



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

HAROLD A. SCHAITBERGER
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March 9, 2007

Dear IAFF Affiliates,

On March 14, 2007, the IAFF will host the first bi-partisan Presidential Forum of the 2008 election cycle. No other union – and very few organizations – has the credibility and respect to attract top-tier candidates from both political parties. The lineup of speakers who have agreed to participate in our Forum is truly a testament to our great union and the reputation we have built as a powerful political force and a coveted endorsement.

John Edwards, John McCain, Barack Obama, Chuck Hagel, Hillary Clinton, Jim Gilmore, Chris Dodd, Joe Biden, Duncan Hunter and Bill Richardson all will make their case before the 1,000 delegates who will be attending the Forum and to our entire membership via same-day broadcast on our web site (Mitt Romney, Sam Brownback, George Pataki, Mike Huckabee and Tommy Thompson declined our invitation).

The IAFF made a decision early on to invite all major candidates from both political parties, even those with whom we have substantial disagreement on policy issues.

However, beginning last November, I had discussions with our New York City affiliate presidents of Locals 94 and 854 about whether to invite former Mayor Rudy Giuliani based on his egregious treatment of our 343 fallen on 9/11, their families and our members following that horrific day.

After many discussions among the local presidents and me, we initially decided to not invite Giuliani. To make sure we explained clearly to our affiliates and members why he wasn't going to be invited, we prepared a DRAFT letter that would have only been distributed internally if the decision became final not to invite him.

Then, after additional discussions, including at our recent Executive Board meeting, we made a final decision to extend an invitation to Mayor Giuliani. And the DRAFT letter was never distributed.

Ultimately, Giuliani was invited because we decided we should remain true to our principles and invite all major candidates, regardless of party, even those with whom we have disagreed on issues in the past.

A call was placed by the IAFF Governmental Affairs Division to the Giuliani campaign, inviting the candidate to our Forum. A high-ranking official in Giuliani's campaign, Tim Brown, returned our call on Friday, March 2 and requested that we accommodate the Mayor in the early part of the day. After considerable work to get other speakers to agree to change their times, we opened up 9:30 a.m. for Giuliani, and let the campaign know. Mr. Brown called on Monday, March 5 and confirmed the Mayor's attendance.

Then late on Wednesday, March 7, Mr. Brown called once again and informed us that Giuliani had decided to cancel his participation in our Forum.

Since the former Mayor decided not to participate in our event, and because the media has become aware of the DRAFT letter that was designed to inform our members why we were not inviting former Mayor Giuliani, we wanted you to hear of this situation straight from us, so you know the whole story.

We did not intend for that DRAFT to become public, it was solely for internal discussion amongst a very few.

But it's out there now, so here are the facts. This is just an initial correspondence about Giuliani and what we believe to be an account that reveals his true character.

There is another entire story concerning his unfriendly relationship with our New York City affiliates prior to 9/11, which we will document and explain in additional communications later on during the campaign, just as we will discuss the records of all of the major candidates – positive and negative – in the race for president at a later time.

The story I want to relay is of the events that occurred in November 2001, while our members were continuing the painful, but necessary, task of searching Ground Zero for the remains of our fallen brothers and the thousands of innocent citizens who were killed, because precious few of those who died in the terrorist attacks had been recovered at that point.

Prior to November 2001, 101 bodies or remains of fire fighters had been recovered. And those on the pile at Ground Zero believed they had just found a spot in the rubble where they would find countless more who could be given proper burial.

Nevertheless, Giuliani, with the full support of his Fire Commissioner Thomas Von Essen, decided on November 2, 2001, to sharply reduce the number of those who could search for remains at any one time. There had been as many as 300 fire fighters at a time involved in search and recovery, but Giuliani cut that number to no more than 25 who could be there at once.

In conjunction with the cut in fire fighters allowed to search, Giuliani also made a conscious decision to institute a “scoop-and-dump” operation to expedite the clean-up of Ground Zero in lieu of the more time-consuming, but respectful, process of carefully removing debris in hope of uncovering more remains.

Mayor Giuliani's actions meant that fire fighters and citizens who perished would either remain buried at Ground Zero forever, with no closure for families, or be removed like so much garbage and deposited at the Fresh Kills Landfill.

Our local presidents at the time attempted to meet with the Mayor to stop this disrespectful treatment of those who perished, but he refused to see them face-to-face.

The scoop-and-dump continued. And when hundreds of family members of the fallen joined with our affiliate leadership and FDNY members to protest Giuliani's decision, he ordered senior officers of the New York Police Department to arrest 15 of our FDNY brothers, including a number of local elected IAFF leaders.

Giuliani modified his policy after the protest because public opinion was so strongly with our members. Ultimately, he was forced to put the fire fighters back on the pile. Our protests were later proven justified as more bodies were recovered and those families given a chance for some closure and a decent burial.

Giuliani argued that he took our members off the pile for their own safety, but his argument was empty and without substance. Fire fighters had been on that pile since minutes after the twin towers fell – why all of a sudden, after nearly two months working on the most dangerous incident site in our country's history, was Giuliani concerned about fire fighter safety?

In our view, he wasn't really concerned. The fact is that the Mayor's switch to a scoop-and-dump coincided with the final removal of tens of millions of dollars of gold, silver and other assets of the Bank of Nova Scotia that were buried beneath what was once the towers. Once that money was out, Giuliani sided with the developers that opposed a lengthy recovery effort, and ordered the scoop-and-dump operation so they could proceed with redevelopment.

Giuliani crucified fire fighters after our protest and publicly stated that our members were essentially acting like babies, that they didn't have the market cornered on grief. His insensitive statements demonstrated his inability to grasp what members of the FDNY were experiencing.

What Giuliani showed is a disgraceful lack of respect for the fallen and those brothers still searching for them. He exposed our members and leaders to arrest. He valued the money and gold and wanted the site cleared before he left office at the end of 2001 more than he valued the lives and memories of those lost.

Our members deserved the right to continue with a full search for their lost brothers and other innocent victims. Proudly, as you know, the fire service has a code similar to the military, where we leave no one behind. Recovering even a piece of a turnout coat or helmet gave our FDNY brothers and sisters and the families of the fallen some small semblance of peace, something to honor. But hundreds remained entombed in Ground Zero when Giuliani gave up on them.

The fundamental lack of respect that Giuliani showed is unforgivable. Our disdain for him is not about issues or a disputed contract, it is about a visceral, personal affront to the fallen, to our union and, indeed, to every one of us who has ever risked our lives by going into a burning building to save lives and property.

We have heard from some affiliates that Giuliani's campaign is beginning to reach out to our locals, looking to build support. If you are contacted by Giuliani, Von Essen or a representative of the Giuliani campaign, we hope you will not just say, "No," but, "**Hell no.**"

Please share this correspondence with your membership. Thank you.

Fraternally and Sincerely,



Harold A. Schaitberger
IAFF General President

Cc: Vincent Bollon, IAFF General Secretary-Treasurer
IAFF Executive Board