
THE BROADWAY DEMOCRATS

♦ District Leaders: Curtis Arluck, Paula Diamond Román ♦ President: Noah Kaufman♦

April General Meeting:

Is the Sky the Limit in Morningside Heights?

Rezone or become the Upper East Side . . .

Join us for a presentation by the Morningside Heights Community Coalition, an organization that's been in the forefront of efforts to keep our community livable for all. MHCC has put forward a block-by-block zoning plan that would implement contextual development and provide desperately-needed affordable housing. The presentation will be followed by discussion.

Thursday, April 12

7:45 p.m. registration

Meeting starts at 8:00 p.m. sharp!

Bank Street College

610 W. 112th Street (between Broadway and Riverside Drive)

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March 8, 2018 Democracy Teach-In with Zephyr Teachout: a Report

Susan Crawford

On March 8th the Broadway Democrats hosted a forum featuring Fordham Law Professor Zephyr Teachout. True to her name, her exhortations to look for myriad ways to maintain our democracy were a fresh breeze, after a year of Democratic hair-pulling and soul-searching about how to re-take Congress in 2018.

Teachout has literally “written the book” on political malfeasance: *Corruption in American: From Benjamin Franklin’s Snuff Box to Citizens United*. Her awareness of corruption in our state, in particular, helped prompt her run against Andrew Cuomo in the 2014 Democratic gubernatorial primary. When she spoke to us she had ample home-state examples of how to focus our energies on progressive candidates committed to democratic norms rather than, say, caucusing with Republicans in the State Senate. For example, she has asked Democratic primary contenders in her home district to agree to push back on the charter school lobby, and encouraged us to do the same.



President’s Column: “Free and Ignorant”

Noah Kaufman

“If a nation expects to be ignorant & free, in a state of civilisation, it expects what never was & never will be. The functionaries of every government have propensities to command at will the liberty & property of their constituents. There is no safe deposit for these but with the people themselves; nor can they be safe with them without information. Where the press is free and every man able to read, all is safe.”

Thomas Jefferson to Charles Yancey, Monticello, Jan. 6, 1816.

Thomas Jefferson was born on April 13, 1743. Like many of our revolutionary leaders he saw

firsthand the capacity for abuse inherent in the power of monarchy, and in governmental authority generally. The quote from his letter to Yancey, above, is indicative of Jefferson’s thought regarding the necessity of checks on the excesses of government. In 1778 Jefferson wrote: “Experience hath shewn, that even under the best forms of government those entrusted with power have, in time, and by slow operations, perverted it into tyranny.” It is, and always has been, the inclination of those with power to grab more.

Recently we have learned how internet companies amass vast collections of our personal data, not only through the “likes” we put on our social media pages, but through the accumulation of every click and search we perform on the internet: This information is aggregated and analyzed, and then bought and sold not only by powerful corporate interests, but also by powerful political interests.

The internet is not so much a private library, but rather (to paraphrase data engineer turned whistleblower Christopher Wylie) a self-created biographical and psychological profile available to anyone has an interest in your behavior, your income and your interests. More than ever, we citizens are targets of those seeking to influence or manipulate not only our consumer decisions but our opinions as well.

Recent reports about the connections between Facebook social media data collection and Cambridge Analytica remind us how the internet can be used by dirty tricksters. These reports show how invidious corporate power can be when it operates in the shadows, and they also highlight the Jeffersonian challenge that transparency is a requirement of liberty and democracy.

The Supreme Court’s 2010 *Citizens United* decision allowing corporations the same First Amendment rights as individual citizens has enabled powerful interests to interject, without attribution, influence and misdirection into our electoral process, as seen in the FB/Cambridge Analytica scandal.

Jimmy Carter shared his concerns regarding the *Citizens United* case in 2015, saying that “it violates the essence of what made America a great country in its political system. Now it’s just an oligarchy with unlimited political bribery being the

essence of getting the nominations for president or being elected president. And the same thing applies to governors, and U.S. Senators and congress members.”

It is up to us to ensure that everyone can read, that the press remains free, and that we know who is writing, *or who is posting*, what we do read.

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Disclaimer: unless otherwise indicated, items herein reflect the views of their authors only. They are published as a part of our club’s commitment to the free and open exchange of ideas on topics of interest, but their publication should not be construed as an endorsement by the editor, the Steering Committee, or the Broadway Democrats club.

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Pay Attention to Your Healthcare: Crystal Ball Medicine?

Richard Siegel

Good healthcare policy should balance three reasonable goals – *provide preventive care in the community so people feel better, make the community healthier as a whole, and reduce the cost of providing care.*

Managed care is supposed to make it easy for people to see their primary care physician (PCP) when the need arises. That fosters the idea that we all receive comprehensive, coordinated care in the least expensive setting. A PCP knows you and has easy access to your records. S/he can often resolve your issues without expensive tests.

However, it is often not possible to simply pick up the phone and get an appointment when we do not feel well. Many times there are no openings for weeks at a time; moreover, our PCPs do not work 24/7. As a result, a problem might get worse – and at some point we might go to the Emergency Room.

Many times that one goes to the Emergency Room, there is the potential that something serious is going on. Chest pain, stomach pain, asthma – all make us feel sick and very uncomfortable and worried that bad things are happening. So while it is a fact that some people go to the Emergency Room when it is clear they ought to have seen their PCP

instead, that usually happens because the situation feels urgent at the moment.

Emergency Room care is very expensive, and insurance companies don’t like to pay for care it unless absolutely necessary. In NY State, most insurance companies have tried to discourage the use of the ER by dramatically increasing the co-pay for any Emergency Room visit that does not lead to an admission. Instead of a \$10 or \$20 co-pay, we can now expect to pay between \$50 and \$150.

Anthem Blue Cross has taken this tactic to the extreme in some other states. Anthem is now DENYING the whole bill if – with the benefit of hindsight – evaluation and treatment in the ER reveal a problem that could have been resolved by a PCP or an Urgent Care Center. This can cost the individual hundreds or even thousands of dollars.

This outrageous tactic by Anthem BC/BS could conceivably lead healthcare consumers to make dangerous, even life-threatening choices to delay or defer treatment. So check with *your* insurance company to see how they have changed reimbursement for treatment in the Emergency Room. Let them know your response. Remind them that neither you nor your doctor has a crystal ball.

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Think you know who voted for Trump? Think some more ...

From a March 29 column in the NYT about the “Roseanne” reboot (www.nytimes.com/2018/03/29/opinion/roseanne-reboot-trump.html):

“Forty-one percent of voters earning less than \$50,000 voted for Mr. Trump while 53 percent voted for Hillary Clinton. Forty-nine percent of voters earning between \$50,000 and \$100,000 voted for Mr. Trump while 47 percent voted for Mrs. Clinton. The median income of these voters was \$72,000, while the median income of Hillary Clinton voters was \$61,000.”

This means, as the columnist says, that **the votes of “a significant number of middle-class and wealthy white people contributed to Trump’s election.”**

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Sinclair Broadcast Group: Weaponizing the First Amendment

Luis Román

By now you've seen the video of Sinclair Broadcast Group's local news anchors around the country reading from the same prepared script, attacking "fake news" and "politically biased journalism" (if you haven't, here's one version: <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/4/2/17189302/sinclair-broadcast-fake-news-biased-trump-viral-video>).

This is nothing short of a weaponization of the First Amendment.

Sinclair is already notorious for forcing local stations it owns to air "commentary" by such notables as former White House go-fer Boris Epshteyn. Forcing local anchors to read these prepared scripts is taking it to another level.

Those who grew up in the 70's and 80's can remember the local news anchors who were part of our lives every night at 6 and 11. For me it was Roger Grimsby and Bill Beutel, Chuck Scarborough and Sue Simmons, Ernie Anastos and many others.

Whoever the local anchors of your youth were, can you remember any of them turning to the camera and offering straight political commentary? Do you remember them attacking other journalistic outlets for so-called biased and shoddy reporting, particularly without offering any specific examples of the kind of practices they were complaining of?

Sinclair is disguising its political agenda under the banner of journalism, using prepared scripts to take advantage of the trust that local anchors build with their viewers to give that agenda a veneer of impartiality.

Sinclair is currently awaiting approval of its purchase of Tribune Media, which would give Sinclair entry into 72% of American homes, and the ability to broadcast nationwide their political agenda under the banner of local journalism.

It doesn't matter that Sinclair promotes an agenda that I find odious. If this were 2010 and Sinclair's owners happened to be rabid Obama supporters, they would be just as dangerous. Using local news to promote a political agenda is just another step on the slippery slope to totalitarianism.

Thankfully, Sinclair isn't being given a free pass for this assault on journalistic integrity, but the danger Sinclair presents is very real and present, and we all have to be on our guard.

The Broadway Democrats and DACA

The following letter was sent to Senators Schumer and Gillibrand, and to Representatives Nadler and Espaillat, on January 19, 2018:

At the January 18 Meeting of the Broadway Democratic Club, the following motion was put forth, seconded and affirmed unanimously:

We, the Broadway Democratic Club, urge our Democratic Congressional representatives to support those immigrants in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program in their efforts not only to remain in our country, but to achieve full citizenship. It is expected of us Democrats that we will stand up for those who are suffering and defenseless, and here is a moment when we must live up to those expectations.

This message is conveyed to you to reinforce the seriousness of the plight of hundreds of thousands of our "Dreamer" neighbors.

Please do all that you can to achieve a just and fair resolution to this matter.

Sincerely,

Noah Kaufman
President, The Broadway Democrats

CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS ABOUT THIS OR ANY OTHER MATTER:

Senator Charles E. Schumer
780 3rd Ave., Suite 2301
New York, NY 10017
<https://www.schumer.senate.gov/contact/email-chuck>

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
780 3rd Ave., Suite 2301
New York, NY 10017
<https://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/contact/email-me>

Rep. Jerrold Nadler
201 Varick Street, Suite 669
New York, NY 10014
<https://nadler.house.gov/contact-me>

Rep. Adriano Espaillat
Harlem State Office Building
163 West 125th Street, #507
New York, NY 10027
<https://espaillat.house.gov/contact>

Scott Pruitt Must Go

Pat Almonrode



Would you buy a used car from this man?

How about one that complied only with 1950s-era emissions standards?

The bad news about Scott Pruitt, Trump's head of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), just keeps coming. Pruitt, of course, was chosen by Trump because of his stated goal of undoing the agency's achievements: after all, Pruitt sued the EPA numerous times back when he was Attorney General of Oklahoma (several of those suits are still wending their way through the courts, still with his name on them).

Pruitt's attack on his own agency has been stunning for its speed, depth, and breadth. Like the late lamented Rex Tillerson did at State, Pruitt is literally gutting the EPA from within. Just a few examples:

- Pruitt has instructed employees to highlight scientific uncertainty and "lack of evidence" linking human activity to climate change — statements contradicted by the consensus of 97% of publishing scientists, and by the most recent Federal Climate Assessment, which concluded that "it is extremely likely that human activities, especially emissions of greenhouse gases, are the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century."
- Pruitt has taken at least 15 major actions to delay, weaken or repeal air pollution protections, which were opposed by the American Lung Association and other health groups.
- Shortly after his confirmation, Pruitt personally approved the removal of references to climate change and climate-related government programs from the EPA's website. He has since continued to censor scientific information that might reveal the harmful impact of the administration's environmental policies.
- Pruitt is preparing to roll back vehicle-emissions rules and targets that have contributed to cleaner air — but that are opposed by most automakers.
- Most recently, Pruitt announced that he will no longer allow the EPA to use studies that include nonpublic scientific data to develop rules to safeguard public health and prevent pollution. As

former EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy wrote in an NYT op-ed, this amounts to an announcement by Pruitt that "he alone will decide what is and isn't acceptable science for the agency to use when developing policies that affect your health and the environment."

Of course, Pruitt has also been much in the news for his costly obsession with secrecy and security, and for more run-of-the-mill political scandals:

- Pruitt has a 24/7 security deal, a first for any EPA Administrator. According to CNN, salaries alone will cost at least \$2 million per year, *plus* costs such as training, equipment, and travel. This as the Trump administration has laid out plans to cut EPA's budget by 30%, including major cuts to the agency's enforcement work and staffing as well as the elimination of some programs.
- Pruitt installed new security features inside EPA headquarters, including a \$15,780 upgrade to office doors and a soundproof communications booth costing nearly \$25,000 — even though EPA already has a similar room elsewhere in the building. As CNN reported, "It's unclear if Pruitt and his staff are guarding against outside threats, internal leakers, or both."
- Pruitt famously flies first-class (or by charter), in order to avoid the trauma of being yelled at by coach passengers. His high-flying peace of mind cost the taxpayers over \$200,000 in six months, according to the Associated Press.

And now, of course, Pruitt's sweetheart deal for housing at a Washington condo linked to an energy lobbyist has come to light. As the editorial board of the Washington Post recently wrote, "Mr. Pruitt paid a total of \$6,100 over six months — the sort of sum that might land a young renter a basement unit in a less convenient neighborhood at best. The condo's co-owner [is] the wife of J. Steven Hart, whose firm represents energy companies. If Mr. Pruitt had paid fair rent on realistic terms, the connection would be merely concerning. In light of the cushy deal the administrator got, the arrangement is pure swamp."

As nasty as his substantive record is, it's just possible that these more "typical" Washington scandals might be Pruitt's downfall, as similar scandals were for Tom Price and now the hapless David Shulkin. But meanwhile, to quote again the Washington Post's editorial board, "A swamp monster is running the EPA." Scott Pruitt must go.

Pat Almonrode

Hold the Date!
Broadway Democrats'
Spring Fling
Sunday, April 29th
3:00 - 6:00 pm
Honoring
Public Advocate Tish James &
Morningside Heights Community Coalition
Contact 609-751-3033 or email
fundraiser2018@broadwaydemocrats.org



The Broadway Democrats Newsletter – April 2018

FIRST
CLASS

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