

De Blasio Tries To Link Lhota To Nat'l GOP In Mayoral Debate

by {ga=ggstaff}

Wednesday, October 16, 2013 12:20 AM

In their first televised mayoral debate, Democratic candidate Bill de Blasio tried to link rival Republican Joe Lhota to the national GOP brand that has been attacked for its role in the federal government shutdown.

Throughout the hour-long debate at WABC-TV studios on the Upper West Side on Tuesday night, de Blasio put Lhota on the defensive about the rival candidate's ties to the national Republican Party. Lhota tried to beat back.

"Do not lump me with the national Republicans," Lhota told de Blasio at one point, emphasizing his support for decidedly Democratic values on a national scale. "It's unbecoming, Bill."

The de Blasio campaign released a web ad earlier in the day referring to Lhota's recently reported support for an Obamacare delay, as well as his argument for relaxed gun permit restriction at a recent Staten Island Tea Party group event reported on by NY1.

Lhota tried to distance himself from the Tea Party wing of the Republican party, painting himself as a New York Republican in favor of same-sex marriage and abortion rights.

Meanwhile, de Blasio spent most of the night arguing that Lhota was misrepresenting the Democrat's positions on a range of issues, including education and public safety. De Blasio tried to explain his nuanced positions on stop-and-frisk (he's opposed to its current use and supportive of expanded oversight) and would only ask financially secure charter schools to pay rent, the latter of which Lhota argued was a previously undefined position.

But de Blasio was dissatisfied with Lhota's claims, especially now during a general election appeal for all registered New York City voters.

"You can't have it both ways," de Blasio said. "When the Republican primary was around, Mr. Lhota wanted to prove he was a conservative Republican. Now he's trying to appeal to the mainstream. The fact is he does subscribe to the views of the Republican Party that hurt New

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York City.”

The two agreed on a handful of things: New York City has become too unaffordable and income inequality is a real problem. Neither is willing to negotiate contracts for municipal workers through the media. And both are offended by the federal government shutdown organized by House Republicans.

The most recent WSJ/Marist poll showed de Blasio with a 44 percent point lead over the Republican candidate.