

FIRST LADY IN NEW FLAP

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WAS HILL'S SCHOOL VISIT RIGGED?

A Board of Education member has accused Hillary Rodham Clinton of using White House influence to visit a Queens junior high on the first day of school to advance her likely Senate campaign.

Staten Island board member Jerry Cammarata — an appointee of Mayor Giuliani, Mrs. Clinton's likely opponent in the race — complained that her exploratory campaign committee, which requested the visit, got "possibly" inappropriate permission after it asked the White House "to intervene."

In a confidential memo to Chancellor Rudy Crew last week, Cammarata cited Board of Ed rules forbidding schools to take part in

White House pulled strings: Ed Boarder

By SUSAN EDELMAN and ROBERT HARDT Jr.

events "for the furtherance of any politically partisan interests."

Cammarata did not say what evidence he had that the White House helped the first lady. He was said to be out of town and did not return calls yesterday. Howard Wolfson, Mrs. Clinton's spokesman, called the accusations "totally and categorically false."

"It wasn't a political event," Wolfson said of Mrs. Clinton's return to Virgil Grissom JHS in South Ozone Park, where she had served as honorary principal for the day on April 29. "Politics wasn't discussed," he said.

During the back-to-

school visit Sept. 9, the first lady said she was keeping her promise to return. She also cited Virgil Grissom as an example of overcrowded schools, and answered questions about her husband's clemency offer to FALN terrorists.

Sources close to the first lady acknowledged that the campaign committee arranged the visit — and that Crew gave his blessing to the event.

"We were told that a visit would be fine, and the principal welcomed us — just as long as it wasn't disruptive," said one source, who asked not to be identified.

Crew asked Mrs. Clinton "to keep the number of press [members] feasible," the source said, and the committee complied.

One board official, who

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HOWARD WOLFSON, HILLARY'S SPOKESMAN

asked to remain anonymous, said the school got a call from the "White House advance team."

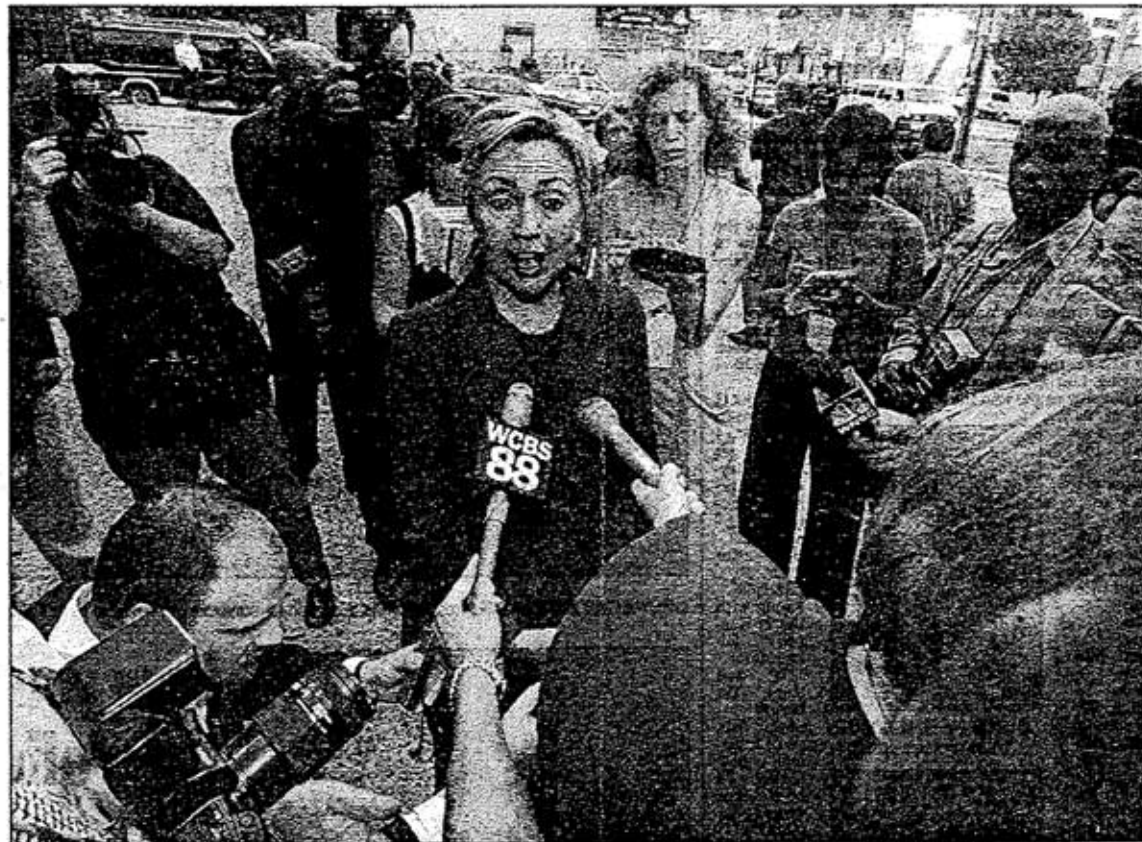
But Crew spokeswoman Karen Crowe denied that the White House ever contacted the board, saying the first lady's visit was arranged "locally" through the school.

Crew was asked to review the proposed visit in advance — and did nothing to stop it, she said.

"She is not a declared candidate," Crowe said of Mrs. Clinton. "As a first lady, she has a right to visit our schools, just as any public figure does."

"Until there's a declaration of candidacy — and even after that — she still is the first lady. Just as if the governor decides to run for another office, he's still the governor, or if the mayor runs for another office, he's still the mayor and he's still going to be welcome in the schools. We're in a bind."

Giuliani's press secretary, Sunny Mindel, had no comment on Cammarata's letter. The White House referred queries to Mrs. Clinton's committee.



POLITICS? NAH! The first lady meets the press during her visit to Virgil I. Grissom JHS in South Ozone Park, Queens, earlier this month.



Clinton

Hillary in school flap

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