

# New GOP face on Elect Board

## Council OKs ex-Dem Polanco for city position - but predecessors have history of problems

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BRONX REPUBLICANS finally have one of their own as a commissioner on the city Board of Elections.

He's Juan Carlos Polanco, 30, of Morris Park, a lawyer and the \$110,000-a-year director of the New York City regional office of Assembly Minority Leader James Tedisco (R-Schenectady).

He's also a GOP leader in the 80th Assembly District, where he lost a bid for the Assembly seat in 2002.

Married, with two children, Polanco was born in Harlem of Dominican parents: He grew up in Fordham and holds a master's degree in business and a law degree from Fordham.

Each borough has two election commissioners — a Democrat and Republican nominated by their parties and confirmed by the City Council. They're paid \$150 a

day for attending various meetings, up to a maximum of \$12,500 a year.

The Bronx GOP seat had been vacant for a year, ever since Bronx GOP Chairman Jay Savino resigned to make a failed bid for the state Senate. Polanco will serve out the unexpired term to Dec. 31, 2008.

The plum job usually goes to someone with more political heft than Polanco. Yet his nomination sailed through the Council, while four of Savino's prior nominations — including one he made himself — went nowhere.

The position does have a downside. Both Savino and his predecessor, Vincent Velella, ended up figuring in corruption investigations.

Savino remains a focus of a city probe into alleged irregularities among Republicans on the Bronx Board of Elections. He denies any wrongdoing.

Velella was the GOP commissioner for 24 years until resigning June 8, 2004, after his embroilment in the political-influence and bribery case that saw his son, Guy

Velella, serve three months in jail. Guy Velella had been the longtime Bronx Republican boss and state senator. The charges against Vincent Velella were dropped as a condition of his son's guilty plea.

Only 7.5% of the Bronx's 584,466 registered voters are Republicans, yet they seem to love fighting and feuding among themselves.

Once allies, Savino and Guy Velella are now bitter enemies, each with fierce loyalists.

Polanco — a Democrat from 1997 until 2001 — became a Republican when Velella was the GOP boss, but he was nominated for the election post by Savino.

Asked whether he was a Savino backer or a Velella man, Polanco shot back, "No, I consider myself a Polanco man. I consider myself a Republican. ... I'm my own man."

One political insider said Polanco was quickly confirmed by the Council because it served the interest of the dominant Bronx Democrats.

He can't run for office and keep his new post, which removes him as a possible GOP opponent next year to Assemblywoman Naomi Rivera (D-Bronx), daughter of Bronx Democratic boss and Assemblyman Jose Rivera.



Juan Carlos Polanco

