Bloomberg, Quinn At Odds Over NYPD Inspector General

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Mayor Michael Bloomberg said the introduction of any legislation that would create an inspector general to independently monitor the NYPD will set a dangerous precedent for the city.

He said the plan is a political play during an election year that would create redundant bureaucracy.

"Together, the mayor and the commissioner set the direction of the department — and they do not need an unelected and unaccountable official to supervise their policy decisions," Bloomberg said. "The bill being considered by the City Council would undermine the accountability that has been essential in the department's success — and make our city less safe."

Council Speaker Christine Quinn, one of the leading Democratic candidates for mayor who yesterday announced she would support a measure to create an inspector general for the NYPD, told reporters at City Hall that it was unfortunate the mayor disagrees with the bill. But she said she expects the bill to pass with overwhelming support as soon as it's introduced. She said she would push back against a mayoral veto.

"I can guarantee we will override it," she said.

Quinn said the groups that Mayor Bloomberg cited as oversight bodies — five district attorneys, two U.S. attorneys, the Civilian Complaint Review Board, the Commission to Combat Police Corruption and the department's own Internal Affairs Bureau — did not have sufficient powers to reign in the NYPD.

"Those are entities that look at the actions of individual police officers," Quinn said. "But we

don't, in fact, have a monitoring mechanism to look at broader policies and practices within the department."

She rebuffed Bloomberg's implication that the bill is just election year politics, adding that the stakes were too high for her to ignore the legislation while she still serves as speaker.

"We have a situation right now in this city, whether we like it or not, where some of the practices of the police department have caused significant rifts the police and the community," Quinn said. "Those types of rifts make it harder to keep people safe, not easier. This type of monitoring will help move us beyond this issue in the future."

Some of Quinn's fellow candidates for mayor began to take a stand on the issue a forum on public safety on Tuesday night . Democratic candidate Bill de Blasio and Republican Joe Lhota both vocally opposed the bill, although Capital New York reported
that de Blasio supports introducing an inspector general bill that grants subpeona power and a budget independent of both the mayor and council.

The public advocate's fellow Democratic challenger and former comptroller Bill Thompson sent out a statement late Wednesday also in support of a strong independent watchdog over NYPD.

"The need for an IG reflects the city’s failure to reform stop-and-frisk and see our communities as partners, instead of adversaries, in fighting crime," the statement said.

Meanwhile, Republican candidate and supermarket mogul John Catsimatidis sent out his own statement, calling Quinn's proposed inspector general legislation "ill-conceived" and that it "defies common sense."

"Speaker Quinn released the plan just prior to a mayoral debate focused on criminal justice and public safety issues in an attempt to advance her candidacy for mayor," Catsimatidis wrote. "It is a perfect example of a professional politician's desire to create a larger bureaucracy."

Photo by Bill Alatriste

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