

## **Machines** **by Dan Jacoby**

Mayor Michael Bloomberg has won reelection by a landslide.

Yes, he has billions of dollars, and he spent an enormous amount of money on his campaign. But this race wasn't decided based on television commercials. It wasn't decided based on slick flyers. It was decided based on who was the better candidate. And Freddy Ferrer just didn't match up.

Fernando Ferrer came up through the Bronx Democratic machine. His political success in the Bronx was due not to any ability to reach voters, but to his ability to ally himself with the politically powerful. Even his recent Democratic primary victory came as a result of securing last-minute endorsements from the politically connected. Without that string of endorsements, he almost certainly would have faced Anthony Weiner in a runoff, and would most likely have lost.

Instead, Ferrer spent the last eight weeks proving his inability to gain support from the voters. Yesterday's election showed he has no support outside of the base that got him the nomination – and precious little inside that base as well. Even those people who said they were going to vote for him did so without any enthusiasm. People he should have been able to count on for financial support deserted him. His campaign events were a morass of technical difficulties, his commercials were boring, and his attempts to bring in Democratic “bigwigs” not only looked desperate, they were desperate.

Four years ago, Mark Green beat Ferrer in the primary runoff. As ugly as that race was, Green still would have been the next mayor if it weren't for the 9/11 attacks. His insurgent campaign had the earmarks of a winner.

Before that, Democrats nominated Ruth Messenger and David Dinkins – people who came up through the machine. Dinkins eaked out a win over Rudy Giuliani in 1989, but lost four years later when New Yorkers realized what the political machine really produces. And most people don't even remember Ruth Messenger now.

Nationally, Democrats have lost seven out of the last ten Presidential elections. The only winners were insurgents – Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton. Machine candidates, like John Kerry, Al Gore and Michael Dukakis, were hopelessly inept campaigners.

It's time the Democratic party learned its lesson. And slowly, ever so slowly, the lesson is getting through. Democratic National Committee chairman Howard Dean (himself an insurgent) is beginning to reach out to non-machine Democrats. People like Paul Hackett, who will probably run for U.S. Senate in Ohio next year, and Eric Massa, who is running for Congress in New York's 29<sup>th</sup> district, have never been elected, and came in from the outside rather than up through the machine. Both candidates are bright, thoughtful, with excellent non-politician credentials, and both will be outstanding representatives. Both also have an excellent chance of winning next fall.

Democrats in New York, at both city and state levels, should follow these examples. We should find candidates who did not come up through the machine and are not the pick of district and county leaders, but who have good ideas and can connect with the voters. Only then will we have a chance of winning.