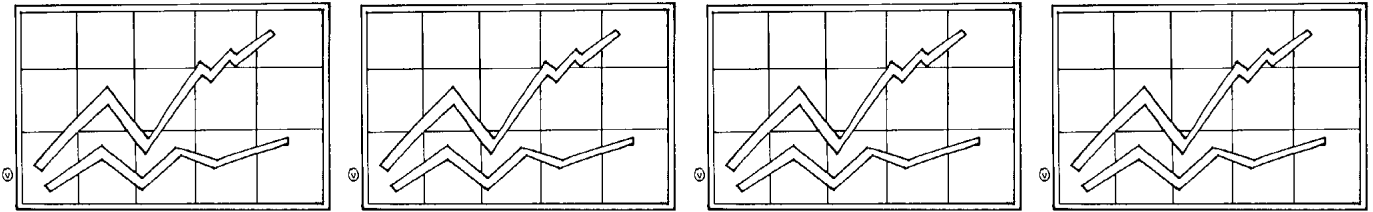

THE BROADWAY DEMOCRATS

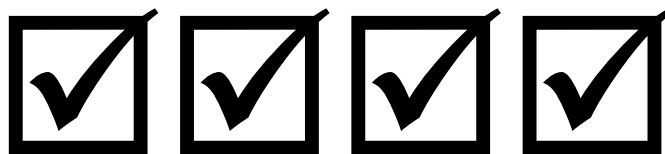
◆ District Leaders: Curtis Arluck, Paula Diamond Román ◆ President: Luis Román ◆



David Weiman on *The Economic State of the Country*

and

Annual Club Elections



Thursday, January 20th

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

Congregation Ramath Orah

550 West 110th Street (off Broadway)

THE BROADWAY DEMOCRATS

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

Volume 36, Issue 1

January 2011

District Leader's Report

Curtis Arluck

2011: Challenges and Opportunities

It will be a good year for Broadway Democrats, and Democrats most everywhere, to focus on building our organizations, strengthening our message, and figuring out just what it is to be a Democrat. For the first time since 1995 we have neither elections for legislative or executive offices nor the buildup to a seriously contested NY Presidential primary the following year. (Though let us not forget that District Leaders are up for re-election, and there could be primaries for Civil Court Judge.) Free from having to worry much about elections this year, we must instead think about what we, as Democrats and as citizens, can do to rebuild our institutions and how to counter the Republican mismanagement and lies that have so imperiled them.

At his January 6 Inauguration at City College, Attorney General Eric Schneiderman got us off to a good start. He spoke eloquently of Charles Hamilton Houston, an early civil rights lawyer (who trained, among others, Thurgood Marshall). Houston made it his life's work to overturn the Supreme Court's infamous *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision legalizing segregation. Despite knowing that he probably wouldn't achieve this goal in his lifetime—he died four years before *Brown vs. Board of Education* accomplished it—he began the fight because it had to start somewhere, and he knew others would pick up the torch when he could no longer carry it. The NY Attorney General, Eric said, is the people's lawyer, whose job is to prosecute those who abuse the state's laws for their own profit, and to protect the rights of people from those who would abuse them. (Eric's opponent actually ran on a platform of going easy on Wall St. crooks because they were "helping" the state's economy!) Governor Cuomo also spoke at his successor Eric Schneiderman's inauguration, more movingly, many people felt, than at his own. Of course, as the Governor would be the first to point out, the Attorney General doesn't have to find ways to close a 10 billion dollar budget deficit.

The sad state of New York and many other states' finances is the hardest nut for Democrats to crack as we contemplate both how to "sell" our policies and what those policies should be. For the condition of the U.S. economy, I strongly believe that Republican economic policies are mostly responsible, and that if true Democratic policies could be enacted things would get much better very quickly—but there are no easy answers for New York and other states. We know that Republican policies are bad, but what should the Democrats' policies be? There really isn't enough money to go around, and what kept us afloat last year, the much-derided but very successful Obama stimulus money, is about to disappear.

We can't keep raising real estate taxes; working poor and middle class people, especially upstate, will be forced out of their homes, and as a general principle it's monstrously unfair to raise people's real estate taxes by 10% every year when they're getting no raises at all (if they're lucky enough to be working) and their property values are going down. We can't afford the current level of Medicare payments, as worthy as they may be. We can't afford the government employee pension mandates, which are going to get frighteningly worse in the next decades. (And too many of these pensions aren't even worthy, because they're bloated by people gaming the system by working ridiculous amounts of overtime hours in the last years they work.) We can't afford the necessary expenditures for education, health, transit—for everything.

And how do we raise the money? The Federal government could virtually close its budget deficit by repealing the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy. As a progressive I would say that NY should raise its top income tax brackets some, as it did as a temporary measure last year, and I am upset that Governor Cuomo refuses to consider doing this. But it is no panacea; it just wouldn't raise enough money. I wish Governor Cuomo would reconsider his position on income tax rates, but I don't envy him his job.

For the national economic debate, we Democrats should stick to the points eloquently outlined in the debate over extending the Bush tax cuts late last year: Spending cuts cost jobs at time when unemployment is still much too high. Republican tax policies from Reagan through both Bushes ballooned the deficit and produced a sick economy; Democratic tax policies under Clinton produced budget surpluses and a strong economy. The economy is already much better under Obama than it was under Bush, why go back to the same Republican policies that have failed over and over again? The Republicans in the House are already reminding people why they were voted out in 2006: trying to undo health care for the country while demanding it for themselves, and running up the deficit, according to the non-partisan CBO, by \$230 billion in order to do it.

For Broadway Democrats, this should be a great year to build our club and involve our community through our forums: on the federal, state and national economy, on using the media to get our message across, on education, especially the increasingly poisonous Charter School debate, on immigration, immigrants rights, and the assault on people whose only "crime" is that they speak Spanish.

Finally, special praise for four people:
Nancy Pelosi: You will go down in history as one of the greatest Speakers of the House.

Kirstin Gillibrand: You (along with many others including our own Chuck Schumer, Charlie Rangel, Jerry Nadler and Carolyn Maloney) abolished Don't Ask Don't Tell, got the 9/11 Health Responders bill through, passed START, extended unemployment benefits and, in your spare time, enacted crib safety legislation as well.

Eric Schneiderman: You demonstrated that it is politically wise as well as morally right to run as a progressive, and in your first few days as Attorney General, are already making us so proud that we elected you.

Luis Roman: For two years you held together the lovable but often trying lot that is Broadway Democrats with grace, and humor without ever once—Paula, don't contradict me!—losing your temper.



Assembly Member's Report

Daniel O'Donnell

I write today to wish you a very Happy New Year. This past year held challenges for us all, and I am optimistic that 2011 will offer new opportunities for positive, meaningful change.

With each year comes a new state budget and the myriad of difficult decisions that go into its formation. This year, those decisions will be even tougher. In his State of the State address, Governor Cuomo outlined his proposals to reorganize and reform New York's government and address the state's fiscal deficit, signaling the gravity of this year's situation. After the Executive Budget is formally released and carefully analyzed, the Senate and Assembly will develop their responses, and negotiations among the three bodies will begin.

As always, I plan to closely examine this year's budget proposal. And as always, I pledge to ensure that our state's most vulnerable are not disproportionately affected by the upcoming budget. No one will be exempted from cutbacks, but there are ways to protect our children, seniors, and those most in need.

It is my sincere hope that the coming year brings health and prosperity to you and your loved ones, to our state, and to our country. Thank you for the important work you do for our community. I very much look forward to continuing our work together.



Steering Committee

David F. Weiman

Bankrupt Ideas, Not the Government

I am completely bewildered by the current concerns over the budget deficit and the national debt among Republicans and even many so-called fiscally prudent Democrats. After all, many of these "deficit hawks" voted for the Bush tax cuts in 2001, which alone account for just over 1/4 of the 2009 deficit. What's more, two (unfunded) wars added 13% to the deficit, and the Great Recession (without any TARP or stimulus spending), another 30%. So, if you truly wanted to balance the budget,

you'd be attacking these problems, not social security (which in 2009 was still running a surplus if anyone bothered to check) or the relatively small amounts of non-military discretionary spending.

The hypocrisy of the deficit hawks, I'm sure, will not surprise you, but I want to focus on two less commonly discussed deficit fallacies. The first was nicely illustrated by a front page article on Japan's lost decade(s) in the Oct. 30th New York Times. Of course, the article could also have been titled "1937 all over again," as both cases demonstrate the self-destructive consequences of adopting a contractionary fiscal policy—whether tax increases or spending cuts—when an economy is just recovering from a severe recession. What the budget hawks don't tell us is that their policies will further weaken a fragile, lethargic economy.

And if we should head into the second dip of a "double-dip" recession, then tax revenues will fall and the deficits could increase even more (or fall much less than projected). Just to underscore my point, the spending cuts and tax increases enacted in 1937 virtually eliminated the federal government deficit in 1938, but the subsequent downturn returned the deficit to the average levels experienced since 1932 (the low point of the Depression).

My second point focuses on the faulty logic claiming that budget deficits will inexorably burden our children (presumably with future debt service payments). The fallacy of the argument should be obvious, as it would apply to all forms of borrowing, whether by individuals, businesses or governments.

We know of course that it is sensible to borrow, if the funds are "invested" in projects that will yield future returns. We understand this logic when students borrow to finance their education or businesses borrow to expand their operations or develop new products. In these cases we naturally assume that their borrowing will pay off in the form of higher future income, which will enable them to repay their loans and even leave a bit left over for other spending. Well, the same applies to government spending on schools, green technologies, or a new transportation tunnel under the Hudson River. These worthy projects will also yield returns in the form of more employment, higher incomes and profits and so more tax receipts to all governments. And with the increased in tax revenues, the government can repay its loans without burdening our children.

Indeed, there may even be a little of these social dividends left over for other worthwhile government spending.

Club Elections

It's January, time to elect the Broadway Democrats' officers for the next year. Individuals nominated thus far are listed below. **Further nominations may be made from the floor.**

President: Joe Nunley
Vice President: Gretchen Borges
Treasurer: Lew Moses
Secretary:

Steering Committee:

[This list reflects those who have expressed an interest and may not be complete.]

Martina Garcia
Joyce Goodman
Katie Hanner
Norm Levine
Carrie Marlin
Sarah Martin
Joe Robins
Luis Román
Richard Siegal
Liz Sostre
Nick O'Neill

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.

As per the club constitution, there will be only one ballot. The winner will be selected by "Instant Runoff Voting"; "no endorsement" is still a ballot option.

Interested in local,
state, or national
issues? Consider
running for the
Steering Committee.

The Broadway
Democrats want you!

Membership

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.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Special Interests: _____

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

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

The State of the Economy and Club Elections

Thursday, January 20 8:00 p.m.

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