
October 31, 2002

Re-elect Eliot Spitzer

During his four years as New York State's attorney general, Eliot Spitzer has used the powers of his office, and his own considerable legal skills, to pursue some worthy targets, from abusive practices on Wall Street to irresponsible marketing by gun manufacturers and major threats to the environment. Often, he has worked in cooperation with other state attorneys general to help fill large enforcement voids left by the federal government. In the process, Mr. Spitzer has emerged as a savvy and responsible champion of the public interest, easily earning our endorsement for a second term over his token Republican opponent, Dora Irizarry, a former state court judge.

Mr. Spitzer's immediate task upon becoming attorney general was to restore the office to its tradition of professionalism and bipartisanship after four years under his patronage-obsessed Republican predecessor, Dennis Vacco. He rose to the challenge, selecting a capable team of bureau chiefs and discarding hiring criteria that elevated political connections over legal experience, competence and ethics.

Over all, Mr. Spitzer has shown a penchant for weighing in constructively on public issues -- whether by bringing litigation, as he did to try to get owners of Midwestern utilities to address the problem of acid rain drifting into New York, or by coming up with practical proposals for complicated problems like mental patients whose refusal to take their medication leads to psychotic symptoms, or the need for charitable organizations to share data to help ensure sensible distribution of 9/11 aid. In the past year, Mr. Spitzer has achieved national renown at a level rare for a state attorney general by going after deceptive policies and practices at Merrill Lynch and other investment banks.

There is every reason to hope Mr. Spitzer's second term will be just as impressive as his first, provided he takes pains to avoid letting his future political ambitions interfere with his typically sober legal judgment. We are happy to endorse him for a second term.