

Tricky calculus in NY Senate races



**POLITICS
& POWER**

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Suffolk Democratic chairman Rich Schaffer has penciled in on his schedule a meeting Sunday with Legis. Monica Martinez, one of his 11-member Democratic county legislature majority.

The Brentwood lawmaker asked for the meeting, and Schaffer expects that she wants to talk about running for the 3rd Senate District seat from which state Sen. Tom Croci (R-Sayville) is retiring. Republicans last week named Assemb. Dean Murray as their candidate. "I think the governor has her on his speed dial and has talked to her three times a day in the last few weeks," Schaffer joked late last week.

Martinez is the latest elected



Rich Schaffer

official Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo is looking to recruit for his assault to turn the Senate Republican majority Democratic as the governor himself faces a primary challenge from activist Cynthia Nixon, who has maintained the governor is not progressive enough.

Martinez did not return calls Friday, but one Democratic Albany source said, "There's a serious, ongoing effort to convince her to run for the open Senate seat."

Abbey Fashouer, spokeswoman for Cuomo's campaign, declined to comment on any talks with Martinez but said, "It's no secret that Gov. Cuomo is heavily involved in taking back the State Senate and is personally recruiting the strongest possible candidates to run all across the state."

Martinez's meeting request came only days after former Suffolk Legis. Lou D'Amaro, term-limited in December after 12 years in office, announced his candidacy to take on Republican state Sen. Phil Boyle of Bay Shore in the adjoining 4th Senate District.

Both Cuomo and Senate Democratic leader Andrea Stewart Cousins made a full-court press to enlist D'Amaro. State Sen. Mike Gianaris, chair of the Senate Democrats campaign committee, said, "We have a long-standing relationship. I'd been encouraging him to run for the last four or

five years."

Gianaris added that Martinez would be a top addition to the slate when nominating petitions hit the street Tuesday. "She's certainly impressive and would be a strong candidate," he said.

All of this puts Schaffer in an increasingly difficult spot. He's long been accused of being too close to Senate Republicans and opposed to city Democrats who gave the region the unpopular MTA tax. But with control of the Senate one vote away from a tipping point, he can't afford to be without a voice should a new majority emerge and hold together.

But some believe Schaffer is still balking at an all-out effort by backing the inexperienced Bailey Spahn, 20, who the leader says wants to remain in the race, speaking warmly of Boyle as a "very effective state senator" for Babylon and saying he's not sure of "what case he [D'Amaro] will make against Phil."

"I understand having a level playing field," D'Amaro said. "But at some point, Rich has to put aside his personal relationships and past politics and commit to electing a Democratic Senate majority."

But Schaffer said he wants to protect local candidates from getting into races that could hurt their careers. "My concern is putting people out there and not having the resources to run a competitive race. It's easy to get people into races, but harder to execute a successful race," he said.

Schaffer, who has known Cuomo since he was a college student in Albany and a friend of the governor's sister, said he has no quarrel with his recruiting efforts.

"Sometime his political calculus and mine don't necessarily mesh. I have to consider the county and holding the legislature, and he has to worry about the state," he said.

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