

Conservatives fail to fill their slate

Party picks 5 candidates for the fall

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ADVANCE BOROCH HALL BUREAU

Staten Island Conservatives last night renominated five proven vote-getters for re-election this fall — three Republicans and two Democrats — but failed to come up with candidates to take on the island's two senior elected officials, whom they have repeatedly snubbed in past elections.

Receiving the Conservative nod were Republican Rep. Susan Molinari; Assemblyman Robert Straniero, R-Bay Terrace; Assemblyman Eric Vitaliano, D-Dongan Hills; state Sen. Chris Mega, R-Brooklyn, whose new district could include a portion of the island, and Civil Court Judge Pasquale Bifulco, a Democrat.

But it was the first time since Conservatives stripped state Sen. John J. Marchi, R-Ward Hill, of their line in 1984 for accepting liberal Party backing that they couldn't scare up someone to run against him.

Conservative chairman Thomas Brennan said party leaders would find someone to field against Marchi — who also is backed by the Democrats — by the time petitions are circulated July 9.

"I'd hate to let Marchi off the hook," said Brennan, prior to the start of a 20-minute convention in a meeting room in Bayley Seton Hospital, which was attended by 30 party members.

Brennan called Marchi "an affront to the whole system" because he runs with the support of three political parties, adding that Conservatives "offer voters the

only alternative to him.

Nor were there any takers to challenge Assemblywoman Elizabeth Connelly, D-Westfield.

Brennan said while Conservatives interviewed teacher Louis Fraser of Great Kills to run against Mrs. Connelly — at the behest of Republican Party chairman Olga Igneri — before the convention began, they decided to "keep their options open" a while longer.

Yesterday, Mrs. Igneri said the Republican executive committee would recommend Fraser to party members when the GOP holds its convention June 29.

Fraser, who has never run for office before, could not be reached for comment. While he does not live in the district, because it is a reapportionment year he would have until the '94 elections to move should he win.

Last month, Conservatives issued an edict that they would not endorse any candidate who did not wholeheartedly support the party position that the city Board of Education should establish an educational complex on the soon-to-be-vacant College of Staten Island Sunnyside campus.

Last night, Brennan said all of the candidates they endorsed back the Board of Ed plan. But neither Straniero nor Vitaliano have unequivocally said they do — saying they find merit in the proposal put forth by Touro College for an international school of business.

In nominating Ms. Molinari to seek a second full term to Congress, party member Richard Birmingham said that while she "does not follow the Conservative



Richard F. Birmingham, left, Laura Lopresti, Civil Court Judge Pasquale Bifulco and Conservative Party Chairman Thomas Brennan chat during the party's convention in Bayley Seton Hospital.

platform 100 percent" — a reference to her pro-choice stance on abortion — he said she should be supported for her views on "fiscal responsibility, national defense and a strong support of law and order."

In secret paper balloting, 25 Conservatives voted to renominate Ms. Molinari, with three abstentions and two no votes.

Vitaliano received the backing of 27 Conservatives, with three abstentions. Two years ago — when Vitaliano was said to be vulnerable to defeat — it was widely rumored that Conserva-

tives would back his Republican opponent, school board member Jerry Cammarata. But they stuck with Vitaliano — who went on to pummeled Cammarata at the polls — and there was no hint that they would track him again this time around.

In nominating Straniero, party official Skip Master Jr. praised him for the "very best voting record" of Conservatives statewide. He got the support of 26 Conservatives, with three no votes and one abstention.

Mega, meanwhile, received the support of 29 Conservatives, with

one abstention.

As for Bifulco — whose judicial seat is islandwide — Conservatives unanimously renominated him.

Party official Joseph Dick's quipped that in backing Bifulco, it would be the last time anyone could say he voted for a judge who was born on a farm on Staten Island.

The old Bifulco family farm was located in New Springville.

The Conservative's inability to put together a full slate at this late date mirrors the frustrations of the Democratic and Republican parties.

Yesterday, Democratic chairman Robert J. Gigante said Democrats would not nominate anyone to run against Straniero when they held their convention tonight, because they are having trouble finding someone to run against him. But Gigante vowed that the line would not be left blank.

Meanwhile, the Republicans have put off holding their convention until the end of the month because they, too, are having trouble coming up with a full slate. The power of the incumbents here is in sharp contrast to the anti-incumbent sentiment around the country.

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