State Attorney General and Governor-elect Eliot Spitzer, the United States Senate Democratic Policy Committee, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, and several members of Congress.

**PAUL RIVERA** is a New York-based political strategist who served as senior advisor and then campaign manager for Tom Suozzi's 2006 campaign for governor. He is a veteran of the past four presidential

elections and the 1992, 1996, and 2000 Democratic National Conventions.

**BEN SMITH** is a political columnist and blogger for the *New York Daily News*. Previously, he wrote for the *New York Observer* and started that paper's Politicker blog. He also writes about New York politics for the *New Republic*, and in the past has worked for the *Indianapolis Star*, the *Wall Street Journal Europe*, and the *New York Sun*.

**HARRY SIEGEL** was policy director for Tom Suozzi's 2006 gubernatorial campaign. He is currently managing editor of the Manhattan Institute website [citiesonahill.org](http://citiesonahill.org), as well as founder and editor-in-chief of *New Partisan*, an online journal of politics and culture. Previously, Siegel was editor-in-chief of the *New York Press* and editor of the *New York Sun's* OpEd page. He is also the second author, with Fred Siegel, of *The Prince of the City: Giuliani, New York, and the Genius of America Life* and has written for the *New Republic*, the *Weekly Standard* and the *New York Post*, among other publications.

**JON SILVAN**, founder and CEO of Global Strategy Group, has consulted for Eliot Spitzer since 1994. For Spitzer's successful 2006 gubernatorial run, he conducted all campaign research, direct mail, and media buying efforts. In addition to other public officials, his clients include Silverstein Properties, the YES Network, the National Cable and Telecommunications Association, General Electric, and Condé Nast.

**TONY SUBER** was a general consultant to Sean Maloney's 2006 campaign for attorney general. In 2005, he was a senior advisor to the mayoral campaign of Fernando Ferrer, under whom he had previously served as deputy borough president. Suber has also been a senior aide to former U.S. Representative Floyd H. Flake (R-NY), deputy director for intergovernmental relations for New York State Comptroller H. Carl McCall, and campaign manager for U.S. Representative Gregory Meeks (D-NY).

**RYAN F. TOOHEY** was the campaign manager of Eliot Spitzer's successful 2006 gubernatorial bid. He has worked at various private sector firms specializing in governmental and regulatory affairs as well as domestic and international politics. He began his career with Spitzer in 1998 working on his first successful campaign for attorney general, after which he worked in the AG's office for one year. Toohey's political clients have included the government of Colombia, the "Referendum Si" campaign in Venezuela, Dick Gephardt for President, and ACT (America Coming Together).

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