

Here's Someone Gov. Paterson May Not Have Thought of for Hillary's Senate Seat

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New Yorkers Urge Gov. Paterson to Appoint Ralph Nader to US Senate

By The Editorial Board

That stack of resumes on Governor David Paterson's desk is getting higher by the day. Some people are campaigning for themselves — a few public officials and Caroline Kennedy come to mind here.

But others are being proposed by friends or supporters. Like this one.

A loyal supporter has thrown Ralph Nader's hat into the ring, even though Mr. Nader does not live in New York and has not really expressed his own desire to join the club he loves to hammer from the outside.

Matt Funicello, who is leading the group of "concerned New Yorkers" favoring Mr. Nader, says that he hasn't actually asked the high-powered consumer advocate whether he wants the job. "But I think he would be great at it," he said.

It seems like a long shot — to put it very mildly. But here's the press release. Happy Holidays, Ralph.

New Yorkers Urge Gov. Paterson to Appoint Ralph Nader to US Senate

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A group of concerned New York citizens announced today that they are launching a campaign to have Governor David A. Paterson appoint long-time consumer advocate Ralph Nader to the US Senate.

There are no real residency requirements for US Senate (must be a resident of the state as of the date of the election). New York has a long tradition of sending individuals to the US Senate who only established NY residency for the purpose of serving in the Senate. This includes the departing incumbent, Hillary Clinton, who moved here from Arkansas to run, and former US Senator Robert F. Kennedy, whose niece Caroline is one of the front runners for the position. Nader in contrast grew up just a few miles east of the Hudson Valley in the Winsted Connecticut and still maintains his legal voting residency there. Supporters have offered Nader the use of their spare bedrooms if he wants to move in to establish residency.

"In this moment of crisis on Main Street and Wall Street, American needs someone like Ralph Nader to protect their interests. Who better than Nader to help resolve the crisis facing the American automobile industry? Who better than Nader to insure that real consumer protections are put into place to regulate the financial industry? Who better than Nader to stand up to the insurance industry, drug companies, and other special interests to ensure that we finally make health care a right in America? Who better than Nader to lead the fight to reverse climate change and make the transition to a green economy and clean, renewable energy?" asked Matt Funicello, CEO of Rockhill Bakehouse.

Nader's supporters noted that while President elect Obama has made a big point of naming many of his former Presidential opponents to Cabinet positions, he has not yet offered a position to Nader, who finished third in the general election. Obama's first public interest job, which he credits for training him as an organizer, was with a group that Nader helped established, the New York Public Interest Research Group. One of Nader's former student interns, Eliot Spitzer, chose present Governor David A. Paterson as his running mate.

Nader is a long time proponent of single payer health care, a position advocated by Governor Paterson when in the State Senate. A majority of New York State Assemblymembers as well as many of the NY Congressional representatives and State Senate Democrats are sponsors of single payer legislation. While there are more than 90 single payer co-sponsors in the House, there are none yet in the Senate (though that may change once the new Congress is sworn in.) Appointing Nader would ensure a strong single payer advocate in the US Senate. Health care is expected to be one of the first issues taken up by the Obama administration.

"Many Democrats for years have argued that it would be better for Nader to run for Congress rather than the

President. This is an opportunity to make that happen. We are at a critical moment in American and world history. We need the best and the brightest in DC right now helping to figure out how to solve the myriad of problems we face, including how to bring peace to the Middle East and bring our troops home from Iraq and Afghanistan.. We hope that Governor Paterson will put the needs of New York and the country ahead of any short-term partisan considerations. Nader pulled 1% of the vote for Presidency. It would help unite the country if 1% of the seats in the US Senate was held by Nader," added Peter LaVenia a Green Party activist in New York State.

As Howard Dean, chair of the Democratic National Committee, pointed out in the NY Times in an op ed during the previous presidential election, "Many Democrats also admire Ralph Nader's achievements, as I do. Ralph Nader has built a remarkable legacy as a consumer advocate. Because of his tireless work, we have federal consumer protection laws and a federal department dedicated to the protection of our environment, and millions of defective motor vehicles are off the roads. "

Unlike Caroline Kennedy, Nader has been a frequent visitor to upstate New York, making campaign stops in Albany, New Paltz, Syracuse, Buffalo and Rochester during October. Organizers hope Nader will do public appearances in New York after the holidays to focus on issues such as Obama's proposals on universal health care.