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## Cuomo and Green Rivalry Sharpens in Final Debate

By JONATHAN P. HICKS

The Democratic candidates for attorney general met in their final joint appearance yesterday in a debate that highlighted the intensifying tension between the two leading candidates, Mark Green and Andrew M. Cuomo.

In the debate, sponsored by the New York City Bar Association, Mr. Cuomo struck back forcefully amid Mr. Green's attacks on Mr. Cuomo's record as secretary of housing and urban development in the Clinton administration and his ethical conduct after leaving that cabinet post.

It also represented the new competitive dynamic of the primary campaign, since it was the first with just Mr. Cuomo, Mr. Green and Sean Patrick Maloney, a former aide to President Bill Clinton. On Tuesday, another candidate, Charlie King, a former chairman of the New York County Democratic Party, dropped out of the race, but he will remain on the Sept. 12 primary ballot.

In the debate, Mr. Green harshly criticized Mr. Cuomo, saying he "sued a slumlord and went to work for that slumlord and earned \$1.2 million in two years and got \$800,000 in campaign contributions from him."

Mr. Green, a former New York City public advocate, was referring to an article published in The Village Voice yesterday. It reported that Mr. Cuomo, while housing secretary, pursued legal action against a businessman, Andrew L. Farkas, who later settled the case with federal officials in an agreement signed by Mr. Cuomo's counsel. Years later, Mr. Cuomo went to work for Mr. Farkas's new company, earning \$1.2 million over two years. Mr. Farkas and his associates have also contributed \$800,000 to Mr. Cuomo's campaign.

"I'm not here making personal attacks but programmatic criticism," Mr. Green said.

Mr. Cuomo did not address the substance of Mr. Green's criticism, nor the Voice article. But he responded by calling his rival a master of negative campaigning. "My opponent has been running for office for many, many, many years," Mr. Cuomo said. "And the one consistent thing is that he will go down in the history books for the most negative campaigns."

In the closing days of a campaign in which Mr. Cuomo has raised more money and received a larger share of political and labor endorsements, Mr. Green has sought to get traction with a series of attacks aimed at his

opponent. He has also touted his endorsement by The New York Times editorial page. (And in a twist, Mr. Cuomo has also used a snippet from that endorsement that is critical of Mr. Green in his own campaign ad.)

At a press conference after the debate at the bar association's Midtown headquarters, Mr. Green said he felt there was still ample time to reverse any advantage Mr. Cuomo might hold. "He has had every advantage except the one that counts: The best record," Mr. Green said, standing with several prominent lawyers who had endorsed him.

Yesterday's debate was the last in which Mr. Cuomo has agreed to participate. He declined invitations for three televised debates in the weeks leading up to the election.

Supporters of Mr. Green suggested that Mr. Cuomo did not want to risk the possibility of a poor performance in front of larger television audiences.

However, Mr. Cuomo said that he has taken part in dozens of appearances with the other candidates and that he has found other methods of getting his message to voters to be more effective.

While Mr. Cuomo was having his ethics questioned by his opponent, he did get one high-level endorsement yesterday, when the Rev. Al Sharpton endorsed him. Mr. Sharpton often tangled with Mr. Cuomo's father, former Gov. Mario M. Cuomo.

In an interview yesterday, Mr. Sharpton said that his endorsement was based on the "need to unite and be prepared for November," explaining that Democrats expected a vigorous race between their nominee and the Republican candidate, Jeanine F. Pirro.

"Andrew Cuomo and I have not always been on the same page," Mr. Sharpton said. "But we've always been on the same book when it came to civil rights and economic issues. I felt that he was the best option at this point for those of us who want to see an attorney general's office that was aggressive in dealing with the issues of civil rights and the environment."

Mr. Sharpton said he will be campaigning alongside Mr. Cuomo at churches in Brooklyn and Harlem this weekend.

When asked why he had not endorsed Mr. Green, Mr. Sharpton said that he harbored some displeasure with Mr. Green's campaign tactic of criticizing Mr. Cuomo's record on a nearly daily basis.

It was also clear that there remained lingering bitterness from the 2001 mayoral race, when Mr. Green ran for mayor. Shortly before the Democratic primary runoff between Mr. Green and Fernando Ferrer, operatives of the Green campaign sought to rally white voters in Brooklyn by insinuating that Mr. Ferrer was beholden to Mr. Sharpton, in part by distributing fliers with demeaning caricatures of Mr. Sharpton.

“What bothers me is that I think he engages in the politics of desperation that sets in during the last days of his campaigns,” Mr. Sharpton said yesterday. “He tries to win by using crash-and-burn tactics. It only leads to Republican conservative victories. We can’t have a repeat of 2001, because it will come back to haunt us.”

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