

THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS

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Bob Botfeld
Cynthia Doty

State Committee

Lynn Thomas
Daniel Marks Cohen

JUNE 8, 2011

FEATURED TOPIC & SPEAKERS: CENSUS SENSE: WHO WILL REPRESENT US IN 2012?
Susan Lerner, Executive Director, Common Cause, New York
and John Garcia, Redistricting Manager, LatinoJustice
PRLDEF; PIZZA and PETITIONING

DATE: WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8th

TIME: 8:00 PM

PLACE: The Youth Hostel
891 Amsterdam Avenue at 103rd Street

ROOM: Chapel/Ballroom

AGENDA

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

1. President's Report & Announcements
2. District Leaders' Reports
3. CENSUS SENSE
4. PIZZA and PETITIONING

5. New Business
6. Adjournment

CALENDAR

Wednesday, June 22, 2011
Three Parks Board Meeting, 8 PM
Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103rd St.

THREE PARKS ANNUAL PICNIC
End of July date and location to be determined

Wednesday, August 31, 2011
Three Parks Board Meeting, 8 PM
Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103rd St.

Wednesday, September 14, 2011
Three Parks Meeting, 8 PM
Place: Youth Hostel, 891 Amsterdam Ave. at 103rd St.

President's Column

By Daniele Gerard

At the Three Parks May 11 meeting we heard from Mark Hannay, Director, Metro New York Health Care for All Campaign. We thank him for his talk on "Health Care Under Attack," and for answering so many questions from a clearly fascinated membership. I am delighted to report that District Leaders Bob Botfeld and Cynthia Doty handily won the membership's endorsement for the upcoming election; I look forward to continuing to work with them on behalf of the club.

The May 25 meeting featured Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell on rent regulations and Council Members Melissa Mark-Viverito and Inez Dickens on the city budget. State Senator Adriano Espaillat also stopped by to update us on rent regulations and the rent forum the following evening. As always, we were happy to welcome our elected officials, who do such a good job representing our interests in the city and state legislatures—they truly work for the people they represent. The membership also endorsed Franc Perry for Civil Court in the 5th District, Erika McDaniel Edwards for the open countywide Civil Court seat, and incumbent judge Saliann Scarpulla for her Civil Court seat.

Our June 8 meeting will address a once-in-a-decade event: redistricting. We will be lucky to have Susan Lerner, Executive Director of Common Cause, New York and John Garcia, Redistricting Manager, LatinoJustice PRLDEF explain the answer to "Census Sense: Who Will Represent Us in 2012?" As always at the Three Parks June meeting, the theme will be "pizza and petitioning"; we will provide the quintessential New York meal and distribute petitions to gather signatures for candidates running for election in the fall. This is a critical part of the work Three Parks does; come one, come all and participate in the democratic process.

In this, our last newsletter before September, I would like to remind you to be on the lookout for a postcard and email with all the details about our upcoming picnic. Theresa Canter, picnic organizer extraordinaire, is aiming for a late July date in Central Park. We hope to see you there.

In the meantime, have a lovely summer.

The Board of Elections will be hiring poll workers for the upcoming elections. If you are interested or know someone who is, please contact District Leaders Cynthia Doty (212-749-4085; CLDoty@aol.com) or Bob Botfeld (212-865-4510; rjbtweg@aol.com).

District Leader Report

By Bob Botfeld

1992 Déjà Vu?

Will the County Committee Pick Our Next Congress Member and State Representative?

Will the county committee members again play the pivotal role in choosing our local congressional and state representatives in 2012 as they did in 1992? In 1992, due to the death of Congressman Ted Weiss a few days before the Democratic primary, then Assembly Member Jerrold Nadler was selected to be the Democratic nominee for Congress at a special convention convened by the county committee representatives from Three Parks Independent Democrats and other West Side clubs. A few days later, in a dramatic convention, the 67th Assembly District county committee members chose Scott Stringer as the Democratic nominee to replace Nadler in the New York State Assembly by the very narrow margin of the weighted vote of a single county committee member.

The selection of our state legislators by the county committee is surprisingly common. About one-third of New York State's senators and assembly members are first elected to fill a midterm vacancy.

Three Parks Independent Democrats has 84 county committee persons assigned to the Three Parks part of the 69th Assembly District. Each county committee person serves a two-year term. Due to turnover, we have a few open slots each term. If you would like to be on the county committee, contact District Leaders Bob Botfeld (email: rjbtweg@aol.com or phone: 212-865-1450) or Cynthia Doty (email: cldoty@aol.com or phone: 212-749-4085).

The requirements are simple – reside in the 69th Assembly District and petition to collect between 30-50 signatures on the club petitions. The responsibility is generally very light – attend one organizational meeting during your two-year term.

Petitioning begins Tuesday, June 7. Petitioning is also our opportunity to meet our neighbors, talk about local issues and politics, and get some fresh air while we're standing on our local corner, joining other club members at the Three Parks Broadway tables or knocking on our neighbor's door. Our petitioning on behalf of our candidates is critical. If candidates don't get the requisite signatures, they won't be on the ballot; if they're not on the ballot, they can't be elected – even if they are the incumbents.

If you have not petitioned in the past, this year give yourself the opportunity to join in this important activity

and also the chance to learn what your neighbors think about local and national politics. We will distribute the petitions at the June club meeting and pizza party. At the June meeting, we will also hear about the pending redistricting legislation. Our district will change next year – find out why and how. (A preliminary review of the district's changing demographics can be found in the May newsletter or online at <<http://www.threeparksdems.org/publications/TPIDNewsletterMay11.pdf>>)

Return of the Public Option?

By Steve Max

With last week's defeat of the Ryan budget plan, new deficit reduction proposals will continue to focus largely on Medicare. Surprisingly, with the backing of Newt Gingrich, the Heritage Foundation and the Far Right, the Public Option, pulled at the last minute from the 2010 health care bill, seems poised to make a comeback. A bit of background precedes these strange circumstances.

Early in 2010, as preparation for our participation in the campaign for national health care, the membership of Three Parks adopted a thoroughly principled position calling for expanding the role of public insurance and minimizing the role of private for-profit insurance. Specifically, we campaigned for Single Payer legislation, also known as Medicare for All. We felt that private for-profit insurance had no place in the health care system, and that every dollar that went to insurance company stockholders was one dollar less for health services.

Unfortunately, while the Democratic Clubs on the Upper West Side supported this approach, our elected officials and most national organizations that had previously supported Medicare for All would have none of it in 2010. In some surprising shifts, they declared that there was no longer anything wrong with private for-profit health insurance as long as it was combined with a Public (Medicare-type) Option. Many of us said this was a trap to get progressives behind a private insurance proposal, and that the Public Option would be snatched away at the last minute. It was. As the trap sprang shut, we were all faced with either backing the remaining all-private insurance plan or watching the Obama Administration take a major defeat. Three Parks, like most everyone else, pitched in to help pass what was left of the bill.

So how is it that Gingrich and the Right are now suggesting the type of Public Option system they denounced as socialism only two years ago? Well, they don't want it for everyone, just for people in Medicare. But Medicare is a public system. What Gingrich really means

is that Medicare should have a private option to allow for-profit insurance companies to get their hands on public money as well as charge seniors additional premiums. Elements of the health care system adopted in 2010 would now be implemented for seniors with the same kind of insurance exchanges where private companies would compete with what would be left of the original Medicare program. The retention of parts of Medicare allows the Right to call it a Public Option system.

The Far Right has found a clever approach to dismantle and privatize Medicare that looks very much like the program backed by most progressives in 2010. Consistency has never been a problem for the Right. Progressives, who pride themselves on consistency, will have a difficult time explaining why the inclusion of private for-profit health care was just fine for the country in 2010, but it isn't now when Medicare is at stake. Perhaps they will wish that from the start they had joined with us in opposing private insurance, saying that illness should not be an arena for financial speculation and profit, and that they had advocated creating a system like Medicare for all Americans.

It remains to be seen whether Congressional Republicans will attempt this new and deceitful approach, or continue to demand Medicare budget cuts that greatly exceed the new round of cuts proposed by the Administration. (The 2010 legislation cut the Medicare budget by half a trillion dollars.) Needless to say, ending the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and raising taxes on the wealthy would solve much without cutting anything.

Condolences

Three Parks Independent Democrats extends condolences to our former treasurer and long-time board member, Robert Bardin. Robert has been a member of Three Parks since 1988 and helped run the 1988 storefront. Robert's mother died on May 20. Her service was held in Louisville, Kentucky, where she lived with Robert's stepfather.

Three Parks also extends our sympathies to the family of Judy Charles, long-time club member who recently passed away. She will be missed by the community that she loved and served for so many years.

New York State Rent Laws

By Lynn Thomas, State Committee, 69th AD

The residents of New York City have had a positive impact on renewing and improving rent laws. There has been a larger and more sustained effort than in recent years, and we are beginning to see results from that effort. Although Governor Cuomo campaigned on helping to make this happen, until recently he had not made it one of his priorities. The activism of many tenant and community organizations and political clubs and the response and mobilization efforts of our local politicians have created what appears likely to be a significant victory.

The State Assembly passed a bill that would renew and strengthen the law (and repeal the most recent detrimental changes) although the Republican-controlled State Senate is still trying to water down proposed changes to the existing law. Current Democratic strategy is to team the proposed law with a 2 percent property tax cap so that the State Senate would approve a significant portion of the Assembly bill before the June 15 deadline. We just hope that Governor Cuomo will use his considerable political skills to convince the Senate Republicans to accept that deal.

Assembly Member Danny O'Donnell, State Senator Adriano Espaillat, and State Senator Bill Perkins have taken the lead by holding forums, sponsoring buses to Albany, participating in rallies, and providing material that we gave to people in the neighborhood. They have spoken to Governor Cuomo about the importance of this issue to their constituents. Congress Member Rangel, Manhattan Borough President Stringer, City Council Member Dickens, and City Council Member Mark-Viverito have joined our state representatives to increase publicity and pressure.

Since May 14 (this is written May 29), Three Parks has gathered over 900 signatures which have been sent to Governor Cuomo together with our letter asking him to keep his campaign promises to renew and strengthen the rent laws. Thanks to the following workers who gathered signatures: Susan Andrews, Bob Botfeld, Theresa Canter, Wendy Dannett, Cynthia Doty, Arlene Geiger, Daniele Gerard, Robert Leuze, Barbara Lee, Erl Kimmich, Bruce Markens, Mary Ann Marks, Connie Max, Danny Max, Lynn Max, Steve Max, Merle McEldowney, Milivoy Samurovich, Ahmad Shirazi, Ann Shirazi, Deborah Thomas, and Ken Tulloch.

State Committee Report

Daniel Marks Cohen, State Committee, 69th AD

I just returned from attending the Spring Democratic State Committee meeting this May in Suffolk County, Long Island, and while there were a lot of speeches, but in action I and the rest of the Reform Caucus came away disappointed. Last month I published the ethics resolution in the newsletter that was submitted for approval by the State Committee, below is the resolution to extend the moratorium on gas fracking that was also up for a vote. For the sake of brevity I have slightly excerpted the resolution:

“Whereas the process of extracting natural gas from shale known as hydrofracking requires the injection of large quantities of water containing toxic and carcinogenic chemicals into the beds of shale and; Whereas this process has led to the contamination of drinking water in many places where it has been carried out and;

Whereas there is a serious problem with the disposal of the contaminated waste water and;

Whereas the state of Pennsylvania recently has banned the disposal of this waste water in 15 sewage treatment plants because the chemicals in the waste water seriously interfere with the operation of the sewage treatment plants and;

Whereas it has been proposed to use hydrofracking in the Marcellus shale deposit which lies under the watershed collection region of the water supply of New York City which has the largest unfiltered water supply in the world and;

Whereas there is a temporary moratorium on horizontal hydrofracking in New York which expires the end of June and;

Whereas there are bills filed in the Assembly which would make this ban permanent and;

Whereas the energy bill passed by Congress in 2005 at the urging of Vice President Dick Cheney has exempted the process of hydrofracking from federal regulations governing clean water;

Therefore be it resolved that the New York State Democratic Committee calls for the passage of legislation which will ban the process of horizontal hydrofracking in the watershed of New York City or any other municipality

in the State unless it is possible to absolutely guarantee that there is no danger to the municipal water supply and;

Be it further resolved that the New York State Democratic Committee calls for the passage of legislation which will ban the dumping of the waste water from hydrofracking into any sewage disposal system that has not removed all dangerous contaminants from it.”

Sadly, BOTH proposals were tabled indefinitely at the meeting. The argument for tabling the ethics reform proposal was that the governor was coming up with his own proposal, and did not want the State Committee to get in front of his announcement. The argument for tabling the gas fracking moratorium extension was that it was going to get ahead of an NYS Department of Environmental Protection report due out over the summer.

Both arguments are phony. The real reason is that governor doesn't want to have our proposal upstage his own ideas for ethics reform or pressure him to move quicker on it, and his concern of hurting Democratic electoral chances in local elections in upstate New York, rather than worrying about the health of constituents and the safety of the water supply. The State Committee exists to push our elected officials to take positions or move them in the direction that the party wants, not permit the leaders to cut deals or hog press attention. We in the Reform Caucus objected, and forced a vote, but we were not able to overcome the Cuomo forces against us. We have vowed to try again in the fall and we will be better prepared.

Though I reported the last word on the street about the new State chairman was that it was going to be Charlie King (currently the Executive Director) and a former CFD District Leader, the chairman remains Jay Jacobs for now – but his term is up in the fall, so perhaps it will be resolved then. See you out petitioning this spring, or at the next club meeting!

Mark Your Calendar with These Dates!

- * June 7 Petitioning begins
- * June 15 Rent laws expire
- * July 11 Petitions filed
- * July 20 or 27 TPID Picnic (date to be confirmed)
- * September 13 Primary

Update on Solar Energy

By Wendy Dannett

At a recent meeting on solar energy, I learned that the sun is by far the largest source of energy, causes no carbon emissions, and will, of course, never run out. It is more abundant than other renewables, such as wind, tides and hydro (and contributes to these sources) and is a much greater energy source than the non-renewables (oil, gas and nuclear).

Solar energy can be obtained through grids placed on the ground or buildings, or through solar panels. A home can be powered on its own with solar panels, without a central utility source. With solar grids, solar energy provides 50 times as much power as nuclear, per space occupied. Further, large solar energy facilities can produce electricity whether the sun is shining or not, which makes them sustainable and reliable electricity producers. This is achieved by storing heat that has been generated.

Although implementation of a solar grid can be costly, nevertheless, overall, it is cheaper than fuel or nuclear. The increased cost would come if it were the primary source of energy in a heat wave, for instance, as the price goes up the more energy that is used. But overall, 8 to 11 cents on the dollar is saved on the solar grid, as opposed to oil or gas.

There are other advantages to solar energy, though the primary one is that it does not contribute to global warming. So why has the government put in so few subsidies to implement research and improvements in solar energy products? A national study done in 2006 by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, found that 20.2 percent of subsidies went to coal, 25.7 percent to oil and gas, 34.6 percent to ethanol, 8.7 percent to nuclear, AND 2.8 percent WENT TO SOLAR. (The rest went to other sources.)

Although President Obama in a speech at the G-20 summit meeting in September 2009, called for the elimination of government subsidies for greenhouse gas emitting fossil fuels, this has not occurred. We know about the extensive subsidies currently going to oil, gas, and nuclear, which Congress refuses to end. The nuclear industry could not run without subsidies (and can't be insured). And, Obama has called for more nuclear power plants to be built.

Clearly, a lot of grassroots work needs to be done to fight for solar energy and other renewables. It was gratifying to

see that the meeting I attended on solar was sponsored by so many groups (two Sierra Club chapters, NYG20, Tristate Food Not Lawns, Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition, to name a few). I believe pooling our resources and focusing on economic issues are steps in the right direction.

NYC Education Update

By Elizabeth Kellner

As summer vacation approaches, here are some headlines from the last several weeks' education news.

Blatantly unqualified Chancellor Cathie Black was replaced by long-term Bloomberg insider Dennis Walcott. Walcott's May 23 D3 Town Hall Meeting at PS 165 made it painfully obvious that while there may be a welcome change in style and tone, the substance of the Bloomberg/Klein corporate ed reform agenda remains sadly the same.

Teachers continue to be scapegoated by politicians, popular media, and the billionaire funded ed reform movement. NYS made huge cuts to spending, eviscerating the court victory of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity. Bloomberg is threatening to lay off 6,000 teachers and working to eliminate seniority rights. Cuomo supported increasing from 20 percent to 40 percent the weight assigned dubious student test scores in teacher evaluations.

DOE mismanagement abounds. High priced technology consultants have been charged with fraud involving hundreds of thousands of dollars. Former Bear Stearns CFO (yes THAT Bear Stearns) was hired by Klein in 2008 to be the DOE CFO after his firm imploded. He served only 11 months. The Special Investigations Commissioner for city schools just reported he misused DOE resources to look for his next job (where else, but at hedge fund!). DOE has also admitted it totally botched this year's CEC elections by not providing adequate information and outreach to engage parents in the process.

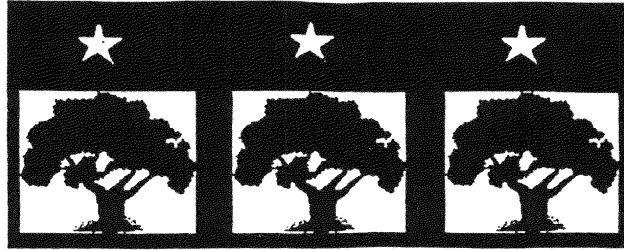
Charter schools continue to divert desperately needed facilities and resources. Harlem Children's Zone will build

a new school on the grounds of St. Nicholas Houses depriving this NYCHA project of precious open space. HCZ's CEO testified as a character witness at the federal criminal trial of hedge fund billionaire Raj Rajaratnam, a substantial HCZ benefactor and trustee. He was convicted of insider trading and faces several years in jail. Plans to co-locate a charter in a successful South Bronx middle school were stymied by a NYT Sunday Magazine April 10 cover story about the struggles of the school and its star principal. The battle for space continues in Park Slope, Central Harlem, and closer to home in D3.

On May 26 SUNY Trustees' Charter Institute heard testimony on the impact of co-locating a new Harlem Success Academy elementary charter within the Brandeis campus. DOE and PEP have approved it despite over 1,000 D3 opposition petition signatures, unanimous opposition by all D3 elected officials, unanimous opposition of CB7 and scores of opponents who testified at the January local hearing and subsequent PEP meeting.

Last week DOE announced the phase out of the popular G&T program across the street from Brandeis at PS 84 for lack of space. D3 has a severe shortage of middle school and high school seats as well as kindergarten wait lists. Opponents of the Brandeis co-location expressed dismay that DOE would undo \$17 million worth of recent renovations so the growing four high schools currently in the building can expand and spend another \$1 million to retrofit the space for young children. Opponents also raised questions about the fairness and transparency of the new charter's lottery admissions process. D3 public education activists have filed a lawsuit to block the co-location and won a temporary halt to the proposed renovations, but Brandeis guidance counselors have already been displaced from their offices.

Finally, two more applications for new charters to be located in D3 will be the subject of a public hearing on June 1, 6-9 p.m., PS 149 on W. 117th between Lenox and 5th. Check out the CEC3 Web site at <cec3@schools.nyc.gov> for links to the applications submitted by these charter groups.



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

Please pay your 2011 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*

2011 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) _____ (W) _____

Email _____

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

****Please pay your dues with a check or via PayPal--cash and money orders are far more difficult to process. Thanks in advance for your cooperation! Please make out all checks to "Three Parks Independent Democrats - Dues 2011"****

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

NEXT MEETING

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8th

**CENSUS SENSE:
WHO WILL REPRESENT US IN 2012?**

PIZZA and PETITIONING