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LOCAL NEWS

Women's group protests NYC's scandal-plagued candidates, but will it affect turnout?

5 days ago by James Ford Reporter

Eliot Spitzer runs for comptroller
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STORY SUMMARY

Eliot Spitzer runs for comptroller



Eliot Spitzer is running for NYC comptroller, more than five years since leaving office in prostitution scandal.

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strongly against political candidates Eliot Spitzer, Anthony Weiner and Vito Lopez Wednesday. It's an open question, however, as to how strongly the word of the National Organization for Women influences votes in the cases of the three men with sex scandals in their pasts.

"Why would you vote for a guy who just used women as objects?" asked Sonia Ossorio, president of the New York chapter of NOW, at a news conference on the steps of City Hall that had about three times the number of journalists as it did women's advocates. Her organization, along with the Women's City Club of New York, pointed out that Weiner, while in Congress, tweeted and texted suggestive pictures of himself multiple times to at least a half dozen women. He's now running for mayor.

Former governor Eliot Spitzer, NOW reminded its audience, was found by federal agents to have used prostitutes over the course of years, at a rate of \$1000 or more per hour. He's now running for comptroller.

Mayoral candidate Anthony Weiner, NOW pointed out, tweeted and texted suggestive pictures of himself multiple times to at least a half dozen women while he was in Congress. NOW also criticized potential city council candidate Vito Lopez, who was forced to resign as Brooklyn Democratic Party leader after he settled two sexual harassment lawsuits and was accused of harassment by other women.

Still, the biggest target of NOW was the candidate for whom members of the group held up a sign reading "We can't trust a john with our dough," Eliot Spitzer.

"Do we want an elected official who has broken the law and who has participated in sustaining an industry that we all know has a long history of exploiting women and girls?" Ossario asked. But PIX11 News sought to determine how likely it is that the answer to that question could be 'yes' for some voters.

"A lot of other women will say, 'So what?', but it will have an impact," said Hank Sheinkopf, a political consultant who has handled decades of New York campaigns, including a past campaign of Eliot Spitzer. Sheinkopf said that the advice of NOW, The Women's City Club and other women's groups has limitations of class and race.

One demographic in particular, Sheinkopf said, must be appealed to, and he was skeptical as to how well NOW's message would resonate with them. "A 55 year-old plus African American woman," Sheinkopf described as the most reliable voter in the races for citywide offices. "Those are the people most likely to turn out in elections, and they can win and lose races for you."

An informal poll by PIX11 News of voters in that demographic on Lenox Avenue in Harlem left Spitzer's chances fair, at least.

Katrina Gilliam clearly remembered Spitzer's prostitution scandal, but when asked if it would prevent her from voting for the former governor, "No, not really," she said. She said that Spitzer was the only candidate she knew who was running.

Shanaqua Bey was walking up Lenox Avenue carrying a sign endorsing Christine Quinn for mayor. When it came to Spitzer and his pursuit of the comptroller's office, however, she said, "You have to take everything in consideration. Look at the pros and cons of everything."

She was by no means ready to rule out voting for Spitzer. Thelma Brown agreed, saying, "Really, I haven't made up my mind yet," she said.

Also, on Monday, while Eliot Spitzer was making his announcement that he was running for comptroller, PIX11 asked a variety of women in all five boroughs if he could count on their vote.

Almost all of the women had to be reminded who Eliot Spitzer was, but more women than not said they were willing to vote for the man who'd had to resign his governorship because of his sex scandal.

However, there was a clear age demarcation in the unscientific poll. Most women over age 35 were as critical of Spitzer as NOW is, but most women younger than 35 were willing to cut Spitzer a break.

That could be telling for Spitzer. Women older than 35 are far more likely to vote than women younger than that age.

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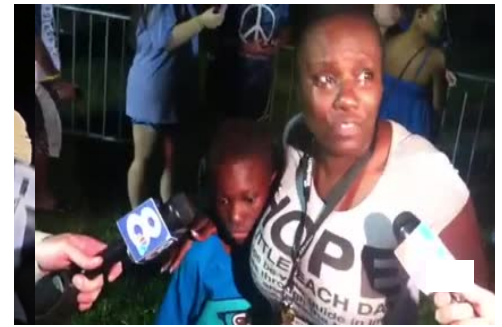
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