



THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS

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Lynn Thomas
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Club Meeting, January 10, 2018, 8:00 pm

The Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Avenue at 103 St.

“Trump Tweets While Republicans Steal It All”

Speaker: Todd Gitlin,

Writer and Commentator on Politics and the Media;

Professor, Columbia School of Journalism

Candidates for State Senate in Districts 30 & 31

AGENDA

7:45 pm Sign-in

8:00 pm Call to Order

District Leader Report

Speakers:

Todd Gitlin and Candidates for State Senate
in Districts 30 and 31

Questions & Answers

Adjourn

2018 CALENDAR

Wednesday, January 22, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Board Meeting

Wednesday, February 14, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Club Meeting

Wednesday, February 28, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Board Meeting

Wednesday, March 14, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Club Meeting

Wednesday, March 28, 8:00 pm

Three Parks Club Meeting

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

President's Report

By Merle McEldowney

December is always the month for parties, so Three Parks had its annual holiday party on December 3, and we did it well. More than 200 people came to enjoy the ambiance.

Why was it so successful? We had the best food!

Chicken from the kitchens of Three Parks cooks. London Broil. Homemade chili. Roast turkey. Spiral hams. Shrimp Fried Rice. Moussaka. Flank Steak. Shrimp Fried Rice. Spinach Pie. Homemade pasta casseroles. Unbelievable salads and homemade desserts. (I am always too full to get to the desserts table but I am told they were fabulous.)

Our State Senator, Brian Benjamin, Assemblyman Danny O'Donnell, and Borough President Gail Brewer came to the party. So did Congressman Adriano Espaillat.

We also collected money to donate to a local soup kitchen. Daniele Gerard spent her entire time at the party as a greeter and receiver of contributions to West Side Campaign Against Hunger. She collected over \$300!

How does this get done? It truly is a labor of love. A lot of people do a lot of hard work. The event is coordinated by Lorraine Zamora. She is on top of the whole thing from the very beginning, making certain everything is getting done, and worrying that there will not be enough food.

Three Parks annual holiday party starts the day after Thanksgiving—with an early morning Black Friday shopping trip. Wendy Dannett, Marie Lunn and Lauren Williams get up early to drive to Home Depot, BJ's, and Costco. It is a pretty amazing trip when you consider how much stuff can be jammed into Wendy's small car. Wendy, Marie and Lauren can get more poinsettias in that car (and still have room for three people) than is imaginable. The poinsettias, the paper goods and many more items get stored in TPID board member apartments until the party.

The afternoon of the party (around 12 pm) Lynn Thomas, our decorations guru, appears with meticulously prepared diagrams and to-do lists that tell us what has to be done to make the hall look perfectly symmetrical and beautiful. Along with Lynn come the other Three Parks elves—Bob Botfeld, Cynthia Doty, Lynn and Steve Max, Tess Canter, Wendy Dannett, Dan Cohen, Chuck Wall, Marie Lunn, Mary Ann Marks, Irene Shrier, Lois Safian, Corinne Constantine, Lorraine Zamora, Jock Davenport, Lauren Williams, Alex Medwedew and Landon Wickham. They are there from early afternoon until late evening, from set up through clean up.

Some elves climb ladders to hang greenery and wreaths around the room's corinthian columns. Others hang wreaths at the windows; they need to be hung just right and in the correct sequence of colors. When the room is finally as beautiful as can be, then comes the next most important—the food!

The food service is organized by Mary Ann Marks and Marie Lunn. They know exactly how everything must be set up because they have so much experience with this hall and this event. A buffet to serve 200 people does not run itself. Those women keep it going and work the entire evening. They make it look easy but they are busy the whole time. (Plus, they never forget to save me some chicken!!) And, of course, there is the well-stocked bar—staffed by Alex Medwedew, Bruce Markens and Ray Schwartz. The wine, the beer, and all the cold drinks, are good and plentiful

Now to Our Future

Our January 10 club meeting will bring us back to what we need to keep doing — fighting the Trump agenda and getting back a Democratic Congress. Todd Gitlin, our featured speaker, has titled his remarks “Trump Tweets While Republicans Steal It All.” Gitlin, a professor of journalism and sociology and chair of the Ph.D. program in Communications at Columbia University, has been writing frequently on media and the campaign for BillMoyers.com. But that is really the short of it. Todd has been a leader of left politics since the beginning of Students for a Democratic Society and the early marches against the Vietnam war. He is the author of several books and countless articles. I am certain that everyone who attends the January meeting will be interested in hearing what he has to say.

And that's not all. The Three Parks board has also voted to push up our endorsements for State Senate to February. Marisol Alcantara joined the Independent Democratic Conference immediately after her election to the State Senate. The IDC has made an agreement with the Republicans to work with the Governor to block legislation that progressive groups like Three Parks have supported for years. At the January meeting, both Robert Jackson and Brian Benjamin, both of whom are running for State Senate in our district, will speak briefly about this election. At the February meeting, there will be an endorsement vote. Three Parks has worked very hard to get Brian Benjamin elected as our State Senator and we will work even harder to ensure that he remains in that position.

Three Parks endorsed Brian Benjamin enthusiastically when he first ran. He has justified that enthusiasm by showing us that he is a demonstrable champion of our values.

State Committeeman Report

By Daniel Marks Cohen

We begin 2018 with a sense of activism and urgency. Congress is on the line, of course, but the State Senate is in the balance as well. Considering that our two local Congressional districts (led by Jerry Nadler and Adriano Espaillat) are solidly Democratic, we have looked to northern New York State to devote our political energy. For Congress, Three Parks has been consistently running phone banks every month into the 19th Congressional District of Republican John Faso, our adopted Congressional district. He was elected in 2016 over Dutchess County newcomer Zephyr Teachout, who came within eight points of beating Faso. This time around, at least half a dozen local candidates have emerged, a few of them having raised almost \$1 million apiece. Whoever wins the June Democratic Congressional primary will have the full support of Three Parks, and we look forward to directing our calls and canvassing to support the Democratic nominee.

The club is going to move ahead soon with its endorsement for the State Senate, with two incumbents running for re-election: Brian Benjamin in the 30th and Marisol Alcantara in the 31st. The two could not be more different. Senator Benjamin was chosen by the County Committee to be the Democratic nominee to fill the remainder of Senator Bill Perkins's term after Perkins was elected to the City Council. He was elected in a special election and now Senator Benjamin must now run for re-election to a full term in 2018. Senator Alcantara was elected in a competitive primary against several other opponents, primarily Micah Lasher and Robert Jackson. Since getting elected, Senator Alcantara has gone on to affiliate with the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC) which caucuses with the Republicans in the State Senate, giving them a majority in that body despite their lesser numbers.

In the districts overwhelmingly Democratic, it all comes down to the State Senate Primary in September. We must do everything we can to support Senator Benjamin in his re-election; he has committed to supporting the Democratic Party and doing all he can to stop the IDC. And we must do everything we can to stop Senator Alcantara from getting re-elected. One of her main 2016 opponents, Robert Jackson, is back for a rematch, and

he has been endorsed by her other primary opponent, Micah Lasher, giving Jackson a clear shot to take the seat. We cannot allow the Republicans to remain in power through co-opting Democratic Senators to further their reactionary agenda. I look forward to seeing many of you on the campaign trail.

As we start a new legislative season shortly, I would like to suggest that Three Parks support legislation, drafted and carried by Assemblyman Danny O'Donnell, that will impact senior citizens in rent control apartments. A quick primer courtesy of MetCouncil: "Rent control is the older of the two rent regulation systems in place in New York City (the newer one is rent stabilization). It offers tenants protections against steep rent increases, and against evictions without cause. Rent control for most tenants is a vital protection that keeps them from being displaced, but it is not the sweet deal that it is often portrayed as in the media and by landlords intent on ending rent protections. Most rent-controlled tenants pay a 7.5 percent increase each year, the median income is under \$22,000 a year, and the majority pay well over one-third of their income towards rent."

So even though we often hear about rent stabilization and the battles of the rent guidelines board to hold the rent increases to zero percent (or even a rollback), or keep increases to two-to-three percent, for people in rent controlled apartments, the increases are almost eight percent a year, well ahead of inflation for more than 30 years. In fact, that is at least twice the average rate of inflation over that more than three-decade period. Especially for people on fixed incomes, like seniors, that is a huge burden where their expenses keep going up while their incomes have been relatively flat.

There is a program in place to freeze rents for seniors, called SCRIE (Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption) also known as the New York City Rent Freeze Program, that freezes the rent for seniors over 62, whose income is less than \$50,000. But if your rent is more than a third of your income, and you make even a dollar more than that amount, you do not qualify. A big portion of that \$50K is frequently Social Security; the legislation being crafted by Assemblyman O'Donnell would exempt Social Security from being counted against the \$50K cap, which could make a huge impact on thousands of seniors by removing them from the unrelenting eight percent rent increases year after year. Once the legislation becomes further refined, I urge the club to take a position in support of this change in the law.

A Democratic Response to the Radical Right-Wing Agenda

By Wendy Dannett

The list goes on and on—the massive tax break for the rich, stricter and crueler immigration rules, homeless people being bused out of cities, plans to drill in the Arctic, and Exxon’s plan to expand the production of plastics—of disastrous policies occurring in this Republican era. And Republicans are expanding their power through judicial appointments, and their plans for redistricting and deconstructing government agencies.

What role can the Democratic Party play in stopping the Trump/Republican agenda? According to an article entitled “Autopsy: The Democratic Party in Crisis,” the party needs to change its focus in order to win elections. Senator Chuck Schumer stated in July 2016 that “for every blue collar Democrat we lose in Western Pennsylvania, we will pick up two moderate Republicans in the suburbs. And you can repeat that in Ohio, Illinois and Wisconsin.” His words had disastrous results because of the people it overlooked. Enormous resources were put into the suburban white voters to the relative neglect of people of color. This needs to change.

The Democratic Party needs to win back black voters, the working classes, and youth. The Autopsy report points out that the Democratic National Committee did not do an autopsy after the 2016 election debacle. The authors feel that the party focus on Wall Street goes far back. During the Clinton and Obama years, when there was so much outsourcing, rarely did you find either of these Democratic presidents take corporations to task on the issue. And Obama chose as chairperson for his job council the CEO of General Electric, a prime outsourcing corporation. “Such silence and/or complicity on corporate greed and irresponsibility allowed a charlatan like Trump to grandstand as the savior of jobs and working people,” they wrote.

The most audible dissent inside the 2016 Democratic National Convention, state the authors, came during two speeches that touted policies of perpetual war. Former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta was taken aback when delegates interrupted him with chants of “No more war!” General John Allen encountered the same chant. The Washington Post cited poll numbers indicating that the chanting delegates represented a substantial number of Democrats nationwide. The wisdom of continual war was clearer to Clinton than to people in U.S. communities bearing the brunt of combat deaths, injuries and psychological traumas. “Research data from

voting patterns suggest that the Clinton campaign’s hawkish stance was a political detriment in working class communities,” the authors point out.

The Democratic Party also needs to do away with the super delegate system, which is undemocratic. The system was created in the early 1980s to enable present and past elected Dems and DNC officials to become delegates and vote for whomever they wish, despite results of primaries or caucuses. It was set up after George McGovern’s loss in 1972 to prevent progressive candidates from getting on the ballot. According to the Sunlight Foundation, at least 63 of the 712 super delegates were registered as lobbyists. The super delegate system skews the nominating process, giving the appearance of inevitability and reduces the power of voters. “The voting power of all super delegates must end,” cited the Foundation.

There were many other issues addressed in this article, such as the need to improve voting rights and the need to acknowledge and respect the views of youth, which are further to the left and against capitalism. “This is about energizing as well as expanding the base of the party. To do this, we must fight right wing efforts to rig the political system, and give people who can vote a truly compelling reason to do so,” they conclude.

Save the Date! Next Phone Bank is January 16.

By Chuck Wall

The Three Parks Take Back Congress phone bank team is working to help flip Congressional seats from Republican to Democrat in the upcoming midterm elections. Right now, the aim is to erode support for vulnerable Republicans in nearby districts, and thereby lay the groundwork for Democratic victory in November. Our next phone bank is scheduled for Tuesday, January 16. Watch the Three Parks website www.threeparksdems.org for details and to RSVP if you can join us!

At this next phone bank as at previous ones, we will be focusing on the 19th Congressional District in upstate New York, a district currently represented by Republican John Faso, but considered a genuine opportunity for a Democratic pick-up in the Midterms. Faso’s electoral margin in the district was already slim, and his votes in favor of headline-making budget cuts—and his even more egregious proposal to cut Medicaid funding that supports elderly patients in New York State nursing homes—give us a real chance to undermine his support, particularly among senior citizens.

In our calls, we will be reaching out to Republican seniors to give them important information about the harmful

consequences of the Republican budget and tax measures. Specifically, we will warn about:

- ▶ Medicare cuts that are sure to be triggered by the deficit resulting from tax cuts,
- ▶ Cuts right now to Social Security Disability Insurance that helps seniors, and looming long-term cuts to regular Social Security, and
- ▶ Budget cuts to programs that help seniors, such as Meals on Wheels, Home Energy Assistance, and funding for patients in nursing homes.

Our message is that Republicans in general, and Rep. Faso in particular, cannot be counted on to protect seniors' interests—and this message resonates strongly, even with Republican voters.

Rep. Faso is clearly worried that his lockstep loyalty to the GOP/Trump agenda is making him vulnerable to defeat in November. On the House budget blueprint, which was filled with cuts to seniors' benefits, he voted "Yes." But when it came to the final tax bill, he and the GOP leadership obviously recognized how deeply unpopular the bill was in New York State. As a result, once it was clear that the bill would pass, Faso voted "No" in a supposed show of regard for his constituents. Yet despite this vote, Faso remains wholeheartedly committed to the Republicans' legislative agenda and all the consequences it entails.

So in our calls, we will continue to stress Faso's dubious reliability as a protector of seniors' benefits. We will also suggest that voters call him and challenge him to reject any proposed cuts. Even if the voter does not make the call, doubts about Faso are likely to be planted in the voter's mind.

Following our last phone bank on November 30, our callers reported that the voters they spoke to were nearly unanimous in their disapproval of the GOP tax bills and the harmful cuts they will inflict. That gives hope that by continuing our phone banks and other activities, we can prepare the way for Democratic electoral success in 2018. In the 19th District there is not yet a Democratic nominee for the 2018 election, but since Rep. Faso is clearly vulnerable, Democrats are lining up to challenge him. Once a Democratic candidate is selected next spring, we expect to shift our focus to support for that candidate, and we plan to coordinate our activities with those of progressive groups in the district.

So join your fellow TPID club members for the January 16 phone bank and help take back Congress! Watch for details in your email, or check the TPID website www.threeparksdems.org. We invite all interested club members to join us, but remember to respond promptly as space may

be limited. No computers are needed, but please bring a cellphone. Scripts and training are provided.

Nominating Committee Report

By Merle McEldowney

Three Parks' annual meeting and club elections will be held on Wednesday, February 14, 2018. The Nominating Committee of the Board of Directors proposes the following list of candidates:

Officers

Merle McEldowney, President
Daniele Gerard, 1st Vice President
Lynn Bender Max, 2nd Vice President
Ellen Flax, Treasurer
Jock Davenport, Recording Secretary
Lorraine Zamora, Corresponding Secretary
Theresa Canter, Membership Secretary

Members at large

Paul Bifani	Mary Ann Marks
Corinne Constantine	Steve Max
Wendy Dannett	Abigail McGloster
Pilar Gomez	Lois Safian
Jessica Habersack	Milivoy Samurovich
Hannah Leider	Irene Shrier
Marie Lunn	Charles Wall

Additional nominations can be made from the floor at the forthcoming January 10 meeting. Biographies of all candidates will be included in the February newsletter.

Save the Date!
January 20, 2018
Women's March in NYC
Join the
Three Parks Delegation
Details to follow



Members of the Three Parks Board of Directors at the TPID Holiday Party on December 3rd.

Dear Suba Customers,

Faced with rising drug costs and now prescription drug reimbursements from health insurance plans, pharmacy profits are at an all-time low. As a result, we would like you to consider expanding your shopping experience here at SUBA, as we now have a broader selection of **health, beauty, household, natural and organic products**. Our prices are competitive with, and often significantly lower, than the major drug store chains in the neighborhood.

Once again, we thank you and, remember, we are just a phone call away!



Suba Pharmacy 2721 Broadway at 104 Street | 212-866-6700

Editor's Note:

Suba Pharmacy is one of the few independent family-owned pharmacies on the Upper West Side. Equally important, Mr. Suba cares about his customers and goes out of his way to accommodate them. In 2004, when Suba's lease was about to expire, Three Parks petitioned to reinstate the store's lease. We were successful. It's time to help the pharmacy again. On behalf of Suba, thanks for your patronage.

Three Parks Independent Democrats 2018 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) _____

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Next Meeting, Wednesday, January 10, 2018
Todd Gitlin,
“Trump Tweets While the Republicans Steal It All”
Candidates for State Senate in Districts 30 and 31