

by Gail Robinson  
Thursday, December 23, 2010 12:00 AM

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Photo by [Peter Bond](#) In a year when no New York pro sport team won a major championship, pitcher Cliff Lee delivered the coup de grace by rejecting a lavish offer from the Yankees to play for the Phillies instead.

*(For other year end coverage, see Gotham Gazette's [Top Stories of 2010](#) and our [roundup of prominent prognosticators' predictions for 2011](#)*

Cliff Lee [did not sign](#) with the Yankees -- who did not, by the way, repeat as World Series champs. Spiderman [did not open](#) on Broadway. Lindsay Lohan did not [move to New York](#)



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Like every year, 2010 was marked almost as much by what did not happen as what did. Fads fizzled. Phenoms flopped. And sure bets sank.

Here's our roundup of some events that, for better or worse, did not happen in New York in 2010.

### Majority Does Not Rule



Photo by William Alatraste

Despite the support of 35 of 51 City Council members, the City Council did not pass a bill requiring [paid sick leave](#) for people who work in the city. In fact the measure did not even make it out of the Committee on Civil Service and Labor, even after sponsor Gale Brewer altered the proposal to make it more palatable for business.

The seeming paradox because while the council has 51 members, when it comes to calling a vote on an issue only one member counts: City Council Speaker [Christine Quinn](#). And in October, Quinn, who had remained noncommittal on the issue for month, finally [came out against it](#), saying the city could not afford to put another burden on small businesses. "There are businesses on the brink, and they fear any new cost will put them under," she said.

Quinn's decision means a few other things also did not happen in 2010:

--Quinn did not break with Mayor Michael Bloomberg. During her five years as speaker, Quinn has rarely differed with Bloomberg whose job (and so money and backing) she almost certainly hopes to have some day.

In this case, Bloomberg had [lashed out](#) at the paid sick leave bill. "It would be a disaster if the government tries to get in to run small businesses. If they run the bars and restaurants, they'll try to run everything else," said the man who banned smoking in bars and restaurants.

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A week later Quinn blocked the bill.

--Council members, even the [Progressive Caucus](#) formed in March to pressure Quinn on issues including paid sick leave, did not go head-to-head with Quinn. Although a relatively new council rule allows members to bring stalled legislation to the floor -- even without the speaker's blessing -- paid sick leave proponents shied away from doing that.

### White Men Only

Diversity did not reach the highest levels of New York State politics in 2010.

More than [half of New Yorkers](#) are women. An estimated 17 percent are black and another 17 percent Latino, with 7 percent Asian.

Despite that all the major party candidates for statewide office this year were white men. Only one woman -- Nassau County district attorney [Kathleen Rice](#) -- made it on to the primary ballot, but she lost to [Eric Schneiderman](#)

. The Democratic and Republican primaries for governor, lieutenant governor attorney general and comptroller had no black, Latino or Asian candidates.

The two contests for New York's U.S. Senate seats this year were whites-only affairs, although a woman, [Kirsten Gillibrand](#), did run for one of the seats - and win.

### Back to Buffalo



Photo by [Azi Paybarah](#) Carl Paladino

Despite a post primary spike in a [Quinnipiac poll](#) (or a faulty poll) Buffalo businessman [Carl Paladino](#)

did not become governor of New York.

[Wielding a baseball bat](#)

, Paladino tried to appeal to New Yorkers angry at Albany, but they apparently could not

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embrace a candidate who

[ranted against gays](#)

, sent

[obscene and racist emails](#)

, appeared

[dazed at a debate](#)

and could not escape his Daily News moniker of Crazy Carl.

And in other gubernatorial news that did not happen:

--Andrew Cuomo did not say what in the state budget he would cut. Blessed with a opponent who terrified many New Yorker, Cuomo did not have to say much to win -- and he seemed to like it that way. Stay tuned for next year to see how long the governor can remain mum.

--Xenophobia did not buy a ticket to Albany. The Republican field for governor in 2010 did not exactly look like an ad for national brotherhood week. Democrat turned Republican Steve Levy was known for his [anti-immigrant rhetoric](#) and for raids on homes where he suspected illegal immigrants lived. Rick Lazio devoted more space on his campaign web site to his opposition to the Lower Manhattan Islamic Center than to the state budget, and Paladino ran ads vowing to use eminent domain to black the mosque. And let's not forget his emails. One by one they all fell -- Levy at the state convention, Lazio in the primary and Paladino on Election Day.

--David Paterson could not hold on to the governor's mansion. Two years after many New Yorkers breathed a sigh of relief as the more affable Paterson took over from "Steamroller" Eliot Spitzer, Paterson had bowed out of the race. Scandals, his own missteps and Albany inertia appear to have ended his political career -- for the time being, anyway.

### Impasse



Photo by [furiousphil2005](#)

The New York City Fire Department did not hire any new recruits in 2010 - and not because of budget cuts.

The city remains locked in an impasse with U.S. District Court Judge Nicholas Garaufis over

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efforts to make the department -- only [3.4 percent black and 7 percent Latino](#) -- a bit more diverse. The judge has blamed the imbalance on city administered tests that discriminate against black and Latinos, and has proposed five ways the city could redress the imbalance. The Bloomberg administration has [rejected](#) all of them, saying they would essentially set quotas and so be illegal. Garaufis has [accused the city](#) of "duplicity and lack of good faith."

With the city down an [estimated 370 firefighters](#), the overtime bill for those the city does have has soared to an expected \$160 million this year. The department, though, says it will not back down. Referring to Garaufis' proposals, city Fire Commissioner Salvatore Cassano [http://www.nydailynews.com/ny\\_local/2010/12/15/2010-said](http://www.nydailynews.com/ny_local/2010/12/15/2010-said), "Every one was a quota, and we're not going to hire firefighters under a quota system."

### Moving Ahead



Photo by [David Shankbone](#) Demonstrators protest the proposed Islamic Center two blocks from Ground Zero.

Opponents -- from Rick Lazio to Sarah Palin -- did not stop the planed Islamic Center near Ground Zero.

In terms of heat and volume, no issue so dominated public debate for much of 2010 than a proposed Islamic Center a couple of blocks from the World Trade Center site.

The project attracted little notice until it caught the attention of Pam Geller, an anti Muslim blogger in May, The New York Post came out swinging against it in May. "A mosque rises over Ground Zero. And fed-up New Yorkers are crying, "No!", the papers Andrea Peyser [wrote](#) .

Some families of 9/11 victims and others opposed the project as an "affront" to those killed. Rudy Giuliani, always eager to weigh in on anything related in anyway to 9./11 called it a "desecration." A number of New York candidates -- Carl Paladino, Rick Lazio, Richard Brodsky -- sought to capitalize on anti mosque sentiment in their campaigns, as did [Republicans across the nation](#)

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Eventually most New Yorkers -- and a more lopsided majority of Americans -- opposed the project.

But none of that has derailed it. The local Community Board [endorsed it](#) in the spring. Opponents tried to use landmark law -- they said the building that Park51, as the center is called, would replace -deserved preservation - but the landmarks commission overwhelmingly [rejected](#) that argument.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who might not have had the legal means to stop the center anyway, made clear he wouldn't block it even if he could. In a [speech](#) on Governors Island, Bloomberg repudiated (or, as Sarah Palin [p](#)  
[ut it](#) during all this, "refudiated") the center's critics, reminding New Yorkers of past struggles for religious freedom and saying that we honor the lives of those who died on 9/11 "by defending those rights and the freedoms that the terrorists attacked."

Financing for the project now remains the big question. Meanwhile reports [circulated](#) this month that the mosque might leave the Ground Zero areas in favor of the St. Vincent's Hospital site in the West Village. At least one Villager [told Gothamist](#) it would not be a bad idea. "I welcome anything here -- except condos for yuppies," the resident said.

### Coke Habit



Photo by [Kevin Coles](#)

Despite a fat population and a thin budget, New York did not pas a soda tax.

Facing a budget shortfall and high rates of obesity among the state's children, Gov. David Paterson proposed the state enact a 1 cent an ounce tax on sugary soft drinks. The tax, along with a tax exemption for less fattening beverages, would have [brought in](#) an estimated \$815 million a year.

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"Someone has got to contribute to the \$7.6 billion the state spends every year to treat diseases from obesity," Paterson [said](#) .

But that somebody should not be the soda industry. Soda companies, operating under the banner of groups with such names as [New Yorkers Against Unfair Taxes](#) and Alliance for a Healthier New York, launched a barrage of ads aimed at sinking the measure. They succeeded, the Times [wrote](#) , "in painting the soda tax as a naked money grab cleverly disguised as a health policy."

While rejecting the soda tax, the legislature [restored a sales tax](#) on clothing costing less than \$110.

### **Better Late than Never ?**

New York did not pass its state budget remotely on time.

The state budget has created a kind of bizarre ritual in New York. Although the governor and legislature often fail to meet the April 1 deadline, then a few weeks or even a month or two late enact a budget, often in a series of last-minute votes in which rank and file legislators have little idea what they are voting on.

This year, with the state facing a particularly difficult fiscal situation, that never happened. With Gov. David Paterson demanding cuts the legislature did not want to make -- and with the April 1 deadline long gone -- Paterson began inserting budget cuts and revenue generators in [emergency budget extenders](#)

. The legislature's failure to approve those would bring the state government to a halt.

While most of the budget passed that way, a few pieces remained unresolved, particularly on the revenue side. With hardly a whimper, let alone a bang, the legislature finally passed the rest of the budget on Aug. 3, changing parts of Paterson's revenue and spending plan. He then vetoed it.

In November with the state facing a \$315 million deficit for this fiscal year -- the next one holds

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far more dire gaps -- Paterson [called the legislature back](#) for one last try. Not that Paterson had high hopes -- he said he called the session "as much to clear my conscience as anything else."

And the legislators lived up to the low expectations, failing to act on the budget or an a bill that could have [saved Off Track Betting](#) in New York City. No one expressed much surprise. " This all sounds very familiar, the Watertown Daily Times [complained](#)

### Party Town

The [New York City Charter Revision Commission](#) did not propose nonpartisan elections -- or any other major changes, for that matter.

More than two years after he said he would appoint a commission to revise the City Charter, Mayor Michael Bloomberg made good on the commitment, naming a commission in March. "Everything will be on the table, " he said.

And during the hearings that followed that seemed to be the case. Public officials, advocates and regular New Yorkers showed up to press their favorite cause -- term limits, changes in the city planning process, eliminating certain city offices - or giving them more powerful -- and making city elections [non partisan](#) .

No issue attracted quite the passion and attention that that did. Advocates said it could reverse the city's dismal voter turnout and enfranchise the hundreds of thousand of New Yorkers who cannot vote in primary elections because they do not have a party affiliation. Opponents warned it could only help self financed-candidates like Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who [tried to get voters to approve](#) the idea back in 2003.

In the end, the commission decided not to put nonpartisan elections on the ballot. Even the commissioners who liked the idea worried voters would reject it again. They feared any fallout might sink other, more popular charter changes at the ballot box. And Bloomberg [decided not to pressure his commission to take that risk.](#)

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In the end, the commission [put two proposals](#) on the ballot: one instituting a two-term limits for city officials and the other a catchall measure of fairly small changes. Voters approved both questions in November.

### Free for Now



Photo by [Amanda Bennett](#) The bidding for video gambling terminals at Aqueduct racetrack could still land several politicians in legal difficulties.

Many Albany politicians were not indicted in 2010.

There are of course many fine, honest state legislators But even several who came under an ethical cloud remained not only out of jail but out of court.

They include:

--The Racino rascals: A report by the state inspector general [charged](#) that State Senate leaders and Gov. David Paterson helped tilt the bidding process for a video lottery terminal at Aqueduct racetrack in favor of Aqueduct Entertainment Group. The report alleged that Senate leaders John Sampson and Malcolm Smith leaked the competition's data to the company, known as AEG. Sampson supposedly put pressure on AEG to hire his preferred developer and make sure the deal helped Sampson's Brooklyn district. Senate leaders allegedly also sought political contributions in return for their support.

AEG first won the contract but then lost it as the controversy over it grew. The report has been [referred](#) to the U.S. attorney's office and the Manhattan district attorney.

--Carl Kruger: The long-time state senator from Brooklyn, who ran virtually unopposed last year, has the Senates largest war chest - a cool [\\$1.9 million](#) . And the FBI has [reportedly begun](#) looking into how Kruger got some that money. Some of it came from Brighton Beach nightclub Michael Levites, who got Kruger's help to clear up some health inspection problems. In June, Levites was charged with lying to federal law enforcement. Kruger has not been charged.

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Levites is reportedly only one of a number of rich Russians Kruger is said to have [hit up for cash](#). "The only time anybody sees Carl Kruger's hands are when they are inside your pockets, or filled with campaign funds," said Levites' lawyer.

Not needing his money for campaign, Kruger uses it to "live like a king," the Post has reported.

--Vito Lopez: At times this year, the Williamsburg assemblyman seemed on track to follow his predecessor as Brooklyn Democratic boss, Clarence Norman, to [prison](#). Lopez has been [facing](#) at least three government investigation involving the Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council, which Lopez controls. The investigations involve whether the council made fraudulent claims to the city and salaries paid to people close to Lopez. And then there's the question of whether Lopez rewarded cronies with judicial nominations -- one of the things that got Norman in trouble.

In his probe, Staten Island District Attorney Daniel Donovan [let Lopez off the hook](#). (Donovan got a minor Lopez functionary to plead guilty of falsifying an expendse sheet.)

Earlier this month, Lopez got some bad press for filing for his state pension while still serving in the legislature. Nothing though, is illegal about that illegal about that.

### **Presidential Prattle**

The talk of a Bloomberg presidential bid did not end.

It's the whack a mole of political gossip. One you think it's gone away, it pops up again. Nothing can end it, not Barack Obama's election, not a packed GOP presidential field, not the mayors re-election to a third term -- or his frequent denials. Not even polls that show most people don't even like him very much.

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This year the perennial speculation about a Bloomberg presidential run returned with renewed force, propelled by the seeming partisan gridlock in Washington, a perception by some that the two main parties drifted to the fringes of the political spectrum and the mayor's own fanning of the flames.

No way, not going to happen, Bloomberg [said](#) , while at the same time appearing on a national talk show to hold forth on issues far outside the five boroughs. He has

[pontificated](#)

on big issues and chastised other for not adhering to his pro business and socially liberal line.

And he has launched a group called

[No Labels](#)

that some

[see](#)

as resembling a nascent presidential campaign.

Why won't people believe the mayor? Well, remember what he [once said](#) about term limits and you might have your answer.