

**By BRIAN ACKLEY**  
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Admit it. While Election night was both fascinating and labored, New Yorkers couldn't help but feel a little jealous. And a little left out.

How come all the folks in Dayton, Des Moines, Duluth and Daytona Beach got to have all the fun? New York flashed blue quicker than a John Edwards fist pump.

That, of course, is about to change. The question isn't if but when.

In case you missed it – and we're not kidding about this – the first 2008 presidential poll has been released, and filed under the heading of "shocking as New York voting Democratic" is the news Hillary Clinton is the favored candidate by 27 percent of Democrats and Independents surveyed.

What may be of greatest interest to those from Amherst to Amityville is not so much the cards Clinton may play, but finding out just where and when Rudolph Giuliani might play his. The former Big Apple CEO is in the delicious position of trying to decide just how he thinks he can disrupt Democrats the most. The same aforementioned poll tabbed Giuliani as the favored and number one White House choice, among Republicans and Independents, at a robust 33 percent.

Should he choose not to wait that long, how about in 2006, challenging Clinton in a re-election bid for the Senate? So overshadowing are the events of September 11 that people almost forget he was the U.S. Senate candidate in 2000 before prostate cancer forced him to the sidelines.

How about two months from now? On the same day one of the former mayor's spokespeople said he wouldn't be a candidate to replace Attorney General John Ashcroft in the second Bush cabinet, Giuliani himself was offering a different thought.

In a sparsely reported post-presidential election speech in Alabama, America's Mayor told a Birmingham audience that "you have to have that conversation with the president," when asked about a cabinet post. True, that has long been a stock Giuliani answer when asked about such an appointment, but a spot in the Bush administration – if not as AG then as the head of homeland security – gives Giuliani a true public platform that he hasn't had for a couple of years now. "The Bush people are likely to choose someone more connected to Bush, more part of his circle," offered Fred Siegel, a senior fellow in Washington's Progressive Policy Institute to *NY Newsday* when asked about the presidential race four years hence.

Clearly, Giuliani will be back in politics, but it is hard to reasonably assess his broad nationwide appeal among GOP voters, who last week unmistakably indicated a tilt to the conservative side. Giuliani has of course had his own little extramarital misstep, and is on record supporting both abortion and gay rights.

Interestingly, he's still actively accepting donations to the Political Action Committee first formed to help fund his 2000 senate run. One Washington-based government watchdog outfit pegs contributions to that fund in the six figures in just the last two years. It's not the kind of account that makes potential challengers quiver, but there's a comfort in just knowing the campaign spigot is still flowing rather freely Giuliani's way.

President? Senator? Governor? Cabinet member? It's easy to make a case for any of them, but close observers still insist the Oval Office is Giuliani's prize, and asking him to run against Clinton in 2006 would all but assure no White House bid. A win, and it would be difficult for Rudy to wiggle out after just two years as our senator. Of course, losing would even more seriously derail the Giuliani express.

In fact, the whole ring-around-the-political-rosy is rife with New York heavyweights, all of who face decisions that will start a tumble of dominos that may know no end. Re-elected Democrat Senator Chuck Schumer might want a run at the governor's mansion in two years. And so might Democrat Eliot Spitzer, the Empire State's bulldog Attorney General. And, as unpopular as he may be within the confines of his own borders, current Governor George Pataki is still considered a player of national significance.

Next time, from North Tonawanda to Nassau, we'll matter.

*(Brian Ackley is a columnist for the Weekly Independent Newspapers (WIN) of Western New York. WIN is a consortium of 19 community weekly newspapers in Erie and Niagara counties with a combined paid circulation of 75,000 homes, providing collaborative advertising and editorial support for member publications. For more information on WIN, or to provide feedback on this column, visit our website at [www.wnynewspapers.com](http://www.wnynewspapers.com). Opinions expressed here are those of the author.)*