

THE CITY

Hillary's school visit challenged

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When Hillary Rodham Clinton visited a Queens junior high school, was it as First Lady or future candidate for U.S. Senate?

That's the question that Staten Island Board of Education member Jerry Cammarata has asked schools Chancellor Rudy Crew.

In a memo submitted to the chancellor's office last week, Cammarata requested a review of the procedure by which Mrs. Clinton arranged for her visit.

"The schools are not to advance political activity for any party. The schools are there for our children," Cammarata told the Advance. "I've asked for an inquiry into exactly how the scheduling of Hillary's visit did occur."

Cammarata said that though her Sept. 9 visit to Virgil Grissom Junior High School in South Ozone Park would be an unacceptable campaign stop, it would be perfectly appropriate as the president's wife.

"She is the First Lady," he said. "If it's through the White House, it's very fair. It's very important as the First Lady."

The New York Post reported today that the First Lady acknowledged that the campaign committee arranged the visit.

No response has yet been received from Crew's office, Cammarata said.

A spokesman for Mrs. Clinton told the Post that her visit to Virgil Grissom was the fulfillment of promise to return after spending a day there as honorary principal back in April.

Karen Crowe, Crew's spokeswoman, told the Post that the chancellor reviewed Mrs. Clinton's visit in advance.

"She is not a declared candidate," said Ms. Crowe. "As a First Lady, she has a right to visit our schools just as any public figure does." Cammarata, 52, was appointed to the his post in 1995 by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani — Mrs. Clinton's likely opponent in the race for the Senate seat being vacated by Sen. Patrick Moynihan — after Borough President Guy V. Molinari picked him for the position.

Since then, the one-time Republican Assembly candidate has made no secret of his close alliance with the Republicans.

Cammarata said some of the Island's public officials have approached him in the past about the use of the schools in political campaigns, but did not cite which officials.

He said that no borough official, however, has contacted him specifically about this month's visit or about Mrs. Clinton, he said.