

# FORWARD

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## Why Even Ed Koch Will Vote for Giuliani

Although the Jewish vote went overwhelmingly for Bill Clinton in the 1996 Presidential election, most New York City Jewish voters will abandon the Democratic Party and vote for the Republican-Liberal candidate, Rudy Giuliani, next November. Federally, the Jewish vote remains liberal, favoring abortion rights, gay rights and public support for the arts. Locally, however, it is increasingly conservative on issues such as taxes and crime. Contrary to conventional wisdom, Jewish support for Mr. Giuliani has less to do with Crown Heights - he won two-thirds of the Jewish vote in 1989, two years before the Crown Heights riots - than it has to do the political priorities of the city's Jews today.

During the past 25 years, the Jewish population of New York City has declined from more than 2 million to just over 1 million, while simultaneously becoming more geographically concentrated and more polarized in religious terms. The enormous working-class and middle-class Jewish communities of Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx have migrated. As a 1990 UJA report showed, two-thirds of the city's Jews live in Manhattan and Brooklyn. From 1981 to 1991, the Jewish population of Queens declined by 25%, as young Reform and Conservative Jews moved to Manhattan or the suburbs while their parents retired to Florida. In Brooklyn, Russian immigrants, the growth of the Syrian and Orthodox communities and an influx of ecumenical Jews to Park Slope, Cobble Hill and Brooklyn Heights have only partially compensated for the loss of Jews from traditional Jewish strongholds.

A shift in Jewish occupations and employment has also shaped political behavior. Jews, who once populated the city's educational and social welfare bureaucracies, are aging; most of the early retirees from the teachers' union during the past two years have been Jewish. Jewish social workers now pursue careers in private practice or non-profit organizations rather than the city's archaic social service agencies. Civil service. Once a route upwards for Jews who faced barriers in the private sector, is less attractive today. For many Jews, the business world is more responsive to merit than city government, where ethnic balance and political criteria can prevail. As a result, Jews, who long ago left the craft and trade unions, are no longer visible in the leadership of the municipal unions, with the notable exception of the president of the United Federation of Teachers' Sandy Feldman.

Simply put, Jews have a diminishing stake in public sector employment and in expansionary government programs. While many Jews still teach in the city university and the public school system, few occupy leadership positions in the city's educational system. Of the City University of New York's five senior colleges, only one is headed by a Jew. The seven-person Board of Education has only one Jewish member.

Most Jews in New York are concerned with safety, quality of life, and taxes, not public schools and social services, the two largest areas of municipal expenditure. Almost half of the Jews in New

York send their children to independent or religious schools, reflecting both the high value that Jews place on education and the loss of confidence in the public school system. Even those who still depend on the public school system will not be susceptible to democratic challengers, since they value safety and are still able to find good schools in Brooklyn or Queens. About 150,000 Jews live below the poverty level, according to the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, and depend on government assistance. The biggest threat to the Jewish poor is not the mayor, however, but new federal welfare policies, especially those targeted to legal immigrants, which Mr. Giuliani is shrewdly fighting.

All New Yorkers have benefited from the reduction in crime that has accelerated under Mr. Giuliani, who consolidated the city's police departments and made the city a palpably safer place. To Jews who live in the city, as well as to those members of the Jewish community with a stake in the city's real estate, tourism and cultural industries, Mr. Giuliani has made New York a more attractive place to live and work. Even the parks are cleaner as a result of his "workfare" policies.

Mr. Giuliani, who won 63% of the Jewish vote in 1989 and 68% in 1993, will probably do even better among Jews in 1997, many of whom voted for David Dinkins, thinking that his presence in City Hall would reduce racial tensions. Unlike politicians who pay excessive attention to Orthodox Jews, who constitute just 17.2% of the Jewish electorate, Mr. Giuliani has reached out to liberal Jews, including many who typically support Democratic candidates.

The new Jewish demographic and occupational patterns are also reflected in the decline of Jews in local elective office. In 1985, Jews controlled 9 out of the 11 votes on the all-important Board of Estimates. Today, less than a dozen Jews are on the 51-person City Council. Although both the city comptroller and the public advocate are Jewish - the most powerful Jewish politician in the city and state is Sheldon Silver, the speaker of the Assembly, an observant Jew who represents Manhattan's Lower East Side. Admittedly, five members of the city's congressional delegation are Jewish: Reps. Gary Ackerman, Eliot Engel, Nita Lowey, Jerrold Nadler and Charles Schumer, but two represent partially suburban districts.

As New York prepares for the 1997 mayoral race, Jews, who constitute one-third of the Democratic primary vote, will choose from a diverse crew: City Councilman Sal Albanese, Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer, Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger and the Rev. AI Sharpton. In the general election, the Jewish vote accounts for 18% of the total vote, but only an extraordinary opponent will be able to take Jewish votes away from a mayor whose agenda has been remarkably in touch with the priorities of New York City's Jewish population today. Should the Rev. Sharpton win the Democratic nomination, even Mr. Giuliani's harshest critic, Ed Koch, will be compelled to vote for Mr. Giuliani.

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