



THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS

Cathedral Station • P.O. Box 1316 • New York, N.Y. 10025 • (212) 539-7602

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State Committee

Lynn Thomas
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CLUB MEETING, APRIL 12, 2017

- Speaker:** Representative Adriano Espaillat
Fighting Back in Washington
- Presentations:** Manhattan Borough President; City Council Districts 6 & 7;
Nominations for Judicial Delegates.
- Date:** Wednesday, April 12, 2017
- Time:** 8:00 pm
- Place:** The Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Avenue at 103 Street
- Room:** Ballroom

AGENDA

- 7:45 pm Sign-in
8:00 pm Call to Order
- District Leader Report
Speaker: Representative Adriano Espaillat
Presentations: Manhattan Borough President &
City Council Districts 6 and 7
Nominations for Judicial Delegates
ADJOURN

CALENDAR

- Wednesday, April 12, 2017, 8:00 pm**
Three Parks Membership meeting,
The Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Avenue
- Wednesday, April 26, 2017, 8:00 pm**
Three Parks Board Meeting,
The Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Avenue
- Hold the Date: Sunday, April 30, 2017**
Three Parks Annual Benefit
Mexican Festival Restaurant
1:00 pm-4:00 pm
2672 Broadway at 102 Street
- Wednesday, May 10, 2017, 8:00 pm**
Three Parks Membership Meeting
The Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Avenue
- Wednesday, May 24, 2017**
Three Parks Board Meeting, 7:00 pm-8:00 pm
Membership Meeting 8:00 pm
The Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Avenue

President's Report

By Merle McEldowney

On March 8, we were thrilled to have Zephyr Teachout speak at our meeting. What an evening! Zephyr, an Associate Professor of Law at Fordham University and a candidate for Congress in 2016 in the 19th New York Congressional District (Ulster, Sullivan, Dutchess, Columbia, and Greene counties), described the local and national issues raised in her campaign, as well as the role played by super PAC money in her defeat. She also reported on the lawsuit against President Trump that she has joined with the watchdog group, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics, in Washington. The suit, filed in federal court, alleges that Trump has violated the emoluments clause of the U.S. Constitution because his businesses have accepted payments from foreign government entities. Teachout focused on the importance of active involvement in politics. She told her listeners, "Just talking about politics with your friends, or posting about politics on Facebook, that's not enough!"

After Zephyr spoke, Katie Robbins from Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP), talked to us about the progress of a single-payer program in New York State.

For Three Parks, the campaign for single-payer is an old one. The passing of Obamacare was both a victory and a disappointment. Single Payer would have to wait, but the acknowledgment that health care was a right was progress. Last week we feared Obamacare would be repealed in favor of a replacement that would cause more people to be uninsured. Tonight, as I write, Paul Ryan has said "Obamacare is now the law of the land." Yahoo!

Single Payer is only a "dream delayed, not denied." Lois Safian has taken leadership of our club's campaign for single payer in New York State and, hopefully, nationally. She will have more to say... but for now everyone ought to sign up for PNHP's Lobby Day on April 4. Lois has signed up and so have I. Please join us! It will be a long but rewarding day—we will be getting on a bus early in the morning. Sign up at <http://www.nyhcampaign.org/lobbyday2017>.

Our meeting on April 12 will be just as exciting. Adriano Espallat has spoken at many Three Parks meetings but this will be the first time he will be speaking at our club as a congressperson.

Our beloved Gail Brewer will also speak as the candidate for Manhattan Borough President. She never runs out of ideas to make our city run better.

That should be enough, but it is not. We have a city council election coming up. We expect that all three city council candidates from the 6th district and both city council

candidates from the 7th district will be speaking.

From the 6th district: Helen Rosenthal, the current city councilperson, Mel Wymore and Cary Goodman.

From the 7th district: Mark Levine, the current city councilperson, and Thomas Lopez-Pierre.

In the meanwhile, a Three Parks team led by Steve and Lynn Max and Dan Cohen will continue the campaign to take back Congress. Read your email blasts!

District Leader Report: Democracy in a Hurry

By Bob Botfeld

On Saturday, March 11, 2017, 260 county committee members (including over twenty from Three Parks Independent Democrats) convened at Save Our Children Foundation on West 125th Street to choose the Democratic nominee to replace Bill Perkins in the 30th State Senate District in an upcoming special election. It was an exciting, raucous event that swiftly concluded a short campaign period of less than three weeks.

The senate seat became vacant when Perkins was elected in another special election held on February 14 to succeed Councilmember Inez Dickens in the 9th City Council district (central Harlem). Dickens triggered the series of special elections when she was elected to the New York State Assembly last November with one year remaining on her term in the City Council.

The 30th senate race was kicked off when Governor Cuomo announced at a press conference on February 23 that a special election for the 30th State Senate would be held on May 23. On March 6, Cuomo officially started the campaign clock, when he issued a gubernatorial proclamation announcing the election. Under New York State election law, a special election must be held between 70 to 80 days after the governor has proclaimed that a special election will be held. Further, under party and state election law, the Democratic Party (and the Republican) had less than two weeks from the date of the official proclamation to choose their candidate and file to run.

Governor Cuomo had a choice: (1) Hold the special election as described above; or (2) Hold the election in November, thereby allowing time for the regular primary election in September. Had Cuomo chosen the second option, the seat would be vacant for an additional five months and the Democrats would be another seat short in the state senate.

At the noisy, classic political convention on a very cold Saturday morning, four candidates competed for the senate seat: Brian Benjamin, Joyce Johnson, Al Taylor and John Ruiz. Because of the truncated campaign, many committee members knew little about the candidates. In the overflow

room, filled with press, party and elected officials and supporters, the county committee members heard the candidates' presentations; for many members they were hearing and seeing the candidates for the first time. The Three Parks' county committee members had an advantage because our regularly scheduled March 8 club meeting allowed us to quickly put together a last-minute forum to hear the candidates.

From the cheering in the room, it was unclear who would win the support of the majority of the delegates. Supporters for Al Taylor made the most noise. Many thought it would proceed to a second or third ballot—each committee member was given four colored ballots in case multiple ballots were needed. However, Joyce Johnson withdrew before the balloting—pledging to run independently, and leaving only three candidates. Benjamin and Taylor had the most support and, after over an hour of counting and recounting the ballots, Benjamin won on the first ballot with over 60 percent of the vote.

I supported Brian Benjamin as did Cynthia Doty, our co-district leader. All the candidates had different strengths. I decided on Benjamin because he was the best organized during the brief campaign; he made a good presentation at our club and a better one at the convention, and I heard good reports by fellow club members that Benjamin demonstrated ability and leadership in his chairmanship of Community Board 10. These factors convinced me that Benjamin would be the best representative for our district in the State Senate, in a very tough place for progressive Democrats.

At our April 12 club meeting, we will have the candidates for the 6th and 7th City Council seats speaking. I urge you to come and bring your friends. City Council members have a strong impact on our neighborhood, especially on the zoning and land use decisions that affect our everyday lives. In addition, they have a critical vote on how we spend our tax dollars. Three Parks' meetings are often the main opportunity for our friends and neighbors to get a chance to hear and question their local representatives. So bring all your friends with you!

Protesting Marisol Alcantara and the IDC

By Nathan Schumer

IDC—the Independent Democratic Conference—continues to thwart progressive legislation in the New York State Senate. On March 13th, the IDC voted down an amendment calling for a three-year phase-in of the 4.3 billion dollars of Foundation Aid owed to schools statewide, which was introduced by Senator Kevin Parker. Other progressive priorities that have died in the Republican-controlled State Senate include the GENDA Act, Raise the Age legislation, and the Dream Act. The

IDC, the Senate GOP, and Governor Cuomo have also decided to not take up voting rights legislation, which would expand voting access, provide opportunities for early voting, and no excuse absentee ballots.

The members of Three Parks Democrats joined a protest of Marisol Alcantara on March 24th. Organized by Rise and Resist, these protests have targeted IDC members for the past few months. About thirteen of us showed up to the protest and there were approximately 120 demonstrators outside of the office building at 5080 Broadway where Senator Alcantara's office is located. With chants of "IDC is GOP" and "No Fake Democrats; Take the New York Senate Back," we marched in a circle in front of Alcantara's office for about an hour on that rainy afternoon. There was extensive press presence at the event and, curiously, a series of idling buses had been placed in front of the building. At about 2:00 pm, we headed down to 207 Street and debriefed with other activists. Senator Alcantara was at a luncheon at a senior center, so she seemed to have missed the crowd—but hopefully she got the message.

Resolution re: IDC

By Daniele Gerard

From time to time, Three Parks introduces resolutions to enable the club to work formally on various issues, for example, health care/single payer, Social Security, and banning fracking. Below for consideration by the membership is a proposed resolution regarding IDC, the New York State Senate Independent Democratic Conference. It will be read, discussed, and voted on at the April 12 club meeting.

WHEREAS at a time when the White House and Republican majorities in Congress are propounding executive orders, policies and legislation that undermine the Constitution, shred public health and environmental protections, target the most vulnerable in our communities and enrich the few to the detriment of the many;

WHEREAS, as of this writing, eight members of the self-styled Independent Democratic Conference (IDC) in the New York State Senate, all of whom ran as Democrats but now caucus with Senate Republicans, actively work against progressive legislation, including, but not limited to, the New York State Liberty Act and the DREAM Act, the strengthening of rent regulations and tenant protections, single-payer health care for all New Yorkers, and criminal justice reforms such as raising the age at which children can be charged as adults; and

WHEREAS the IDC is funded largely by real estate and charter school interests that Three Parks has consistently advocated against,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Three Parks Independent Democrats will not invite elected officials who are members of the IDC to speak to the club membership or otherwise participate in club activities until they have joined or rejoined the State Senate Democrats.

Reaching Out to Republican Voters

By Steve Max

Is it possible to have a reasonable conversation with 119 upstate Republican voters? Yes, Three Parks did just that at our last two Take Back Congress phone banks. We were calling Republican senior citizens to say that we are concerned about the future of Medicare and Social Security. We mentioned legislation in Congress to cut benefits in both programs and asked people to call their Republican Congressman John Faso. Faso's 19th District includes ten upstate counties stretching from Dutchess in the northeast to Otsego in the northwest.

We found, as might be expected, that Republican seniors are as protective of these programs as anyone else would be, but unaware that their own party has designs on cutting benefits. When we brought up that part of the Affordable Care Act delivers prescription drug discounts to people on Medicare, none seemed aware of this or understood that Republicans in Congress want to eliminate this important benefit.

While the Republican plan to kill the Affordable Care Act is at least temporarily dead, they have not given up on their hope to cut benefits for seniors so there will continue to be more material for future phone banks.

As the campaign progresses, we will be making trips to Faso's district to join forces with progressive groups there. We are also looking at New York City's only Republican congressional district on Staten Island.

These phone banks are ongoing. Watch for announcements by email and on the Club web page www.threeparksdems.org. No computers are needed but bring a cell phone. Scripts and training are provided.

Neil Gorsuch: Nominee for the Supreme Court

Wendy Dannett

The nomination of Neil Gorsuch as a Supreme Court judge is troubling on many levels. Jordan Kushner of Politico states that Gorsuch has been right-wing since they attended college at Columbia in the 1980's. "He was the campus's most prominent right-wing activist." In this regard, Zephyr Teachout states, "When you are on the Supreme Court, your deeply held values and beliefs do matter." She further points out that "Gorsuch's record on the bench reveals a man with a strong top-down streak, a preference for

concentrated wealth and power. He has consistently been the friend of big business and monopolies...and the friend of big donors at the expense of small donors. In disputes between the employee and employer, he sides with the boss."

An example of siding with the boss is the now infamous case of the Frozen Truck Driver. In this case, a truck driver's truck broke down in sub-zero weather and the repairmen hadn't come for three hours. Feeling numb, ill and fearing death, the driver decided to abandon his vehicle; his employer told him to "hang in." He was later fired for leaving, though when he warmed up and the truck was repaired, he returned and completed his job. He appealed his firing; out of seven judges, only one sided with the employer: Neil Gorsuch. Senator Al Franken questioned Gorsuch on his decision; Gorsuch saw freezing as insufficient reason to abandon one's vehicle. Teachout calls this Gorsuch's cold-heartedness. She says that, often, when he says he is following the law, "it's cold-hearted in a way that actually defies the law."

Another troubling issue regarding Gorsuch is the amount of dark money (whose donors are not revealed) being spent on his nomination. \$10 million has been spent to support Gorsuch (\$7 million was spent to defeat Merrick Garland, President Obama's nominee). Sheldon Whitehouse, Democrat of Rhode Island, asked Gorsuch in the nominee's hearings what endeared him to the donors. Gorsuch claimed to have no answer to that. He claimed not to have any idea who the people were. However, Jane Mayer of the New Yorker, who has studied dark money, says that he must know. Would Gorsuch be capable of independence with this influx of dark money, asks Jake Whitney of Politico?

Zephyr Teachout notes that Gorsuch is an avowed Scalia admirer, and that we don't need another justice who will tear down key laws like the Voting Rights Act. (Regarding voter rights: Gorsuch is an admirer of Hans von Spakovsky, who was influential in spreading the myth of widespread voter fraud, and backed restrictions making it harder to vote.) Gorsuch will continue to dismantle anti-trust laws. "Scalia was a leader in gutting... protections [of money in politics] which led to a much more oligarchic and kleptocratic country." Teachout feels that Gorsuch is at least as bad as Scalia, but he could even be worse on the question of money in politics. Gorsuch has said we should think about removing limits to money contributed to political campaigns "because contributing to political campaigns is the heart of political freedom."

Chuck Schumer plans to filibuster the Gorsuch nomination. I congratulate Schumer for standing up. Zephyr Teachout

thinks that is a moral strategy. “You’ve got to consider this confirmation as important as a presidential decision. We’ve seen how much our Supreme Court governs us. Despite massive popular support for limitations on corporate spending, the Supreme Court says we must live in a world where there is unlimited corporate spending...They can overrule the popular will.” As far as Gorsuch’s being on the Supreme Court, Teachout says, “We’re talking about a threat to our democracy.”

Health Care for New Yorkers

By Lois Safian

The New York Health Act, sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblyman Richard Gottfried, is a single-payer system that would provide comprehensive, universal health coverage for every New Yorker. The bill was passed by the State Assembly in 2015 and 2016 with overwhelming support. Now we need the NY State Senate to do the same.

The New York Health Act, sponsored in the State Senate by Senator Gustavo Rivera, is due to come up for a Senate vote in a couple of months. We need to make sure that it passes. In that effort, the Campaign for New York Health is holding a rally in Albany on Tuesday, April 4th. You can sign up to attend and find more details of the rally on the website <http://www.nyhcampaign.org/lobbyday2017>

It is critically important to get the Act passed in the State Senate. No matter what happens on a national level, the bill will give all New Yorkers access to universal health care with a single-payer system that eliminates financial barriers and allows us to go the doctors and hospitals of our choice.

We urge you to join us in Albany on April 4th. If you have any questions or need any more information, please contact me—lsafian@mindspring.com.

Senior Citizens’ Rent Increase Exemption

By Marnie Hall

Your help is needed to get a critical bill passed to improve the Senior Citizens’ Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) so that thousands of our seniors can live above the poverty line.

SCRIE is a financial lifeline for many seniors on the Upper West Side. It enables tenants aged 62 and older to maintain the rent they are currently paying without the threat of future rent increases. Currently, any senior earning less than \$50,000 per year and whose rent is more than one-third of their annual rent, is entitled to receive SCRIE. Under SCRIE, an increase to the tenant’s rent is not paid by the tenant. Instead, the landlord receives a tax abatement equal to the permitted rent increase.

SCRIE helps, but as structured today, it is insufficient to help seniors with limited incomes to stay in their

apartments. For example, under the current one-third income limit, my current rent of \$635 per month (\$7,620 per year) means that if I earn more than three times my rent, (\$22,860), my rent would go up for the rest of my life, effectively prohibiting me from taking a part-time job. This leaves people like me consigned to a life of poverty.

I approached Assemblyman O’Donnell’s office about 18 months ago, and they started the ball rolling. The new bill, Assembly #1104 of January, 2017 is being sponsored by Assemblymember Diana Richardson. This bill is desperately needed. It would raise the permitted income to four times the rent, in my case to \$30,480. This change will have a dramatic effect on the life of many of us seniors.

The bill is currently in the Committee on Aging. Please call the following members—and encourage them to pass the bill. Thank you, everyone, for your help!

Sponsor, SCRIE Amendment, Assembly #1104:
Diana Richardson 718-771-3105 and 518-455-5262

Chair, NYS Assembly Committee on Aging:
Donna Lupardo 607-723-9047 or LupardoD@nysassembly.gov
District Office 518-455-5431 (Albany)

Condolences

The board and members of Three Parks wish to express their condolences to Lynn Thomas, State Committeeperson, on the passing of her mother, Helen Marie Thomas. Helen was a public school teacher and school librarian in Decatur, NE for over 50 years.

Suba Pharmacy Needs Our Help

Suba Pharmacy is one of the few independent, family-owned pharmacies on the Upper West Side. Its prices are competitive with, and often significantly lower than, the major drug store chains in the area. Equally important, Mr. Suba cares about his customers and goes out of his way to accommodate them.

In 2004, when Suba Pharmacy’s lease was about to expire, Three Parks petitioned to reinstate the store’s lease. We were successful. Today, faced with rising drug costs and low prescription drug reimbursements from health insurance plans, Suba’s profits are at an all-time low. Please consider expanding your shopping experience to include the pharmacy’s broad selection of health, beauty, natural and organic products.

**It’s time to help Suba Pharmacy again.
2721 Broadway at 104 Street
212-866-6700**

Neighborhood Events

April 8, 2017, 7:00 pm–8:30 pm

Chamber Music Concert

St. Michael's Church, W. 99th St and Amsterdam

Sanctuary Chambermusiccenter.org

A concert of chamber music presented by the young artists of The Chamber Music Center of New York. Works by Dvorak, Schumann, Vivaldi and others. Free admission.

April 23, 2017, 5:30 pm–7:00 pm

Cranky Cabaret Performance Art

Trinity Lutheran Church, 164 W. 100 Street, 212-222-7045

Sunday April 23, doors open at 5:40 for a 6:00 pm curtain.

Tickets are \$20 and include unlimited drinks for pre-show and intermission. Please note that this is an adult show.

April 29, 2017, 5:00 pm–6:30 pm

Vocal Workshop, Bloomingdale School of Music

323 West 108 Street, 212-663-6021

A voice recital will kick off Ella Fitzgerald's Centennial Birthday week spotlighting master class participants, as well voice studio performances featuring recordings by The First Lady of Song. Free and open to the public.

April 29, 2017, 7:00 pm–8:30 pm

Young New Yorkers' Chorus: Women's Ensemble

St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 225 W. 99th St.

Consolations of folk art, ancient custom, heroism, genius:

Story Time, YNYC Women's Ensemble and featuring

stories of humor, fantasy, loss, memory, and fantasy,

told by Opera Choruses, Madrigals and Folk Ballads.

Admission: \$20.

RALLY AGAINST WAGE THEFT

Wednesday, April 5, 5:30 pm

Manhattan Valley Restaurant

100 St. & Broadway

Please come support workers of this restaurant who have been unable to collect the \$700,000 judgment awarded them to restore stolen wages. And, please, continue to boycott Manhattan Valley Restaurant until they pay the workers what is owed to them.

Coming Soon!

Three Parks 42nd Annual Benefit

Sunday, April 30, 1:00-4:00 pm

Mexican Festival Restaurant

2672 Broadway

southeast corner of 102 St.

Please join us as we honor

Congressman Jerry Nadler

with the

Ted Weiss Public Service Award

and

Make the Road New York

with the

Jesse Crawford

Community Service Award



Benefactor \$500

Patron \$300

Sponsor \$175

Guest \$150

Member \$50

To RSVP, click on *Benefit* at

ThreeParksDems.org

or call Lorraine at 917-348-5136

Three Parks Independent Democrats 2017 MEMBERSHIP FORM

New Member _____ Renewal _____

Membership Category—Check One

Individual (\$25) _____

Family—two adults in the same household (\$40) _____

Low Income (\$15) _____ Low Income Family (\$20) _____

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

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____ Apt. # _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (H) _____ (Cell) _____

Email _____

Check here _____ if you prefer to receive the newsletter **solely** by email.

Please pay your dues with a check, money order or via PayPal.

Please make out all checks to

Three Parks Independent Democrats—Dues 2017.

Mail to: Three Parks Independent Democrats

Cathedral Station, P.O. Box 1316, New York, NY 10025 Attn: Treasurer

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**Next Meeting
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Representative Adriano Espaillat
“Fighting Back in Washington”
Candidate Presentations: Manhattan Borough President
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