

# DAILY NEWS

## Big Labor has a grip on Gotham

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With candidates backed by the Working Families Party winning the Democratic nominations for city comptroller and public advocate, fiscal-minded folks are warning of a new era of union power in New York. It's a little late for that.

The unions already have taken over, as the city's bloated pension and payrolls attest. The election confirmed a stranglehold that socks Gotham taxpayers a staggering \$107,000 a year for each employee.

Most reports on the victories of John Liu and Bill de Blasio cited the union muscle behind the Working Families Party, which is tight with the ACORN radicals. The organizations share key leaders and have offices in the same Brooklyn building.

But the primary winners, virtually guaranteed to win since the GOP offers only token resistance, are just the latest proof of the leftward march of local Democrats. Hillary Rodham Clinton took both the Democratic and Working Families ballot lines in her Senate campaigns, as did Eliot Spitzer and David Paterson in 2006. The top ranks and policies of the parties are largely indistinguishable.

The special-interest coalition already has sunk its claws deep into the mayoral candidates. Mayor Bloomberg, touting his sweetheart union deals, fought hard for the WFP backing, which went to Bill Thompson in a close vote.

Largely because of the union lock on pols, City Hall and Albany ignored Recession Economics 101 and raised taxes by a combined \$13 billion this year. Even now, as revenues continue to plunge and private workers lose their jobs, there is almost no talk by Bloomberg or Thompson of reducing labor costs.

As for tax cuts for beleaguered New Yorkers, fugheddaboutit!

City health and pension costs have risen 182 percent since 2000, according to one study. The average annual tab of \$107,000 for each employee includes \$38,000 for benefits and is rising twice as fast as those in the private sector.

Sure, Liu and de Blasio are a concern. But we got in this hole without them. How much worse can they make it?