

## For First Advocate, a Focus on Record

By JULIE BOSMAN

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By [Mark Green](#)'s count, he has written or edited 22 books, appeared on political talk shows hundreds of times, founded a public affairs institute and, since 2007, has presided over Air America Radio, the liberal talk radio network.

"I've been a player, a caddie, the manager of the restaurant at the club," he said the other day, summing up his job experience with a golf metaphor.

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But as Mr. Green campaigns for public advocate, the city's second-highest elected official, he is running largely on his record in public office: three years as consumer affairs commissioner and eight years as the city's first public advocate, from 1994 through 2001.

He has had his eyes on bigger prizes in the past, with failed runs for the Senate, state attorney general and New York City mayor.

After the attorney general's race in 2006, Mr. Green vowed never to run for office again. But he changed his mind after the economy collapsed and after he was angered by the City Council's vote to upend the term-limits law.

Though some believe he is seeking to use the public advocate's office as a springboard for another mayoral run, Mr. Green says he wants to serve as a check on Mayor [Michael R. Bloomberg](#), who is heavily favored to win a third term.

It is a role Mr. Green played during his first turn as public advocate. Using the office as a bully pulpit, he was a liberal adversary to Mayor [Rudolph W. Giuliani](#), taking on police corruption, Joe Camel and even dry cleaners who charged more for women's shirts than for men's.

He and Mr. Giuliani clashed in court numerous times, particularly over access to files of police officers accused of brutality, and Mr. Giuliani tried to cut the budget and power of the public advocate.

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Michael Nagle for The New York Times

Mark Green speaking to members of the National Organization for Women on Monday.

Mr. Green, who has been called abrasive by some critics, was a counterweight to Mr. Giuliani, a “strong, brash figure who needed a strong, brash figure to stand up to him,” said [Kenneth K. Fisher](#), a lawyer and a City Council member from 1991 to 2001. Mr. Green, he added, “viewed his role as reaching out to and speaking for constituencies for which he felt Giuliani had disdain.”

The Democratic race for public advocate will be decided on Tuesday, when Mr. Green and [Bill de Blasio](#), a city councilman from Brooklyn, compete in a runoff. The winner has an overwhelming advantage in the general election, since the little-known Republican opponent, Alex T. Zablocki, is unlikely to attract a large following among the city’s heavily Democratic electorate.

Mr. Green, 64, a Brooklyn native who lives in the Gramercy neighborhood of Manhattan with his wife, Deni Frand, was elected public advocate in 1993, after the office was created to replace the position of city council president. Mr. de Blasio has questioned the relevance of Mr. Green’s public service during the 1990s, frequently noting that his own time in elected office occurred “during this decade.”

Hank Sheinkopf, a Democratic political consultant who advised Mr. Green during his 2001 mayoral bid, said Mr. Green’s core support has weakened since he was last in office. “It is a very different generation he’s facing,” he said. “Others want an opportunity to run, and the demographics of this city have shifted.”

Mr. Green, in his defense, said that much of his work has had a lasting impact. “The experience that best justifies my election as the next public advocate is the years when I performed in this exact role in ways that got an awful lot accomplished for consumers and taxpayers,” he said. “Clearly my work on police misconduct, access-a-ride for seniors and child welfare are entirely current and relevant for the next decade.”

Douglas Muzzio, a professor of public affairs at [Baruch College](#), said Mr. Green deserved credit for demonstrating the capacity of the office, and for outperforming his successor, [Betsy Gotbaum](#), who has kept a lower profile.

“Given the very ambiguity of the office, Mark made it into something as the first public advocate,” Mr. Muzzio said. “He really made the office an ombudsman, and he used it for personal reasons. I think it was a very active, vigorous office, and one that really did act as a check and a counterpoint on the mayor.”

But Fred Siegel, a historian who has served as an adviser to Mr. Giuliani, said Mr. Green sometimes failed to choose his battles wisely.

“It was a mixed record,” he said. “There were times when he got into fruitless conflicts with Giuliani.” On the other hand, Mr. Siegel added, Mr. Green “wrote a number of useful position papers and did a lot in the way of serious policy analysis, some if it substantial.”

As one of two citywide elected offices — the other is comptroller — the public advocate is seen as one likely place to produce a future mayoral candidate, said Kenneth Sherrill, an emeritus professor of political science at [Hunter College](#).

“The question for public advocate is not just, what has he or she done,” Mr. Sherrill said, “but what is he or she likely to do eight years from now?”

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