
THE BROADWAY DEMOCRATS

◆ District Leaders: Curtis Arluck, Paula Diamond Román ◆ President: Luis Román ◆

Endorsement Forum, Part 1 Federal Candidates



🗣️ United States Senate
Kristin Gillibrand^S
Johnathan Tasini

🗣️ United States Senate
Charles “Chuck” Schumer
Randy Credico^C

🗣️ House of Representatives (15th)
Vincent Morgan^C
Charles Rangel^S

S=surrogate speaking C=candidate confirmed

Come and listen, ask questions, and let the candidates know what your priorities are. It's your turn to choose. Come and make an educated decision. Listen to the candidates and vote for your choice!

Thursday, April 8th

7:30 pm sign in/refreshments * 8:00 club business * 8:30 forum

**Congregation Ramath Orah
550 West 110th Street (off Broadway)**

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Volume 35, Issue 4

April 2010

President's Corner

Luis Román

Last Sunday, we had the opportunity to witness our political system at its best and worst, all at the same time. We saw President Obama and Congressional Democrats fulfill one of the major promises of the 2008 campaign, and we saw the venomous hatred of reform's opponents laid bare before our eyes. It was an uplifting, and horrifying day.

There were many moments when it felt like health care reform was slipping away from us. The process that began with so much promise last spring seemed ready to collapse and die before our very eyes. We already had to endure the death of the public option. After Scott Brown was elected to Ted Kennedy's Senate seat, it appeared we had lost hope of any kind of reform legislation being passed. For once, at least, we underestimated the resolve of the President and Democrats in Congress. After the Massachusetts special election, they regrouped and executed their strategy brilliantly, taking advantage of the large majority Democrats enjoy in the House, as well as the rules of the Senate, to put together enough votes to finally pass the legislation we had been promised.

The result is not anything close to what we, as Broadway Dems, would have hoped. Obviously, most of us would have been happier with a single payer system, or at the very least, giving people the option for a Medicare style plan, to remove some of the power from the predatory health insurance industry. Such is the nature of compromise. Millions of people who were on the outside looking in will receive access to health insurance now, and some of the worst practices of the insurance industry will be curbed. The law is a good first step on the road towards a more just health care delivery system.

Even as we proudly watched health care reform becoming law, we watched some of the ugliest expressions of hatred we have seen in our political system in years. Spurred on by right wing radio ranting and corporate-funded fake grassroots campaigns, thousands of anti-reform protesters descended on Washington, and their sickening display was the talk of the nation. As legislators walked into the Capitol building to enact the historic reforms, they were pelted with the most vile racial,

homophobic and misogynistic epithets imaginable. Watching the vile display, it seemed almost impossible to believe that this was the twenty-first century. It was like watching grainy black and white video from the 1950s or 1960s. Sadly, some of the same men and women who endured the racist assaults of the civil rights era, heroes such as John Lewis, were forced to endure those vicious taunts and slurs as they walked into the Capitol on Sunday. The display was only made more disgusting by the sight of Republican members of Congress cheering on the protesters, spurring them to sink lower into the depths of their own hatred.

As disappointing, and rage-inducing, as it was to witness this display, I think the worst part might have been how unsurprising the whole scene was. For months, as the health care debate raged around the country, we have been treated to displays of how people can retreat to their basest instincts in a fight. How many hours of video footage have we seen of protesters carrying signs with the most ugly epithets, directed at President Obama and Congressional leaders? The seemingly endless stream of hatred spewing from the mouths of Limbaugh, Beck and the rest of the right wing media cabal is like poison running through our veins. How do people hate so deeply, and choose to express it so freely?

The election of Barack Obama proved how far we have come as a country, but the displays we have seen throughout this health care debate have proved how far we still have to go. President Obama and Congressional Democrats charted the course for us. They never let themselves get discouraged by the taunting, the epithets or the fake grassroots outrage of the corporate interests. They understood their goal was to change the system for the good of all Americans, even the ones who were outside the Capitol, verbally assaulting them in the most vile ways. It is only with that kind of focus, and endurance, that real change will come. The President and Congress should be congratulated.

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Assembly Member's Report

Daniel O'Donnell

One of the most alarming cuts included in the Governor's proposed 2010-11 spending plan was a

\$15 million reduction in funding to state parks and historic sites. Notably, that reduction included significant cuts to Riverbank State Park's hours as well as the closing of the park's outdoor swimming pool and elimination of all senior programming.

In my, and this community's, opinion, Riverbank's unique status makes it an unacceptable target for state budget cuts. The park was created as a public amenity for a community forced to deal with the impacts of a sewage treatment plant in its backyard. The park is already much smaller than originally promised and the surrounding neighborhoods regularly confront the facility's negative effects on quality of life and the environment. Any cuts would be unacceptable.

I authored a letter to Speaker Silver, co-signed by Assembly Members Herman Farrell and Keith Wright, making the case that these cuts were simply unacceptable. I strongly support this community's activism in support of this important public space.

I am pleased to report that both the Assembly's and the Senate's budget resolutions restore funding to prevent these detrimental park and historic site closings. New York State must keep its promise to West Harlem and upper Manhattan by maintaining Riverbank hours and programming.

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Steering Committee

Joe Nunley

"They Own the Place." President Obama has finally found his muscle (and reconciliation) and the Democrats have succeeded in doing more in the last week than in the last year. The Health Care Bill has passed. And Congress passed yesterday the overhaul of the student loan program which is wonderful. The Obama Administration announced today something long needed, a broad new initiative to help troubled homeowners, potentially re-financing several million of them into fresh government backed mortgages with loan payments. Things are finally beginning to roll in a direction we all hoped for. Democrats are behaving like Democrats again.

Now, we have to tackle and really tackle the very crucial issue of financial reform. The public, across the political spectrum, is outraged by the bailouts and bonuses and in my mind, clear criminality of Wall Street. Democratic Senator Ted Kaufman said on the floor of the Senate on March 15 "that fraud and potential criminal conduct were at the heart of the financial crisis."

Now Senator Dodd, the head of the Banking Committee, has gone rogue and introduced a sweeping reform bill after negotiations with Republicans broke down. There are some good things in this bill. It includes the Volcker Rule restricting risky bank activities, including proprietary trading. It includes a framework for over-the-counter derivatives. It gives the Securities and Exchange Commission power to discipline ratings agencies if they're reckless, and several other things. But it makes one compromise that is hard to bear.

Dodd originally wanted an independent Consumer Protection Agency as proposed by the President, but every member of the Banking Committee, Democrat and Republican, balked at this. This incident sadly clarifies this corporate takeover of the US Senate. Senator Durbin in a radio interview a few days ago said, "The banks are the most powerful lobby on Capitol Hill. (And) they frankly own the place."

This new legislation will have the Consumer Protection Agency inside the Fed. It will not be independent. It will have an oversight board that is made up of the very regulators who failed to act for the last decade, and they can overrule its decisions. The oversight board will be made up of Secretary Geithner, the chair of the Fed, and all of the existing bank regulators, and they have the ability to say, "No, you can't do this." It's designed to neuter the consumer financial protection initiative. It should not be in the Fed. The Fed's primary responsibility is safety and soundness of large financial institutions (What a great job they're doing here!). Consumer financial protection is not in the bank's predatory interests.

The telltale sign that this legislation may be weak is that the banking lobbyists haven't yet strongly opposed it. Mike Konczai at the Roosevelt Institute put on a blog, "What would Goldman Sachs dislike about this?" And the answer was nothing, really. Robert Johnson, former economist at the Senate Banking Committee, said "There's nothing in this bill that would prevent AIG, Lehman Brothers, Bear Stern from happening or a banking crisis causing ten percent unemployment."

We have to stay as informed and vigilant as we can on this. Politicians are hoping perhaps that the material is too complicated for the American people to understand. Then, pass a bill, declare victory, and encode into law current practices of the banks. We have to let our elected officials know that we're paying attention and hold them accountable. Only the American people should "own" the US Senate.

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Balloting Procedures

To be eligible to vote, you must have attended at least one of the previous nine monthly public meetings and you must pay your dues. There will be an open ballot box which will stay open until 9:30 p.m. (or until five minutes after the last speaker has finished, if the meeting runs late).

Votes may be cast in person or by proxy, limit one proxy per voting member. A proxy must be written. The proxy giver must state the name of the proxy holder (i.e., the name can't be filled in later by the proxy holder). The proxy must be signed or verifiable, as by electronic transmission stating the person's name.

Under the new voting procedure adopted when the

new club constitution passed in March 2008, there will be only one ballot. The winner will be selected by "Instant Runoff Voting", as described in new club constitution; "no endorsement" is still a ballot option. (Copies of the new club constitution will be available at the meeting.)

In order to vote in club elections (endorsements, elections of officers, judicial convention, amendments), you must be an eligible, voting member of the Broadway Democrats. You must have attended at least one of the previous nine monthly public meetings and you must pay your dues. Dues partially defray the costs of presenting forums and putting out this newsletter. Dues are \$20; senior dues are \$5.

SAVE THE DATE!

The Broadway Democrats Annual Spring Fling

When: Sunday, May 2, 2010 from 1:00-4:00 pm

Where: Popular Upper West Side Restaurant, 107 West, 2787 Broadway (between 106th and 107th Streets)

The Broadway Democrats
P.O. Box 1099
Cathedral Station
New York, NY 10025

FIRST
CLASS

Assemblymember: Daniel O'Donnell
District Leaders: Curtis Arluck,
Paula Diamond Román
President: Luis Román
Newsletter Editor: Gretchen Borges

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