
THE BROADWAY DEMOCRATS

◆ District Leaders: Curtis Arluck, Paula Diamond Román ◆ President: Gretchen Borges ◆

**Come hear
Barnard Professor
David Weiman
speak on**

**Income
Inequality**

Thursday, November 13th

7:45 p.m. Sign in
Meeting starts at 8:00 p.m. sharp!

Bank Street College

610 West 112th Street (between Broadway and Riverside Drive)

THE BROADWAY DEMOCRATS

◆ District Leaders: Curtis Arluck, Paula Diamond Román ◆ President: Gretchen Borges ◆

Volume 39, Issue 8

November 2014

District Leader's Report

Curtis Arluck

Election Results

Election results from our PS 165, 390 Riverside, 410 Riverside and 75 La Salle St. poll sites

GOVERNOR

Cuomo (D etc.)	3747	80%
(737 votes on WFP line)		
Astorino (R etc.)	349	7%
Hawkins (G)	604	13%

COMPTROLLER

DiNapoli (D etc.)	3964	88%
Antonacci (R etc.)	297	7%
Green Party cand.	269	6%

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Schneiderman (D etc.)	4121	89%
Cahill (R etc.)	302	7%
Green Party cand.	190	4%

BALLOT PROPOSALS-PS 165 vote only

1- Redistricting Commission

YES	1199	48%
NO	1320	52%

2 Legislative Bills Electronically

YES	2217	90%
NO	244	10%

3 Schools Technology Bond Issue

YES	1979	79%
NO	536	21%

Due to production deadlines, there is no time to write a lengthy analysis of one of the most depressing elections of my lifetime. The American people simply blew it, voting yet again for right wing idiots pledged to return to the policies that brought the country to economic ruin in 2008. I was pleased that our area cast such a strong protest vote against Governor Cuomo, but the upstate NY results were sobering: Cuomo lost upstate, and Democratic Congressional and State Senate candidates were wiped out. While the sophistry of Cuomo's campaign hurt him everywhere, we must recognize that outside of NYC there was an ugly right wing wave out there, and can feel a little bit of satisfaction that our flawed Governor was able to overcome it.

DA

Congratulations to the Broadway Democrats who helped out in another locally successful campaign, highlighted by Eric Schneiderman's landslide victory and Danny O'Donnell's unopposed re-election: Dan Zweig, Audrey Waysse, Martina Garcia, Pat Almonrode, Luis Roman, Lizabeth Sostre, Gretchen Borges, Gregory House, Nick O'Neill, Maxine Phillips, Katie Hanner, Jacob Arluck (Dad's donut delivery driver), Lisa Wager, Laura Friedman, Cathy Grad, Ed Sullivan, David Robinson, Mary Hines, Norm and Joan Levine, Sarah Martin and Rachelle Bradt.

President's Corner

Gretchen Borges

Losing the Scientific Method

Taped to poles on Broadway one can frequently see evidence of enterprising, underemployed presumably young people trying to make a living through tutoring. The signs frequently include some credentials. Today I passed one for someone who is offering to tutor math and physics and who claims to have a PhD in physics and an MA in math. I wondered how someone ends up in these circumstances: advertising on copy paper posted to poles in the neighborhood, hoping to attract anxious parents or sinking undergraduates. And then I thought about attitudes toward science in America today and concluded that a physics PhD might indeed have trouble finding a slot.

Of course, it is not the attitude of the person on the street that is at issue. Rather it is the attitude of politicians caught in that spiraling confluence of politics and issues in which facts derived from science should play a key role, but astoundingly seldom do. Consider, for example, the claims of several prominent Republican candidates (Including Mitch McConnell and Rick Scott), this election season who responded to questions concerning climate change with the non sequitur of "I am not a scientist." The line was used earlier by such notables as Michelle Bachmann (though in response to a question concerning her pronouncement that vaccines caused brain cancer) and Marco Rubio, but it now seems to have become a Republican talking point, or at least a canned response. One could say that neither are they engineers or doctors, but seem to have no problem legislating and opining on issues in which

such expertise would be useful. The real issue raised by their response is the assumption behind it: that only a scientist can understand enough science to accept pronouncements from other scientists. Being a non-scientist has become more than a dodge, a way of not responding to questions about climate change. Science has become so suspect that the non-scientist label now appears to be a badge of honor.

In what other realms has science been questioned? Certainly the local and even the national response to the Ebola Virus crisis has been tainted by our society's widespread reluctance to accept the findings of science. The CDC itself did not initially turn to the practices of MSF (Doctors without Borders), an organization with protocols derived from their experience with the virus, when making their first recommendations for suitable protective garb. The more pertinent issue, however, regards the CDC's pronouncements concerning quarantine and how those suggestions were ignored by the certain states.

Though undoubtedly the largest public health organization in the world, the CDC's mission is not to impose mandates, but rather to achieve public health goals through encouraging voluntary compliance. Officially, the CDC is empowered to impose quarantines; specifically, under the Commerce Clause it can restrict travel into the country of an infected person or of a person who has come into contact with an infected person and can also restrict interstate travel of such persons. But it basically acts as an advisor and only under extreme circumstances or if asked can it take control from local authorities. It is powerless to impose mandates. It can only make suggestions.

We thus have a powerless public health authority and a patchwork of local reactions as our defense against a very powerful virus. And as we have seen, the local reactions are more based in politics than in science. Governors Christie and Cuomo clearly were appealing to a frightened conservative base in making their initial quarantine pronouncements. Once again, as in the national response to climate change, politics trumps science.

One more example. This time an example in which science, or perhaps it is just a rational response, is trumped by the profit motive rather than politics. With the money currently flooding into political races, the motivations driving those seeking a profit and those seeking office are becoming increasingly similar.

As we are frequently told in the media, the process of developing new drugs is costly and time consuming. Thus, understandably, any decision to develop an effective response to a disease is one that must be made with due consideration of the anticipated profits to be derived from the product. Some diseases require many doses of a medication. Lifelong diseases thus provide the most fertile area for developing profitable products. At the other end of the spectrum are vaccines. Products administered once or twice, albeit to many people. Add to that disadvantage, the geography of a disease. A disease like Ebola that is most frequently in poorer countries is less likely to attract the attention of the pharmaceutical industry.

Modern medicine, with all its miracles, is directed toward solving the problems of the wealthy. It is not driven by science or even by rational thinking. And thus we are left with a crisis, one in which a terrible

disease is killing thousands, frightening millions, and exposing an America which ignores the findings of science. Thomas Jefferson would not be pleased. As he wrote to John Adams on 27 May 1795, "...the more ignorant we become the less value we set on science, & the less indication we shall have to seek it." A chillingly prophetic statement and one that perhaps explains the presence of a hastily taped ad on a Broadway lamppost from a Physics PhD in November 2014.



From the Steering Committee Pat Almonrode

A Brief Report on the Education Speakout, October 9

The Broadway Democrats held an Education "Speakout" on October 9, at Bank Street. Neighborhood residents were invited to share their concerns and ideas about educational issues in the district and the City. The event was organized and moderated by Lizabeth Sostre, member of the club's Steering Committee and longtime education advocate. About 30 people altogether attended and participated in a lively discussion. Several participants noted that it seems that in today's political and economic climate, the whole premise of public education is being challenged. This phenomenon was seen as another reflection of polarization and growing inequality and as a dangerous trend for our society. Public education is in serious peril – 12,000 NYC children are being taught in trailers; not a **single** child in NYC has as much gym as is mandated by state guidelines; the system is more overcrowded than it's been in 15 years.

Charter schools were a key issue throughout the evening, and those who spoke were unanimously critical of them. It was said that charter schools siphon off better

students. This effect is true of gifted & talented programs too, to some extent, but the driver there is educational policy and the parents themselves, whereas (most thought) the driver behind charter schools is simply the profit motive. The question was asked, if charters are **not** for profit, why are hedge-funds investing in them? Participants argued there's lots of money to be made, and power to be gained. Charters also get significant tax deductions – “new market tax credits.” It was claimed that investors in charters can double their money in about seven years. It was said that the charter lobby has taken over Albany, and that Serrano and Espaillat have both taken contributions from the lobby.

Many argued that we need to focus on funding for public schools, including making the state fund the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, and that we should stop allowing Governor Cuomo and the State Senate to continue cutting the schools' budget. Assemblyman Danny O'Donnell, who was in attendance, pointed out that the Assembly had put \$4.5 billion into the schools in 2006, with little to show. He said the Assembly needs to “attach better strings” to the money it appropriates, so that it doesn't end up “lost” again. He thought there may be a better chance with the new mayoral administration.

District Leader Curtis Arluck pointed out that only 12% of the city's school age population is in charters, and called on the parents of the other 88% to **organize**.

Some speakers said that studies show charters do **not** perform better than public schools; Ed Sullivan pointed out that **no** children from charter middle schools got into any of the specialized high schools this year.

Assemblymember O'Donnell pointed out that whatever success charters have depends in part on the fact that they don't take children whose first language is not English, or special-needs children; they can also expel children for whatever reason. Also, charters are **required** to have after school programs, which are especially important for parents who couldn't afford a

private alternative. Danny suggested that we force public schools to provide such programs as well.

Some participants pointed out that parents are sending their children to charters because they think they'll do better there, and we can't fault those parents for wanting the best for their children. The bottom line is that charters are not going away anytime soon, so we have to find an effective way to deal with them, and to build support for **truly** public education.

It was mentioned that minority and poor enrollment in the city's specialized high schools is getting lower and lower, and it was suggested that it might be time for a policy of automatic admission for the top 5% of each graduating class of middle schools (similar to the Texas model, whereby the University of Texas accepts the top 5% of the graduating class at each state high school, without comparing one to another). Assemblymember O'Donnell noted that Bronx Science, Stuyvesant, and Brooklyn Tech are required by state law to have admissions tests, but that Mayor Bloomberg imposed this requirement on additional schools, and that could be undone by the City Council.

Councilmember Mark Levine said the Council is trying to find their leverage when so much power has been taken away from the city. He said that all councilmembers agree that co-location is a critical challenge. He has been strident about charters' lack of “backfilling” (failing to take in new children in the upper grades when children leave, as district schools are required to do; this results in a charter cohort that gets smaller and smaller in higher grades). Levine is drafting legislation to require reports from **all** schools (including charters) regarding backfilling; he has also spoken out regarding ELL and special needs kids not being served in charters.

DL

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 \$25; for seniors, students, and those with limited incomes, dues are \$10.

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: Gretchen Borges
Newsletter Editor: Gretchen Borges

Income Inequality**Thursday, November 13th, 2014****Sign in 7:45 p.m.****Meeting Starts 8:00 p.m.****Bank Street College of Education 610 W. 112th St. (between Broadway and Riverside Drive)**