

## ***THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS***

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## **April 2009**

**APRIL MEETING:** **Wednesday, April 22, 2009**

**FEATURED  
TOPICS &  
SPEAKERS**

**PUBLIC ADVOCATE FORUM**

Council Member Eric Gioia, Council Member Bill de  
Blasio, Hon. Mark Green, Norman Siegel

**BOROUGH PRESIDENT** Scott Stringer (unopposed)

**TIME:** 8:00 PM

**PLACE:** American Youth Hostels  
891 Amsterdam Avenue at 103<sup>rd</sup> Street

**ROOM:** Chapel

### **AGENDA**

**7:45 PM Sign-in**  
**8 PM Call to Order**

1. President's Report & Announcements
2. Public Advocate Forum
3. Manhattan Borough President
4. District Leaders' Report /Health Care Update
5. New Business
6. Adjournment

### **CALENDAR**

**Wed., April 29, 2009, 8 PM**

**Three Parks Board Meeting**

Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103<sup>rd</sup> St.

**Sunday, May 3, 2009, 3-6 PM**

**TPID 34th ANNUAL BENEFIT**

Place: Meridiana Restaurant, 2756 Broadway at  
105th/106th Streets

**Wednesday, May 13, 2009, 8 PM**

**Three Parks Endorsement Meeting**

Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103<sup>rd</sup> St.

**Wednesday, May 27, 2009 [NOTE ADD'L MTG]**

**Three Parks Board Meeting, 7 PM**

**Three Parks Endorsement Meeting, 8 PM**

Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103<sup>rd</sup> St.

## President's Column

By Daniele Gerard

Welcome back from the spring holiday season! I would like to thank the membership for turning out for the Club's meetings in such consistently high numbers. This is terrific for our speakers—it also helps broaden our impact on the issues we tackle. The March meeting was no exception. Once again, there was standing room only for the Three Parks Comptroller Forum, where we heard from Council Members Melinda Katz, David Weprin, David Yassky and John Liu. A warm thanks to all four for their remarks and informative answers to the membership's questions regarding this critical office, especially in these tough economic times.

We would also like to thank Steve Max, Three Parks Member and Associate Director & Lead Trainer of Midwest Academy, and Sherry Glied, Professor of Health Policy & Management at Columbia University's School of Public Health, for their riveting presentation on the pros and cons of single payer. Afterwards, the Club voted overwhelmingly in support of single payer and a significant public option in any health care plan passed by Congress. The Club has already gathered hundreds of signatures on petitions; look for handouts at the April meeting to find out what else you can do to make your voices heard in New York and Washington.

Members brought canned goods to the March meeting for West Side Campaign Against Hunger; the Club raised \$170 in contributions for WSCAH's soup kitchen during recent tabling activities for health care. Judicial delegates to the September Convention were also elected; look for the results elsewhere in this issue.

April's meeting will feature the Club's Forum for Public Advocate with remarks and Q&A by Council Member Eric Gioia, Council Member Bill de Blasio, Mark Green and Norman Siegel. When members arrive, please be sure to fill out an index card with your question for the candidates for this office, the importance of which will only increase with the Mayor's end run around term limits. Borough President Scott Stringer will also address this month's meeting; he is running for reelection unopposed at this time.

By now, you should have received the Club's invitation to the Three Parks 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Benefit. This year, we will present State Senator Bill Perkins with the Ted Weiss Public Service Award;

the Jesse Crawford Community Service Award will go to West Side Campaign Against Hunger. Please be sure to join us on **Sunday, May 3rd from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at Meridiana Restaurant!** You can go to [ThreeParksDems.org](http://ThreeParksDems.org) to buy your ticket or simply return the response card. We look forward to seeing you there to help support the Club's ongoing work on behalf of Democratic candidates and progressive issues and, of course, to celebrate the 2008 Democratic victories.

## District Leader Report

By Bob Botfeld

In the midst of the most severe economic downturn since the Great Depression, it is hard to pay attention to anything other than the national crisis and the Obama administration's efforts to stave off economic calamity. Fortunately, last fall we helped elect our team of President Obama and a Democratic Congressional majority to find the best practical remedies to cure our financial problems and to initiate health care reforms and massive energy programs as part of the solution.

This spring at the club meetings in April and May we have a more local focus but no less important for us on the West Side. We will be choosing from among the candidates running for New York City offices and deciding which of these candidates will best represent our interests. In this month's column are my views on the Borough President, City Council and Public Advocate.

### Borough President

Since Scott Stringer is probably running unopposed, this is an easy endorsement but it is also very much earned. Scott works very hard. The BP's office has limited authority in a mayoral dominated city structure but Scott has made the most use of the existing powers and bully pulpit. He followed through on his campaign promise to reinvigorate and support the community boards. In these difficult economic times, his office identified abandoned and vacant lots that could provide sites for economic or housing development.

He recruited a staff of very able and talented young professionals – particularly in land use. We worked with them closely during the 97th-110<sup>th</sup> Street. West Side rezoning. When the negotiations between our West Side group advocating the rezoning and the City Planning

Commission stalemated, Scott was instrumental in pushing an agreement that delivered 90% of the restricted 8A/7A zoning that we had requested.

As Borough President, Stringer has also been involved in land use negotiations in the Columbia University expansion, 125<sup>th</sup> Street Redevelopment, and the lower East Side. In some of these communities, the local advocates were not as pleased with or as successful with the final plan but here on the Upper West Side, Scott helped preserve our neighborhood.

### **City Council**

The 97<sup>th</sup> – 110 Sts. rezoning would also not have been possible without the strong support of our city council members, Melissa Mark Viverito representing the 8<sup>th</sup> Council District (the area east of Broadway on the UWS) and Inez Dickens representing the 9<sup>th</sup> Council District (the area west of Broadway). Their strong and early support was especially appreciated since Three Parks and the West Side area generally supported other candidates in the council races in 2005. Their effective support demonstrated their understanding of our neighborhood's needs as well as their political maturity.

Melissa Mark Viverito is a progressive activist who has continued in that role in office. She led demonstrations for affordable housing in East Harlem. She has worked to protect tenants from eviction by harassment from landlords and worked to include that language into rezoning bills.

She was one of a minority of council members who voted against the Yankees' grab of public parkland in the Bronx. Again, Melissa was courageously in the minority when she voted against the term limits extension. I did not always agree with her. Many in the club, including myself, disagreed with her support of congestion pricing but she came to Three Parks to debate her position on her issue.

On balance, Melissa Mark Viverito has been a very good councilmember for the Three Parks area. Her instinctive political positions reflect progressive politics and community interests.

Inez Dickens has been a very effective councilmember who has delivered in getting city services to her community including Harlem and the Upper West Side. Inez Dickens and her staff,

particularly Micah Kellner (now NYS Assembly Member) provided critical support in getting both the Planning Commission and the local Community Board members to believe that the 97<sup>th</sup>-110<sup>th</sup> Sts. rezoning plan needed to be adopted. Her influential role as council majority whip is also helpful.

Our Club's and neighborhood's concerns are important to Dickens. Her staff member continues to attend nearly all of the Three Parks meetings and pays attention to the issues that matter to our club members. True, in her influential role as majority whip, she has been less likely to adopt positions that differ from Speaker Quinn's (i.e., the vote on term limits), but overall it is very good for our neighborhood, Three Parks Independent Democrats, and the city that Inez Dickens continue to represent us in the City Council.

### **Public Advocate**

Norman Siegel is an activist and advocate by nature. He has spent his life giving voice and representation to the less powerful. His intelligence, energy and enthusiasm for the job might just reinvigorate an office that has been weakened by budget cuts and mayoral criticism. Also, after eight years of George Bush, I want to put anyone in office that has spent a significant amount of time supporting and defending our civil liberties – as Norman has. We probably do not even realize how much we lost during the last Bush years. Bloomberg's record on civil liberties and the rights of citizens to protest have not been good either. Let's help Norman Siegel get a louder voice for what he cares about.

## **District Leader Report**

By Cynthia Doty

The latest talk from Washington is that Health Care reform and Energy reform are the next items on the President's agenda. Obama would like new Health Care legislation by Memorial Day! This seems very optimistic given how Congress works and given how controversial changing Health Care is; however, if indeed reforms are to happen in this short a time frame, then the legislation will likely be watered down by lots of compromises. So far the White House summits and forums on Health Care have had major participation by the insurance industry and very little by single payer advocates. There is frequent talk that we "can't let the perfect

stand in the way of reform," meaning "we don't think we can get Republican support for single payer or even a quality public option plan."

So, for any substantial progressive reform in Health Care, we all need to stay vigilant and keep expressing the need for single payer or at least the inclusion of a genuine public option. The Senate and the White House are the key players. Senator Schumer is now heading the subcommittee that will actually write the details for the public option legislation.

Send your messages to Senator Schumer and President Obama (and to the White House policy advisors) whenever and wherever possible. Write letters, make calls, send emails, and join rallies. The polls show wide public support for single payer plans. Let's make sure we aren't drowned out by for-profit insurance "experts." Remember: the devil is in the details!

For more detailed information, check out the excellent Health Care page on the Three Parks website. Thanks to Steve Max our website manager, we have all kinds of info and links to help you with your advocacy. Go to: [www.ThreeParksDems.org](http://www.ThreeParksDems.org)

## How Do We Solve New York's Housing Crisis?

By Arlene Geiger

The most successful affordable housing program in New York City is rent regulation and the future of rent-regulated housing in New York City depends on ending vacancy decontrol. "Vacancy decontrol" is a provision in the rent laws that allows landlords to take apartments permanently out of rent regulation upon vacancy, if the legal rent can be brought to \$2,000 a month. The promise of limitless rent increases, and minimal tenant rights (including no lease-renewal rights), provides a tremendous incentive for landlords to push out long-time tenants, often by harassing tenants until they move out, or bringing them to court on false grounds. Since vacancy decontrol was enacted over a decade ago, an estimated 300,000 once-affordable apartments have become de-regulated. We are at a critical moment in the tenants' movement. The future of affordable housing in this city depends on our ability to preserve the system of rent-regulation.

The Real Rent Reform campaign is a coalition of

all the tenant organizations and many local groups in the city and suburbs. This coalition has been meeting regularly to win our four platform measures: (1) Repeal vacancy decontrol; (2) Re-instate home rule for New York City's Council and Mayor over rent and eviction rules; (3) Save affordable units in expiring Mitchell-Lama and Section 8 projects by putting them under rent stabilization and barring market-rate rent increases; (4) and reforming the rent guidelines boards in NYC and the surrounding counties.

Most of the campaign's energy is currently focused on winning the repeal of vacancy decontrol. Measures were introduced in both the Assembly (A 2005) and Senate (S 2237) to completely repeal vacancy decontrol. The bill has already passed the Assembly and we are working hard to pass it in the Senate. Many of our Senate allies have already signed on to support the bill, but we are still missing some key support.

Several Democrats in New York City and the surrounding suburbs have not yet signed on to the bill that has been introduced in the State Senate to repeal vacancy decontrol, so Tenants & Neighbors and our allies in Housing Here and Now and the Real Rent Reform Campaign have been urging tenants living in the districts of these hold out Senators to let them know how important this issue is to their constituents.

**Your help is needed to repeal vacancy decontrol. You can volunteer to phone bank, canvass, canvas door to door in districts of Senators who have not yet signed on to the bill, attend rallies in New York City or lobby in Albany in April.**

**To help, contact Giti at Tenants and Neighbors, 212-608-4320 ext. 316 or [gdadlani@tandn.org](mailto:gdadlani@tandn.org)**

### Manhattan Borough Rally to Repeal Vacancy Decontrol

April 22<sup>nd</sup>, starting at 7PM  
Church for All Nations  
417 W. 57th Street, between 9th & 10th Ave.  
Subway: A, B, C, D, or 1 to Columbus Circle

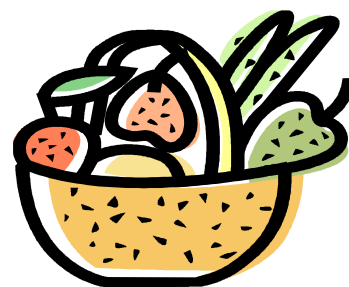
### Matters Judicial

By Elizabeth Kellner

Governor Paterson made several appointments to the intermediate appellate court serving New York

County -- the Appellate Division First Department. Paterson continues the effort begun by Spitzer to restore the representative character of that prestigious panel by filling vacancies with highly qualified progressive Manhattan jurists, as opposed to Pataki's unprecedented frequent practice of importing (at extra taxpayer expense) more conservative upstate judges to fill city vacancies. Justice Louis Gonzalez was recently elevated to First Department Presiding Justice ("PJ"). He had been considered one of the leading contenders for the position, along with Justices Rolando Acosta and Peter Tom. Justice Tom had been serving as the Acting PJ since the previous PJ, Justice Jonathan Lippman, became New York State's Chief Judge earlier this year. Paterson also nominated Justice Rosalind Richter to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Justice Milton Williams, and Justice Sheila Abdus-Salaam was appointed to PJ Gonzalez's Associate Justice seat.

There is only one Manhattan Supreme Court vacancy to be filled in the 2009 election. Justice Stackhouse's term is up this year. He has decided to resign before the expiration of his term for health reasons. If Paterson appoints someone to serve out the balance of Stackhouse's term, it is expected that that individual will seek his or her own full term in the fall with the advantage of incumbency in seeking the Democratic Party's nomination. There are five Civil Court vacancies: two incumbents seeking re-election (Judges Cynthia Kern and Analisa Torres); two retirement vacancies (Judges Walter Tolub and Marilyn Shafer); and one vacancy resulting from Justice Judith Gische's election to the Supreme Court. Several candidates for these vacancies have begun to emerge, but the deadline for applications to the screening panels is not until May 1. TPID will keep you updated as "the season" progresses.



## Want Healthy, Fresh, Affordable Vegetables? Join the West Harlem CSA

By Cynthia Doty

The West Harlem Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a project in its third year that allows people of all income levels to buy their vegetables directly from a local farm. The mission of the CSA is to "make fresh, organic produce available to area residents, regardless of economic status."

Each member receives a "share" of fresh, locally grown, organic vegetables every week: a full share will feed 3-4 people and a half-share will feed 1-2 people. There are 50 full shares available for all income levels at very affordable rates, including very generous subsidies for low-income households.

Unlike most CSA projects, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as "Food Stamps") benefits are accepted. **For about \$4.00 of food stamps/week one receives a large bag of about 9-10 fresh organic, locally grown vegetables... enough to feed a family of 4.** The West Harlem CSA also offers an egg share, a fruit share, and a fresh flower share for additional prices. The deliveries are at the same time and place as the vegetable delivery.

In addition to providing fresh organic produce, CSAs also support local farmers. The West Harlem CSA will work with Windflower Farm located in the Taconic Hill country near Saratoga Springs between the Hudson River and the Vermont border. The farmers, Ted and Jan Blomgren, deliver their harvest **every Tuesday from June 16<sup>th</sup> through November 10<sup>th</sup> to the Broadway Presbyterian Church at Broadway and W. 114<sup>th</sup> Street for pick up from 4-7 PM.**

### 10th ANNUAL RIVERSIDE POETRY EVENT

**Date: SUNDAY, APRIL 26<sup>th</sup>**

**Time: 1:30 PM**

**Place: *On the Island at 103rd St. &  
Riverside Drive***

**Rain Location, Indoors at 310 Riverside Dr.**

**COME - READ - LISTEN - ENJOY**

There are also cooking workshops, farm visits, and food and hunger policy information. This CSA partners with Just Food, the Hunger Action Network of New York State and the New York City Coalition Against Hunger. Contact [vmyers@hungeractionnys.org](mailto:vmyers@hungeractionnys.org), or (212) 741-8192 ext. 2, or visit our website: <http://westharlemcsa.wordpress.com>. Or call Cynthia Doty @212-749-4085.

## National Health Care Debate Glossary

By Steve Max, Health Care Committee Chair

**Single Payer:** A national system in which private for-profit insurance is replaced by a tax-funded agency that pays everyone's doctor and hospital bills in the way that Medicare does. All tax-paying families are covered. Also known as the Canadian System or Medicare for All. Endorsed by Three Parks.

**Insurance Exchange Model:** Based on private for-profit insurance companies. A government agency called the "Insurance Exchange" negotiates a choice of basic plans with private insurance companies. Uninsured people go to the "Exchange" to join a plan. People can keep the coverage they now have if it continues to be offered. Limited subsidies for people who can't afford the premiums. Some versions are universal; others are not.

**The Public Option:** A government sponsored plan similar to Medicare that would be offered as part of the Exchange Model. Combined, they are often called the Mixed Model. Obama, Clinton and Edwards advanced Mixed Models during the primaries. The inclusion of a public option is supported by Three Parks.

**Universal Health Care:** Used in many ways. With Single Payer, this means everyone is covered. In other plans, it means that everyone must have some form of insurance or receive penalties and fines. The President has been opposed; Congress seems to favor it.

**National Health Plan:** A vague term implying that lower wage workers will be partially subsidized to buy private health insurance. Favored by the health insurance industry if universal (compulsory). Voluntary insurance reforms such as non-discrimination by age or previous condition. Minimal government involvement.

**Socialized Medicine:** The British system. In England, most health care professionals are government employees and private practice is quite limited. No one is actually proposing this for the U.S. but right-wingers apply the term to every proposal they don't like.

**The Conyers Bill, H.R. 676:** The actual Single Payer legislation referred to the Ways and Means Committee. Fate uncertain. Endorsed by Three Parks.

**The Sanders Bill S. 703:** Introduced by Senator Sanders (I-VT.) A federally funded Single Payer plan administered by the states. House version **H.R. 1200**, Jim McDermott (D-WA).

**The Baucus Proposal:** The main proposal that will come before the Senate. Finance Committee Chair, Max Baucus (D-MT.) wants a bi-partisan bill (watch out) and is working with Senator Grassley. Similar to the Mixed Model (above) but the public option may be eliminated by Baucus to get Republican support.

**The Kennedy Perspective:** His Chief of Staff says Kennedy's plan will be essentially the same as the Baucus plan. But, expect significant differences in details (*New England Journal of Medicine*, April 1, 2009).

**The Obama Plan:** Obama says he won't offer a detailed plan because he wants Congress to write it. Nonetheless, people are getting confusing e-mail blasts from various groups urging them to support the Obama Plan.

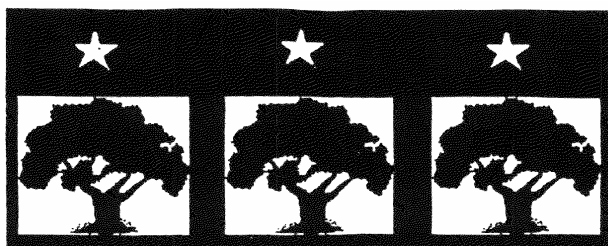
## TOWN HALL MEETING ON THE FEDERAL STIMULUS PACKAGE

The New York State Senate will be hosting a Federal Stimulus Package Town Hall Forum where you can find out how your community can benefit from the stimulus package, what projects are eligible for funding, as well as job and business opportunities.

**When:** Friday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, from 9:30 AM – 12 PM

**Where:** Harlem Hospital Center, 506 Lenox Ave.  
New York, NY 10037

Three Parks mourns the recent passing of club member Estelle Kattleson and extends our condolences to her family and friends. Her activism and commitment to progressive causes will be sorely missed.



*THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS*  
Cathedral Station P.O. Box 1316 • New York, NY 10025 (212) 866-6378

Please pay your 2009 dues by filling out the form below and bringing it to the next meeting  
or by mailing it with your check to:

***Three Parks Independent Democrats  
Cathedral Station P.O. Box 1316  
New York, N.Y. 10025  
Attn: Treasurer***

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## **2009 MEMBERSHIP FORM**

***New Member***\_\_\_

***Renewal***\_\_\_

Membership Category -- Check One

Individual (\$25) \_\_\_\_\_

Family -- two adults in the same household (\$40) \_\_\_\_\_

Student/Senior Citizen/Low Income (\$10)\_\_\_\_\_

Low Income Family (18) \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor (\$50)\_\_\_\_\_ Patron (\$100) \_\_\_\_\_

Name\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_ Apt. #\_\_\_\_\_

City\_\_\_\_\_ State\_\_\_\_\_ Zip\_\_\_\_\_

Phone (H)\_\_\_\_\_ (W)\_\_\_\_\_

Email\_\_\_\_\_

**Check here if you prefer to receive the newsletter via email.**

**Please make out all checks to "Three Parks Independent Democrats - Dues 2009"**

*Three Parks Independent Democrats*  
Cathedral Station P.O. Box 1316  
New York, NY 10025

## **NEXT MEETING**

**Wednesday, April 22, 2009**

**Candidates Forum for  
Public Advocate and  
Borough President**

<p>Three Parks Annual Benefit, Sunday Afternoon, May 3, 2009 Go to <a href="http://ThreeParksDems.org">ThreeParksDems.org</a> for more information</p>
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