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City Room



Liu and de Blasio Gain Key Endorsements

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As the tight, four-way Democratic primary race for comptroller enters its final two weeks, **the Uniformed Firefighters Association, which has 20,000 active and retired members, on Monday endorsed Councilman John C. Liu, handing him another coveted union endorsement and a much-needed boost** after a spate of bad news for his campaign.

For the last week, Mr. Liu — who represents Flushing, Queens, in the City Council — has been defending himself against charges made in The Daily News that he embellished his past in a campaign commercial when he said that as a boy, he worked alongside his mother in a sweatshop.

Last Tuesday, Mr. Liu tried to play down the matter by gathering quotes from supporters about the issue, including this one from George Gresham of 1199 S.E.I.U./United Healthcare Workers East:

1199 was proud to endorse John Liu for comptroller and even more proud of him today for helping the public understand the nature of sweatshop work. Time and again, John has supported our homemaker workers fight for a living wage and healthcare benefits exactly because he understands the struggles of immigrant workers. One reporter's misguided perspective does not affect our confidence in John Liu one bit.

In a race with no well-known candidates, union endorsements are seen as crucial. Mr. Liu's rivals also have labor support: Councilman David I. Weprin has been endorsed by the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, and Councilwoman Melinda R. Katz has the support of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Joint Council 16.

Councilman David Yassky of Brooklyn has two union endorsements, the fewest of the four candidates: the Freelancers Union and the American Federation of Musicians, Local 802.

In a press release announcing the firefighters' union endorsement, Stephen J. Cassidy, the president of the union, said Mr. Liu "fought to halt the efforts in 2003 and 2009 to close our community firehouses and reduce fire company staffing to unsafe levels."

He added, "John Liu fully understands that while budgetary priorities must be made in the city, public safety must be at the forefront."

The firefighters union also plans to give a coveted endorsement in the race for public advocate to City Councilman Bill de Blasio of Brooklyh, who was once arrested for civil disobedience to protest the closing of a firehouse in his district.

On Tuesday, members of the Uniformed Firefighters Association, which represents 20,000 active and retired firefighters, will make it official at a news conference with Mr. de Blasio outside City Hall, a de Blasio spokesman said. Steve Buscemi, the actor and former city firefighter, who was arrested alongside Mr. de Blasio, is expected to appear at the news conference.

There are four Democratic candidates for public advocate: Mr. de Blasio, former public advocate Mark Green, City Councilman Eric N. Gioia and civil rights lawyer Norman Siegel. The Democratic primary is Sept. 15.

Mr. de Blasio has collected the lion's share of endorsements in the race. He has wooed labor unions (the Service Employees International Union), elected officials (Mario M. Cuomo, Edward I. Koch, Fernando Ferrer) and a newspaper editorial board (The New York Times).