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Gov. candidates forum: Why we won't be on the panel

Questions that Ithaca Journal readers sent us to ask gubernatorial candidates at tonight's debate at Cornell University were rejected by the event's media organizer.

Because we can not present our readers' questions to Republican John Faso and Democrat Eliot Spitzer, The Journal has withdrawn from participating in the event.

▼ ADVERTISEMENT ▼ The Journal selected two primary questions and a third back-up question from a few dozen reader submissions. The questions were:

*Thousands of New Yorkers continue to suffer from the 2001 terror attacks in NYC. Families and surviving victims have sought additional investigations on the attack that were never addressed by the 9/11 Commission Report. Do you accept the findings of that Commission, or are there areas of that investigation that still leave you with unanswered questions? Would you as governor act to open a state investigation to answer those questions?

*As governor, what would you do to reform the state's mental health housing policies to assure an adequate supply of safe, affordable and adequately staffed housing with services for people with mental illnesses?

*A bill will be proposed in the next legislative session titled "The Clean Money, Clean Elections Bill." This bill would create a new system in New York that provides "clean money" candidates with a fixed and equal amount of public financing for their political campaigns. If elected, will you support this bill?

In the planning for tonight's forum, we told event organizers at New York 1 News that we would ask our readers to suggest questions. We explained that while topics such as gay marriage and local taxes are possible topics on the minds of Ithacans, we could not predict what our readers might offer.

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A solicitation for questions and our plan to use those questions was published on this page for a week through last Friday.

Last Friday evening, the questions our readers wanted to pose to the candidates were rejected by New York 1 News. The question on a possible state investigation related to the Sept. 11 attacks in New York City was deemed irrelevant. The question about housing for the mentally ill was deemed too narrow to have statewide interest. And the backup question on campaign financing was considered redundant of another panelist's question on Albany reform.

We regret our readers' questions did not make the cut for tonight's candidate forum at Cornell. However, we are happy to let the candidates know what our readers would have asked by printing the topics and questions on this page and our Web site, <http://www.theithacajournal.com/>.

Maybe Spitzer or Faso will decide that questions from regular people deserve answers. We'd be happy to publish them.