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## The Primary for Attorney General

The race for the Democratic nomination for attorney general seems to have been conducted well below the public's radar screen, which is too bad. It is an important post, and New York has seldom seen as good a group of candidates, with such strong qualifications for the office they seek.

Oliver Koppell has already served as Attorney General on an appointive basis in 1993, following an impressive 23-year career championing good government and environmental causes in the State Assembly. Catherine Abate, a two-term State Senator from Manhattan, gained valuable managerial experience at the helm of several public agencies, including a challenging two-year stint as New York City's Corrections Commissioner.

Eliot Spitzer, a former New York City prosecutor who is spending millions of his own money on the race, has shown himself to be a tireless campaigner who would enliven the office with fresh energy and ideas. Evan Davis, who was counsel to former Gov. Mario Cuomo, has an impressive legal background that includes a prestigious Supreme Court clerkship, work on the House Watergate inquiry and a partnership in a large New York City law firm. The

winner of the primary on Sept. 15 will face the Republican incumbent, Dennis Vacco, in November.

Ms. Abate has a fine record of public service. But despite her recent expression of regret, we remain troubled by the lack of candor she showed when she took the job of Corrections Commissioner without divulging that her father had been identified as an organized crime figure by New Jersey law enforcement officials.

Mr. Davis deserves praise for limiting campaign contributions to \$2,500 and rejecting donations from corporations and other special-interest groups. It is a bold step designed to highlight the need for statewide campaign finance reform and to keep the attorney general's office removed from political fund-raising.

But, in a close call, our endorsement goes to Mr. Koppell, another longtime advocate of campaign reform, whose public service was marked by a principled and intelligent approach to issues. We believe he offers the most appealing mix of legal expertise, managerial experience and the political skills required to mount an effective fall campaign.