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Endorsement - New York Post: Spitzer for Attorney General

By Editorial Board

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NEW YORK -

The choices for New York state attorney general this year are not, on the whole, terribly satisfying.

The incumbent, a Democrat seeking a second term, long ago abandoned any pretense of occupying his party's center - which he ran from four years ago.

Indeed, he's used the office for a host of dubious headline-grabbing crusades designed to raise his public profile for a gubernatorial run in 2006.

The Republican candidate, Judge Dora Irizarry, seems well-meaning - but demonstrates a woefully weak grasp of the issues, and has no apparent understanding of the responsibilities of the office.

So, with some reluctance, we endorse the Democrat - Eliot Spitzer.

Of late, to be sure, he's done some important work - particularly in leading the charge on reforming Wall Street.

His civil suit against five telecom CEOs uncovered the blatant conflicts-of-interest involving such elite investment banking houses as Merrill Lynch and Salomon Smith Barney. He obtained a \$100 million fine against the former and forced it to separate

its securities-analysis practice from its investment-banking business.

This sort of aggressive law-enforcement helps keep Wall Street healthy, and a robust financial-services industry is critical to New York City's economy. So Spitzer is doing God's work here.

He also took the lead in digging into the web behind Middle East terrorism, demanding that the Texas-based Holy Land Foundation - reportedly linked to the Palestinian terror group Hamas - turn over critical financial information.

Yet he regularly indulges in anti-corporate rhetorical excess, particularly on environmental issues, where he's railed against utilities' "excess profits."

But that's Eliot Spitzer.

It is to be hoped that his ability to perform diligent public service will outweigh his penchant for self-promotion during the next four years - as he continues his pursuit of the Executive Mansion in Albany.

As for Judge Irizarry, who is something of a GOP sacrificial lamb in this race, we hope she tries again for public office. A native of Puerto Rico, she came to New York at a young age and rose from public housing to graduate from Yale and Columbia Law School.

She spent 16 years as a state and federal prosecutor and went on to serve a number of judicial appointments; she is the first Hispanic woman to sit on the state Court of Claims and as a Brooklyn Supreme Court justice.

Surprisingly, for a Republican, she's running to the left of Spitzer, somewhat bizarrely terming him "soft on white-collar criminals" - and advocating virtual repeal of the Rockefeller drug laws. (But that's the New York GOP these days, it seems.)

But, to repeat, Irizarry's failure to comprehend the issues is substantial - disqualifyingly so.

In any event, she has no chance to win.

Thus, while we hope against hope that the incumbent will stifle his penchant for grandstanding over the next four years, we nevertheless urge the re-election of Eliot Spitzer.

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