

The first phase of New York's contentious and often spicy mayoral campaign is winding down in advance of the primary election scheduled for September 10th. Our pre-election roundup shines the spotlight on the candidates pollsters say have the best chance to win

# Duking It Out in



BY *Shimmy Blum*  
PHOTOS *AFP/Imagebank*



## How Voters Define Themselves

2013 New York City Electorate

Number of registered voters:

**4.5 million** (est.)

Party ID:

Democrat: **67%**    Republican: **13%**    Independent: **19%**

Ideology:

Liberal: **39%**    Moderate: **35%**    Conservative: **26%**

Racial breakdown:

White: **39%**    African-American: **23%**    Hispanic: **25%**    Asian: **10%**

(Source: Marist poll)

## The Jewish Vote

Jewish vote as percentage of city electorate in 2013:

**15%**

Jewish vote as percentage of 2013 Democratic primary electorate:

**17%**

Jewish vote as percentage of 2013 Republican primary electorate:

**20%**

Former New York mayor John Lindsay once called his position “the second-toughest job in America.” It may be tough, but the post also accords prominence to the person holding it — witness Mayors Rudolph Giuliani and Michael Bloomberg, who both earned widespread adulation and scorn.

That’s part of the reason more than ten candidates have been competing in the first leg of the selection process — the September 10 primaries — which have provided ample drama for politicians well beyond the city’s borders. Mayor Bloomberg, who was elected a few weeks after the 9/11 terror attacks, is stepping down after three terms in office.

Whoever ultimately wins a ticket to Gracie Mansion on November 5 will assume the reins of a city far more peaceful, prosperous, and stable than the one either Giuliani or Bloomberg found at the beginning of their tenures.

However, the low crime rates, boom on Wall Street, improved race relations, and 12 years of terror-free living raise expectations for the new mayor, too. In many aspects, there is more room for downside than upside — and New York’s new leader will be hard-pressed to keep the positive momentum going.



**Q** Christine Quinn

City Council Speaker Christine Quinn has remained at or near the top of the polls throughout the primary campaign. Ms. Quinn is considered the de facto favorite and would be New York’s first female mayor, but her eventual victory is far from certain.

She has not engendered enough enthusiasm to break away from the field, and she scores mediocre numbers in hypothetical runoff races with individual rivals. Ms. Quinn’s close identification with Mayor Michael Bloomberg and his policies is doing her no favors among Democrats eager to see them go. Previous controversies over her alleged manipulation of public funds to reward friends and punish enemies haven’t helped either.

**Age:** 47

**Career path:** Chief of staff to New York City Councilman Thomas K. Duane, 1992-96; New York City Councilwoman for the 3<sup>rd</sup> District in Manhattan, 1999-present; New York City Council speaker, 2006-present.

**Notable career hallmark:** Became New York City’s first female council speaker; worked with Mayor Bloomberg to pass bill that overturned term limits that were put in place by the city’s voters.

**Notable endorsements:** National Organization for Women, Emily’s List, and feminist icon Gloria Steinem.

**Notable quote:** “I decided that the mayor and I would have a productive and cordial working relationship, and because I decided it, *it was so.*” (*New York Magazine*)

**Aspects of interest to the Orthodox Jewish community:** Wrote open letter to Columbia University urging the administration to cancel Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s 2007 speech; is an aggressive advocate for alternative family lifestyles; expressed support for maintaining the Bloomberg administration’s policy of requiring a consent form when performing *metzitzah b’peh* during bris milah.

**Top Orthodox advisor:** Ezra Friedlander

## The Democratic Finalists

It’s been 24 years since a Democrat (David Dinkins) was elected mayor in this overwhelmingly Democratic city, although many pollsters say the long drought will be broken in November’s general election.

However, the eventual nominee will first have to emerge among a crowded seven-candidate field. In the likely event that the winner on primary day does not garner 40 percent of the vote, he or she will face the runner-up in a runoff election on October 1.

The Democratic mayoral primary has been quite volatile, but as voting day nears, the latest polls indicate that the nominee will in all likelihood be named Christine Quinn, Bill de Blasio, or Bill Thompson.

2013 Democratic primary electorate:

Race:

White: **41%**    African-American: **25%**

Hispanic: **21%**    Asian: **9%**

Ideology:

Liberal: **51%**    Moderate: **32%**    Conservative: **17%**

(Source: Marist poll)

# T Bill Thompson Jr.

governing style may ultimately turn him into the quintessential middle-of-the-road, compromise candidate that voters turn to once they're done toying with the rest. Additionally, although Mr. Thompson's race is no novelty in a post-Mayor Dinkins and President Obama world, it can only serve him well among the city's large African-American electorate.



**Age:** 60

**Career path:** Chief of staff to Representative Fred Richmond, 1974-82; Deputy Brooklyn borough president, 1982-93; Brooklyn representative to New York City Board of Education, 1994-96; Board of Education president, 1996-01; New York City comptroller, 2002-09; President of the Battery City Authority, 2010-12.

**Notable career hallmark:** After being outspent by 14-1, Thompson overcame a double-digit deficit in the polls and came within five percent of defeating Michael Bloomberg in his 2009 reelection race.

**Notable endorsements:** Assemblyman Dov Hikind, former senator Al D'Amato, United Federation of Teachers, United Uniformed (law enforcement) Workers union, and Uniformed Firefighters Association.

**Notable quote:** "We're not going to go backwards on crime [-fighting measures]." (*The Jewish Week*)

**Aspects of interest to the Orthodox Jewish community:** Was active in the "Blacks and Jews in Conversation" organization to help heal divisions between the communities, especially after the Crown Heights riots; was the first city comptroller to invest in Israeli bonds; was a member of a 2007 AIPAC panel on Iran sanctions.

**Top Orthodox advisors:** Jonathan Schenker, Chaskel Bennett

The man who nearly beat Michael Bloomberg last round is at it again. Although Bill Thompson Jr. achieves respectable numbers in the polls, he lacks the pizzazz and freshness boosting some of his rivals.

However, Thompson's agreeable temperament and consensus

# B Bill de Blasio

Public advocate Bill de Blasio's last-minute surge to the top of the field comes as no surprise to seasoned political observers. Mr. de Blasio proved himself to be a master political strategist when he ran Hillary Clinton's first Senate campaign in 2000, leading her from an even race to a double-digit victory. When he subsequently ran his own races for City Council and public advocate, he managed victories in tough, crowded primary fields as well.

Tall and poised, Bill de Blasio's strident liberalism has helped set him apart from his more moderate rivals. Mr. de Blasio's platform — amplified in advertisements by his mixed-race son — includes introducing a surtax on wealthy New Yorkers to pay for preschool and after-school programs, and building or preserving 200,000 affordable

housing units. He also calls for an aggressive reversal of stop-and-frisk and other Giuliani/Bloomberg-era crime fighting policies.

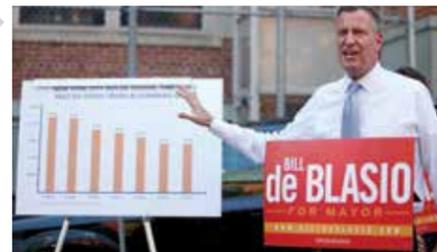
Should Bill de Blasio become the Democratic nominee, only time will tell how well his ideology will play among a general electorate that is over 60 percent moderate or conservative.

**Age:** 52

**Career path:** Volunteer coordinator and City Hall aide for David Dinkins, 1989-93; New York/New Jersey regional director for the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1997-00; Clinton for Senate campaign manager, 2000; New York City councilman for the 39<sup>th</sup> district, 2002-10; New York City public advocate, 2010-present.

**Notable career hallmark:** Created "New York City's Worst Landlord" list to publicize landlords who were delinquent in repairs and other tenant services.

**Notable Endorsements:** Former presidential candidate Howard Dean, controversial



Jewish billionaire George Soros, editors of liberal *Salon* and the *Nation* magazines.

**Notable quote:** "I'm Bill de Blasio. I'm the progressive choice for mayor." (WABC mayoral debate)

**Aspects of interest to the Orthodox Jewish community:** Represented council district that's about 20 percent Orthodox, including parts of Boro Park; aggressively battled Mayor Bloomberg's proposed cuts to Priority 5 and Priority 7 child care vouchers, which overwhelmingly benefit Orthodox communities.

**Top Orthodox advisor:** Pinny Ringel



# L Joseph Lhota

banker at First Boston and Paine Webber, 1980-94; Budget director in Giuliani administration, 1995-98; Deputy mayor in Giuliani administration, 1998-01; Executive vice president of Cablevision, 2002-10; Executive vice president of the Madison Square Garden Company, 2010-11; Chairman of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, 2011-13.

**Notable career hallmark:** As MTA chairman, increased productivity by \$16 million by better expenditure targeting; spent \$30 million to enhance services at underserved locations; oversaw raises in tolls, fares, and executive salaries.

**Notable endorsements:** Former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, all Republican City Council members, Conservative Party.

**Notable quote:** "Call me 'Yoely' from now on." (*The Jewish Press*)

**Aspects of interest to the Orthodox Jewish community:** Expressed support for taxpayer-funded relief for private school parents; reversed his initial support for the Bloomberg administration's required consent form for *metzitzah b'peh*, seeing it as a slippery slope toward excessive government intervention in religious affairs.

**Top Orthodox advisor:** Michael Fragin

With extensive careers in both government and the private sector (he coordinated the city's response to the 9/11 attacks), Joe Lhota certainly has the resume to be New York's next mayor. On the campaign trail, he touts his work in the Giuliani administration, which is almost universally credited with reversing New York's high crime rate and other negative trends.

At the same time, Mr. Lhota has differentiated himself from his former boss by promising a friendlier personality and better outreach to the city's diverse communities. He piqued the interest of the city's Jewish communities by revealing in February that his maternal grandmother was a Jewish woman named Ita Steinberg. Although a practicing Christian, the candidate is thus halachically Jewish. If Lhota is to reach Gracie Mansion, he would be the city's first bearded mayor since William Gaynor, who served from 1910 to 1913.

**Age:** 58

**Career path:** Investment

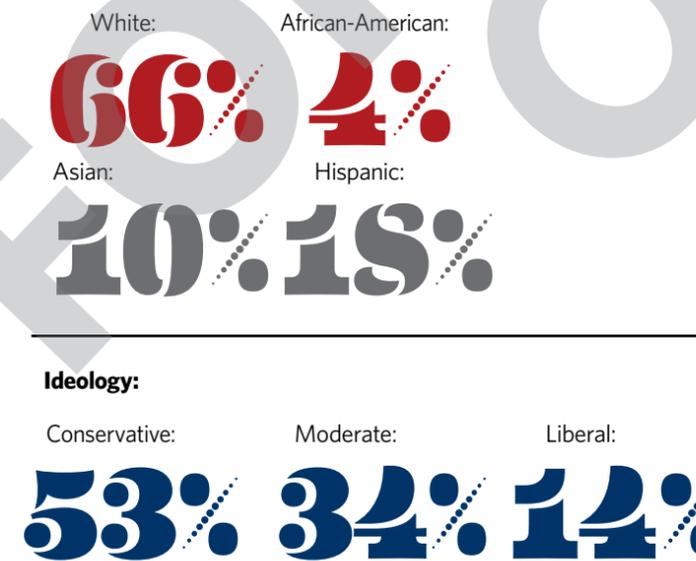
## The Republican Finalists

After seeing New York's last two mayors win office with the Republican label, the city's typically powerless GOP would happily continue down that road. The dynamics of the 2013 race, however, mean that that's a lot easier said than done, especially since 52 percent of the city's voters say that Mayor Bloomberg is merely doing a poor or fair job, as the latest Marist poll shows.

None of this, however, has stopped the party's two top mayoral candidates — former Deputy Mayor Joseph Lhota and billionaire John Catsimatidis — from soldiering on in a spirited primary race, and vowing to largely continue the

policies of Giuliani and Bloomberg. Mr. Lhota has held a modest lead throughout the race, but it is tightening and very fluid. With the lone other primary candidate receiving minimal support, it likely that the winner on September 10<sup>th</sup> will garner 40 percent and avoid a potentially bruising runoff.

The victor will have his work cut out to replicate the electoral successes of Mayors Giuliani and Bloomberg — Democrats trounce the GOP contenders in early general election polls — but if Democrats choose one of their weaker candidates, the Republicans' window opens somewhat wider.



## Duking It Out in New York



### C John Catsimatidis

The comparisons between John Catsimatidis and the man he seeks to replace are hard to ignore. The former Democrat switched party affiliation to Republican in advance of the mayoral run – his first attempt for political office; he has a net worth of \$3 to \$5 billion; and he’s not particularly charismatic.

Born in Greece, the college dropout and son of a busboy went from a job in a grocery store to running a \$25 million business at age 24. Despite his business success and praise of the Bloomberg administration, Mr. Catsimatidis sees his \$99 suits and lack of polish as a clear difference from Mr. Bloomberg’s elitist aura. He has gotten into verbal skirmishes with voters on the campaign trail and mocked his opponent, Joe Lhota, as a “maintenance man.” In addition to focusing on the continuation of current crime fighting policies and other major issues, Mr. Catsimatidis has focused on unique, quirkiest issues, too, such as providing police officers with tricycles and making city bicycle stands more attractive.

Although the outsider by conventional standards, Mr. Catsimatidis’ money is a major asset for Republicans, who are facing an uphill general election battle. He has committed to spend as much as

\$19 million for the general election campaign, and vowed to drop “nuclear bombs” against any opponent who goes negative against him.

**Age:** 64

**Career path:** Opened first grocery store and purchased the store that launched the Red Apple Group, which now includes retail, real estate, and aviation interests, 1971; acquired Gristedes supermarket chain, 1986; purchased United Refining company, 1987.

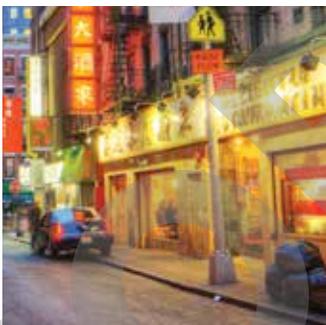
**Notable career hallmark:** Donated to a diverse array of political interests, including the Republican National Committee, Bill and Hillary Clinton, Mitt Romney, former Connecticut senator Joseph Lieberman, and Congressman Charles Rangel.

**Notable endorsements:** Former New York governor George Pataki, Liberal Party, Sergeants Benevolent Association.

**Notable quote:** “What they do all over the world ... is they hire the top 25 percent of their graduates to be teachers. What they do in our country, we hire the bottom 25 percent.” (*Daily News* mayoral debate)

**Aspects of interest to the Orthodox Jewish community:** Expressed support for private school tuition relief and opposition to government regulation of *metzitzah b’peh* in bris milah; is a member of Rabbi Arthur Schneier’s Appeal of Conscience Foundation.

**Top Orthodox advisor:** Yoel Lefkowitz



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