HILLARY'S FREE RIDE
NY POST Editorial

September 10, 2003 -- Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton has found a hot-button issue with which to pummel the Bush administration - and never mind the facts, ma'am.

New York's junior senator disclosed over the weekend that she is placing a hold on the president's nomination of Gov. Mike Leavitt as head of the Environmental Protection Agency; the move would keep the full Senate from voting on Leavitt's confirmation.

At issue is a report last month by the EPA's inspector general - an Al Gore ally held over from her husband's administration - charging that the White House forced the EPA to cover up possible health risks in the air around Ground Zero after the 9/11 attacks.

Clinton, in typical Hillaryesque hyperbole, claims the report "has to do with the credibility and trust of this entire government."

Such words coming from a Clinton drip with irony; as we noted at the time, if anybody knows cover-up, it's Hillary.

It's all about politics, of course - and even if the net effect of the effort is to call into question the legitimacy of America's War on Terror, what's a little aid and comfort to the enemy when there's a Republican president to smear?

But, as Post State Editor Fred Dicker asks on the preceding page, where are New York state Republicans to counter Clinton's political mischief?

In particular, why have Gov. Pataki and state GOP Chairman Sandy Treadwell been so quiet?

The governor has expressed his own "concern" about the report.

And, asked whether he was disappointed in the president, Pataki said he didn't "want to draw any conclusions."

Why not?

Why is Sen. Clinton getting a free ride? Shouldn't Republicans be calling her to account, politically, for her pernicious nonsense?

There is no evidence to contradict the EPA's assurance that there were no long-term health risks for the general population - as junk-science debunker Steven Milloy notes in detail, also on the preceeding page.

Even the IG's report itself does not contradict the EPA's reassuring statements about air quality - it merely says there was insufficient evidence at the time to support the judgment.

Yet no evidence has been presented since to contradict the EPA's position.

As for the White House's desire to prevent widespread fear - well, what's wrong with that?

After all, thousands of Americans lay dead in smoking ruins.

It wasn't at all clear that the attacks were over.

Maybe Sen. Clinton - who seems to be hard at work pumping up a presidential bubble of her own these days - would have handled things differently. Maybe she would have fomented panic in the streets of New York.

Well, we hope not.

Bottom line: The evidence over the past two years validates the EPA's judgment on this matter.

All the more reason, then, for Pataki and Treadwell to "draw [some] conclusions" - and call Mrs. Clinton out on her slanderous accusations.

She appears to have no shame.

Do they?