

Latino Politics and the
2016 New York State
Legislative Primaries
A NiLP iReport

By Angelo Falcon
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NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
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By Angelo Falcón (September 14, 2016)

Highlights

- **Congressional Candidate Adriano Espaillat consolidates Dominican political power base in Northern Manhattan**
- **Dominican women make major political gains**
- **Higher turnout resulted in important political change**
- **Latino representation loss in Lower East Side to Long Overdue Chinese political ascendancy**
- **Bronx Latino politics status quo retained**

This report by the National Institute for Latino Policy (NiLP) discusses the implications of the results of New York State's state legislative primaries for the Latino community. By providing the results of these primaries that included Latino candidates, this analysis presents a broad picture of the overall status of Latino political representation in New York. After reviewing the results of the races for State Senate and State Assembly, it includes a discussion of the important role that turnout played in determining the outcomes of these races. The attempt here is to discuss the state of Latino politics in broad terms on a citywide level to address the problem of the fragmented manner in which Latino politics tends to be discussed today. Rather than just the sum of the stories of the individual campaigns, the attempt here is to prepare the basis for a more holistic view of the political challenges facing the Latino community.

Manhattan

Yesterday's Democratic primaries in the Latino community reflected the growing political clout of Northern Manhattan's Dominican community and the role of Congressional candidate Adriano Espaillat. They also validated the campaign theme of the rise of the Dominican woman in the area's politics with the nomination of Marisol Alcantara for the State Senate and Carmen De La Rosa for the State Assembly.

DEM Primary > 31st Senate District > Active Enrolled Democrats: 140,387		
Candidate	Percent (by Candidate)	Votes (by Candidate)
Robert Jackson	29.72%	7,616
Marisol Alcantara	32.43%	8,309
Micah Lasher	30.19%	7,737
Luis Tejada	4.89%	1,253
Blank	2.31%	591
Void	0.32%	82
Write-in	0.14%	37
<i>Total Votes</i>		<i>25,625</i>

This race to replace Espaillat in the State Senate had a strong, diverse field of candidates. With the bulk of union support that he had and his experience as an elected official, Robert Jackson was

thought to have the edge in this race, but the Espaillat machinery and the support that Alcantara received from Jeff Klein's Independent Democratic Caucus got her victory with less than 1,000 votes. Relative to other primary races, the turnout in this district was higher than expected.

The Alcantara victory raises some interesting questions. First, what does this mean for the role of the Independent Democratic Caucus in the state Senate? She has stated that she would be joining the IDC as the breakaway Democrats in the Senate, but how this will affect her political priorities is not clear, nor what type of influence she will have with this group. Some of this might be answered if in November the Democrats achieve effective control of the Senate or not. Second, with the losses of Keith Wright for Congress and Jackson for the State Senate, what is the future and nature of Black politics in Northern Manhattan? Third, as Espaillat consolidates his political base, what will his relationship be with the politicians in the adjacent and increasingly Dominican Bronx?

The loss of his Assembly seat by incumbent Guillermo Linares to Carmen De La Rosa was not necessarily unexpected, but his margin of defeat was larger than anticipated, 46 to 32 percent. This is a major blow for the first Dominican to be elected to any major political office in New York City. Linares was only one of three incumbents who lost their primary in the city as a whole. As with the Alcantara win, this reflects the rise of the role of Dominican women politically as well as a generational change within this community. Linares' campaigning was largely viewed as weak, with some pointing to his complacency as an incumbent as the problem.

DEM Primary > 72nd Assembly District > Active Enrolled Democrats: 57,053		
Candidate	Percent (by Candidate)	Votes (by Candidate)
George Fernandez	8.16%	780
Carmen N. De La Rosa	46.20%	4,414
Guillermo Linares	32.44%	3,099
Blank	12.42%	1,187
Void	0.52%	50
Write-in	0.25%	24
<i>Total Votes</i>		<i>9,554</i>

Another major generational change of sorts occurred in Lower Manhattan, where incumbent-light Alice Cancel lost handily to Yuh-Line Niou to make her the first Asian elected to the State Assembly. Cancel, who is Puerto Rican, held the position for a few months and was viewed as the candidate of disgraced Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver's political club. Cancel had four opponents --- three Chinese-Americans, one with parents from India and one Jewish-American. This win by Niou is significant in that the case has been made for decades on the need for Chinese representation in a district that includes the city's oldest Chinatown. As with the Dominican case, this also highlighted the increasing role that Chinese women are playing in the city's politics. Regarding the Latino community, the area's Latino population has been in decline for some time and before Cancel's brief incumbency had not been represented in the Assembly or State Senate for decades, making this only a marginal loss in overall Latino representation.

DEM Primary > 65th Assembly District > Active Enrolled Democrats: 43,094		
Candidate	Percent (by Candidate)	Votes (by Candidate)
Yuh-Line Niou	31.55%	2,742
Gigi K. Li	9.51%	827
Jenifer Rajkumar	18.55%	1,612
Don Lee	11.32%	984
Paul Newell	15.89%	1,381
Alice Cancel	12.30%	1,069
Blank	0.33%	29
Void	0.37%	32
Write-in	0.18%	16
<i>Total Votes</i>		<i>8,692</i>

In East Harlem's 68th Assembly District, incumbent Robert J. Rodriguez was unopposed.

The Bronx

Although all the Latino state legislators in the Bronx had challengers, all of the incumbents were renominated, maintaining the borough's political status quo. This means that the leadership of the Bronx Democratic County Committee, which is headed by Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie with his Latino ally Assemblyman Marcos Crespo, remained intact. The renomination of State Senator Gustavo Rivera and Assemblyman Jose Rivera represents the Bronx machine's inability to remove these outsiders --- Gustavo as the new generation, and Jose as old generation. The Fernando Cabrera loss to Gustavo Rivera is also a setback to social conservative State Senator Ruben Diaz Sr.

Despite his many controversial stands in promoting an extreme social conservative agenda, Reverend Ruben Diaz Sr. was easily renominated with 85 percent of the role. His base as an evangelical minister has developed into a potent political field operation that reformers have not been able to dent.

DEM Primary > 32nd Senate District > (Active Enrolled Democrats: 122,756		
Candidate	Percent (by Candidate)	Votes (by Candidate)
Ruben Diaz, Sr.	85.01%	7,618
Elliot Quinones	10.21%	915
Blank	3.94%	353
Void	0.58%	52
Write-in	0.26%	23
<i>Total Votes</i>		<i>8,961</i>

The strong victory of State Senator Gustavo Rivera over the recurring opposition by term-limited Councilmember Fernando Cabrera was significant in representing the Bronx machine's inability to remove Rivera. As the persons who unseated the disgraced Pedro Espada Jr. in 2011, Rivera is viewed as a lone progressive voice in the ethically dubious Latino world of the Bronx. Cabrera was carrying the baggage of the charter school and other socially conservative interests championed by

State Senator Ruben Diaz Sr. While in the Dominican community, Marisol Alcantara's nomination for State Senate is a win for the breakaway Independent Democratic Caucus, the Rivera victory represents a loss because Cabrera was viewed as a likely IDC ally.

DEM Primary > 33rd Senate District > Active Enrolled Democrats: 102,844		
Candidate	Percent (by Candidate)	Votes (by Candidate)
J. Gustavo Rivera	60.09%	5,620
Fernando Cabrera	35.17%	3,289
Blank	3.60%	337
Void	0.63%	59
Write-in	0.51%	48
<i>Total Votes</i>		<i>9,353</i>
<i>Turnout Rate</i>		<i>9.1%</i>

In the Assembly races in the Bronx, all the Latino incumbents were renominated. The strong victory by 80-year-old incumbent Jose Rivera over the Bronx machine candidates, Ischia Bravo, was significant as an indicator that the borough's power holders were not able to rid themselves of this former head of the machine they currently run. Rivera, who had been chair of the Bronx Democratic County Committee, had been dethroned in 2008 by a coalition led in part by the Ruben Diazes. Known more for his videography than his legislation, Rivera was quoted in the media as challenging his opponent in this primary to a "salsa dance-off." His renomination and outsider status reinforces his relationship with the other Rivera elected in the Bronx, Gustavo.

DEM Primary > 78th Assembly District > Active Enrolled Democrats: 36,772		
Candidate	Percent (by Candidate)	Votes (by Candidate)
Jose Rivera	59.78%	2,102
Ischia J. Bravo	32.25%	1,134
Blank	7.14%	251
Void	0.40%	14
Write-in	0.43%	15
<i>Total Votes</i>		<i>3,516</i>

The other incumbent Latino Assemblymembers were all renominated easily with votes ranging from 62 to 70 percent. Of this group, Victor Pichardo is a close ally of State Senator Gustavo Rivera.

DEM Primary > 84th Assembly District > Active Enrolled Democrats: 46,710		
Candidate	Percent (by Candidate)	Votes (by Candidate)
Carmen E. Arroyo	64.14%	1,862
Jackson Strong	30.80%	894
Blank	4.17%	121
Void	0.45%	13
Write-in	0.45%	13
<i>Total Votes</i>		<i>2,903</i>

DEM Primary > 85th Assembly District > Active Enrolled Democrats: 44,294		
Candidate	Percent (by Candidate)	Votes (by Candidate)
William R. Moore	23.91%	906
Marcos A. Crespo	66.81%	2,532
Blank	8.44%	320
Void	0.58%	22
Write-in	0.26%	10
<i>Total Votes</i>		<i>3,790</i>

DEM Primary > 86th Assembly District > Active Enrolled Democrats: 41,877		
Candidate	Percent (by Candidate)	Votes (by Candidate)
Victor M. Pichardo	62.98%	2,696
Hector R. Ramirez	30.95%	1,325
Blank	4.72%	202
Void	0.63%	27
Write-in	0.72%	31
<i>Total Votes</i>		<i>4,281</i>

DEM Primary > 87th Assembly District > Active Enrolled Democrats: 47,598		
Candidate	Percent (by Candidate)	Votes (by Candidate)
Pamela Stewart-Martinez	23.56%	710
Luis R. Sepulveda	70.39%	2,121
Blank	4.58%	138
Void	1.23%	37
Write-in	0.23%	7
<i>Total Votes</i>		<i>3,013</i>

Brooklyn

The one Latino incumbent in Brooklyn to receive a challenge was State Senator Martin Malave Dilan, was renominated handily with 55 percent of the vote. His recurring opponent, Debbie Medina, received some notoriety from her affiliation with the Presidential campaign Bernie Sanders and her self-description as a socialist. However, her past problem with the domestic abuse of her son many years ago came to light late in the campaign and may have hurt her politically. This continues a long-term inability of reform forces in the Williamsburg section to effectively challenge the remnants of the old Vito Lopez machine.

DEM Primary > 18th Senate District > Active Enrolled Democrats: 115,491		
Candidate	Percent (by Candidate)	Votes (by Candidate)
Debbie Medina	37.82%	3,843
Martin Malave Dilan	55.04%	5,593
Blank	6.15%	625
Void	0.66%	67
Write-in	0.33%	34
<i>Total Votes</i>		<i>10,162</i>

The following Latino incumbents were unopposed in the primaries: 51st Assembly District - Felix W. Ortiz; 53rd Assembly District – Maritza Davila; and 54th Assembly District - Erik M. Dilan.

Queens

In Queens, all three Latino incumbents in the State Legislature were unopposed: 25th Assembly District - Nily Rozic; 39th Assembly District - Francisco P. Moya; and 13th Senatorial District - Jose Peralta.

The media reported that Hiram Monserrate lost his bid to return to politics, losing to George R. Dixon for district leader in the 35th district, part A.

Staten Island

In Staten Island, State Assembly incumbent Nicole Malliotakis was renominated unopposed as a Republican.

Long Island

Philip Ramos was renominated as a Democrat to represent the 6th District of the New York Assembly. The district includes portions of the Town of Islip, including Bay Shore, Brentwood, Central Islip and Islandia in Suffolk County on Long Island. He has held this seat since 2003. Ramos is a 60-year-old retired Suffolk County police detective who lives in Bay Shore. He is s running for his eighth term.

DEM Primary > 6th Assembly District > Active Enrolled Democrats: 29,235		
Candidate	Percent (by Candidate)	Votes (by Candidate)
Giovanni A. Mata	26.29%	710
Philip Ramos	70.94%	1,916
Blank	2.52%	68
Void	0.00%	0
Write-in	0.26%	7
<i>Total Votes</i>		<i>2,701</i>

In the 3rd State Senate District, which covers Brentwood, Long Island, Ricard Montano lost in the Democratic primary to nominate a challenger to the Republican incumbent. He is a former Suffolk

County Legislator from the 9th District, which includes the Town of Islip in west-central Suffolk County. He is the son of former Bronx Assemblyman, Armando Montano. The 3rd Senatorial District was represented by the disgraced Dean Skelos.

DEM Primary > 3rd Senate District > Active Enrolled Democrats: 60,308		
Candidate	Percent (by Candidate)	Votes (by Candidate)
John M. De Vito, Jr.	37.73%	1,173
Joseph L. Fritz	28.88%	898
Ricardo Montano	26.15%	813
Blank	6.79%	211
Void	0.13%	4
Write-in	0.32%	10
<i>Total Votes</i>		<i>3,109</i>

In this Hempstead, Long Island district, Carmen Piñeyo unsuccessfully challenged 15-term, 77-year-old State Assembly incumbent, Earlene Hooper, who is African-American. Piñeyo is a 40-year-old mortgage banker and immigrant from the Dominican Republic, the first Latina ever elected to the Village of Freeport Board of Trustees, where she's serving her second term. She was previously elected to the Freeport Board of Education, where she rose to the rank of board president.

DEM Primary > 18th Assembly District (Active Enrolled Democrats: 50,215)		
Candidate	Percent (by Candidate)	Votes (by Candidate)
Earlene Hooper	58.77%	2,090
Carmen J. Pineyro	39.88%	1,418
Blank	0.11%	4
Void	1.07%	38
Write-in	0.17%	6
<i>Total Votes</i>		<i>3,556</i>

Upstate

In upstate New York, Peter Lopez, a Latino Republican incumbent, who is Puerto Rican, was unopposed in the 102nd Assembly District covering all of Schoharie County and portions of Chenango, Columbia, Delaware, Greene, Otsego, Ulster counties.

In Rockland and Orange counties' 98th Assembly District, Krystal Serrano, a mergers and acquisitions analyst, lost to Aaron Wieder in the Democratic primary to nominate a challenger to the Republican incumbent, Karl A. Brabenec. Wieder is a Hasidic leader in the controversial public school district in East Ramapo.

DEM Primary > 98th Assembly District > Active Enrolled Democrats: 27,648		
Candidate	Percent (by Candidate)	Votes (by Candidate)
Aron B. Wieder	55.76%	2,300
Krystal Z. Serrano	36.92%	1,523
Blank	1.77%	73
Void	0.10%	4
Write-in	5.45%	225
<i>Total Votes</i>		<i>4,125</i>

The Role of Turnout

While turnout in the September 13th primaries was generally very low, at least in the districts where Latino candidates were running, it appears that turnout was an important factor in determining outcomes. While in the majority of the New York City districts we discussed above the turnout rates ranged from only 6.2 to 10.2 percent, in the three districts that saw a change in representation, the turnout was much higher.

In the two Dominican districts, turnout was relatively higher, about double that in the other Latino districts. In 31st State Senatorial District, where Marisol Alcantara won, the turnout rate was about 18.3 percent of registered Democratic voters. In the 72nd Assembly District, in which Carmen De La Rosa unseat incumbent Guillermo Linares, the turnout rate was around 16.7 percent. In lower Manhattan, in which Yuh-Line Niou unseated Alice Cancel to become the first Asian nominated to serve in the State Legislature, the turnout rate was the highest, at 20.2 percent.

In these cases, it appears that the Dominican and Chinese communities, long underrepresented, were mobilized at unprecedented levels for a primary. Besides resulting in new leadership, this also reflected a growing role for women in these communities in the electoral process and improved descriptive representation.

New York City Primaries with Latino Candidates September 13, 2016			
District	Total Vote	Total Registered	Turnout Rate
State Assmbly			
Manhattan			
65th AD	8,692	43,094	20.2%
72nd AD	9,554	57,053	16.7%
Bronx			
78th AD	3,516	36,772	9.6%
84th AD	2,903	46,710	6.2%
85th AD	3,790	44,294	8.6%
86th AD	4,281	41,877	10.2%
87th AD	3,013	47,598	6.3%
State Senate			
Manhattan			
31st SD	25,625	140,387	18.3%
Bronx			
32nd SD	8,961	122,756	7.3%
33rd SD	9,353	102,844	9.1%
Brooklyn			
18th SD	10,162	115,491	8.8%