
THE BROADWAY DEMOCRATS

♦ District Leaders: Curtis Arluck, Paula Diamond Román ♦ President: Joe Nunley ♦

We invite you to attend a forum on:

Jobs: What Can Democrats Do?

Finding real solutions for a very real problem

Speakers:

David Weiman

Professor of Economics
Barnard College

Bill Henning

Vice President
CWA Local 1180

Thursday, October 13th

Meeting starts at 8:00 PM

Forum begins 8:30 PM

Bank Street College

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

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Volume 36, Issue 8

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President's Corner

Joe Nunley

A FEW THOUGHTS

I got involved in politics in a big way during the Bush Administration because I was aghast at the direction the country was going in. We campaigned hard and enthusiastically for Barack Obama in 2008. That election night we had tears in our eyes and smiles on our faces at our storefront. We dreamed about what might be possible. We knew that he was not a progressive (although he *had* presented himself that way) but we thought at least we would have a real voice in his administration. We didn't.

Now, we have *experienced the continuation and even expansion of Bush policies in virtually all important areas*. Obama inherited an unprecedented economic calamity. His advisors badly underestimated the extent of the disaster (but almost everybody did).

When Bush/Cheney got into office with fewer votes than Gore they conducted themselves as if they had a mandate. It worked. They pushed a lot of stuff through. Obama, who had a mandate—nearly a 10 million vote margin and both houses of congress—devoted himself from day one to compromise and bipartisanship, even after Mitch McConnell expressed his stated aim to make Obama a one term president.

Parliamentary maneuvers could have been used to ram things through Congress, but the Dems didn't want to execute them because they thought it looked bad. If you put budget issues in bills you would win with 50 votes. Bush did it in 2001, but Obama didn't. Reid could have changed the filibuster rules in the Senate which makes its own rules every 2 years. He didn't.

Politically, Obama has hurt himself with important constituencies. The problem with his quest for the middle and compromise is that he gets no credit for it from anyone.

Working people were looking for someone different and they thought Obama would be that someone. You impress people by winning, not by being prudent. Low information voters are impressed by "winning", not, "I'm making compromises." He impressed no one by allowing himself to be flummoxed by Republicans.

As far as union voters are concerned, during his campaign in Wisconsin he stated that if they fought for collective bargaining he would join them on the lines.

Instead, for the entire 6 months of their protest, he said nothing.

But his biggest problem is us, the base. Progressives were the energizing force behind his past election—getting out the votes, moving independents to his side.

He has ignored us for 3 years, apparently thinking that if he was one elbow to the left of Republicans, we would still support him. I was astonished at his meeting with the Congressional Black Caucus a week ago when he told them to "stop complaining" and "get out of your slippers" and "fight", and "Look at the alternative." This said when African American unemployment is over 16 percent (25% in real terms) and 44 million Americans are living in poverty. And when is the last time he mentioned the word "poverty"? (Not once in the State of the Union Address.)

It goes on every day. Since early August, 3 administrative decisions—on Arctic drilling, the Keystone Pipeline, and the ozone that forms smog—have all favored dirty industry over public health and a clean environment.

At this very moment, Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner is pushing a settlement with banks and Wall Street firms so they won't have to face any serious punishment for the widespread fraud that crashed our economy. Our own Eric Schneiderman, NY Attorney General, is holding firm to real investigations and prosecutions despite enormous pressure from the administration.

The President may have crossed his Rubicon with the Debt Ceiling deal, falling in with the deficit hysteria crowd. We should resist his own proposal to cut \$320 billion from Medicare and Medicaid. (And I might add, if the House and Senate Democrats can stand united on saving Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid from the bipartisan compromise that President Obama is brokering with Republicans, we have a better chance of taking the House back and keeping the Senate in Democratic control.)

The Republicans we are fighting now are the most retro-grade, regressive, obstructionist, anti-American, pro-plutocracy, pro-giant corporation, anti-regulatory, anti-science, anti-education, anti-healthcare, middle class hating, union hating, anti-fair taxation, fanatical legislators in history. And we know what happened the last time they had the White House. But the entire Democratic strategy seems to be, "Vote for us. The

Republicans are worse.” Is that enough of a strategy? And can you successfully fight neo-fascism with Neville Chamberlain? Don’t we need a Winston Churchill?



District Leader’s Report

Curtis Arluck

Some Updates and Observations

Congratulations to Judicial Convention nominees Ellen Gesmer, Analisa Torres, Deborah Kaplan and to our own renominated Laura Visitacion Lewis. The Independent Screening Panel reported out an unbelievably qualified and progressive group of judges this year, a tribute to our panel system. Also to be commended is County Leader Keith Wright, who didn’t roll over to his “boss” Speaker Shelley Silver’s demand that the much less senior and progressive Shlomo Hagler be promoted ahead of Ellen Gesmer; he allowed the delegates to vote their consciences, and thereby insured Ellen’s victory.

Congratulations to victorious West Harlem District Leader candidates Marisol Alcantara and Jamaal Nelson, two vibrant young leaders, and to incumbent Paul Newell and newcomer Jenifer Rajkumar, who trounced Silver-backed candidates downtown. Jenifer is the first South Asian District Leader, and her victory will assist our neighbor Anil Singh—reported out by the Screening Panel for the second year in a row—who should be a strong candidate for State Supreme Court next year.

No Congratulations to Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito and Assembly Member Robert Rodriguez on assuming District Leaderships in East Harlem. I have been tremendously impressed with Rodriguez’s work in his first year in the Assembly, and continue to strongly support Melissa, one of the most progressive members of the City Council, but the fact remains: elected public officials should not be District Leaders. It both violates the reform, good government principles on which our club was founded, and discourages participation from young activists. Above 96th Street we now have Robert, Melissa, Charles Rangel, Keith Wright, Inez Dickens, Adriano Espaillat and Guillermo Linares all wearing two hats as District Leaders; Bill Perkins also holds the “lesser” party position of Democratic State Committeeman. Not a good trend.

The Wall Street Protests are an exciting and positive development. We should all support the protestors’ major demands regarding Wall Street: the millionaire’s tax, stronger regulations of banks and securities firms, removing the outrageous loophole in which hedge fund managers’ salaries are taxed as capital gains. But we have to be careful. The financial services industry is by far the most significant part of our city’s economy. It is not accurate to describe it as a total villain as we try

to figure out how to get out of the financial mess we’re in. *That* medal of dishonor goes to the Republicans: their lies, their distortions, their economic philosophy which, put simply, is: “we will create jobs by cutting jobs.” I’m sure the speakers at our exciting forum on jobs will demolish that argument.



State Committeeman Reports

Daniel Marks Cohen

State Committeeman, 69th AD

We are fortunate to have 2 submissions from State Committeeman Cohen, as he submitted one article for October (immediately below), and one for a September newsletter (following thereafter).

On Wednesday, September 21st I testified before the NYS Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment (also known as LATFOR), which is responsible for redrawing the district lines. The LATFOR panel is a bit of a sham, as the members are drawn from the Assembly and the State Senate, and each majority group draws the lines to protect incumbents. I supported an independent redistricting panel, and for a while between the governor’s support and Ed Koch’s NY Uprising group pressuring the legislature, it looked like an independent panel might come into being. Despite majorities in both houses supporting such a panel, and the governor endorsing it, it somehow never materialized. Faced with the status quo I decided that providing input into a flawed process is better than no input at all, so I testified before LATFOR, and my comments, edited for space and continuity, are reprinted below:

“My name is Daniel Marks Cohen, and I am the New York State Democratic Committeeman representing the 69th Assembly District. The part of the Upper West Side I live in – between 96th Street and 125th Street, is the poorest portion of the 69th Assembly District (<http://zipskinny.com/zipcompare.php>), it is the least served in terms of services and transportation (<http://www.straphangers.org/pokeyaward/10/>), and has more crime (http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/crime_prevention/crime_statistics.shtml).

I believe at least one reason for its consistent and uneven status is that fact that the 69th is cut up into multiple pieces—particularly the northern end of the district—including 2 Congressional districts: the 8th by Representative Jerry Nadler, and the 15th by Representative Charlie Rangel; 3 State Senate districts: Tom Duane of the 29th, Bill Perkins of the 30th and Adriano Espaillat of the 31st; and 4 City Council districts: Gale Brewer of the 6th, Robert Jackson of the 7th, Melissa Mark-Viverito of the 8th and Inez Dickens of the 9th. With 10 different elected officials representing

one community at 3 different levels of government, it is no wonder that people get confused about whom to talk to about one issue or another. Looking more closely at each situation:

In Congress we are ably represented by Representatives Nadler and Rangel, I urge the panel to move the lines between the Rangel and Nadler districts north, so that the 69th AD is not cut in half between the two districts. My parents have lived at 99th Street and Riverside Drive for over 40 years, and just in the past 2 decades they have been represented by 3 different currently serving members of Congress due to the redrawing of the lines. This kind of willful disregard for natural neighborhoods and communities cannot lead to quality political leadership, or consistent civic participation, if there is no continuity from year to year.

In the State Senate it is challenging to combine districts to make them more compact while still making them numerically and ethnically balanced, but surely something can be done where portions of the Upper West Side are represented by one State Senator who lives in Washington Heights, another who lives in Harlem while a third lives in Chelsea—3 neighborhoods that are vastly different by any measure, and whose elected officials have appropriately different priorities in representing their majority neighborhood constituencies, leaving the Upper West Side without an appropriate champion for its needs. This suggestion is not to disparage in any way the current elected leadership, just recognition of the limits of human attention, resources and time—which no elected official, no matter how talented, can overcome. Furthermore on the West Side we are inheritors of a long skinny district—the 31st—currently represented by Mr. Espailat. This district included 2 disparate neighborhoods—the Upper West Side and Washington Heights—forced together in an attempt to punish its predecessor, Eric Schneiderman by creating a district that would lead to a primary, one that might remove a thorn from the side of Albany power brokers. But thankfully he won, repeatedly, and then last year was elected to be the state's Attorney General. While I am thrilled at Mr. Schneiderman's elevation to higher office, I implore the Task Force not to leave the 31st unchanged, but redraw it so that it is either fully on the West Side, or fully in Washington Heights, rather than as it is now, stretched between the 2 neighborhoods.

Perhaps the most egregious district lines are the ones in the City Council, for which I know this Task Force is not responsible, but nonetheless this body can set an example. If the task Force begins to undo some of the messy work enacted over the past few cycles, it might inspire the Council to follow suit. Today you can stand on the corner of 96th Street and Broadway, and depending on which corner you stand on, you can be in 3 different districts. Surely one side of Broadway is not so different than the other that it requires the attention of 2 members of the city council, let alone 3.

Perhaps they could be drawn to include all of the West Side above 96th Street in one district, or even better, all of the West Side from 59th Street to 125th Street—similar to the outlines of the Community Board.

I will close on this point—just shy of 50 years ago in 1963 the community board lines were drawn to map out constituencies, neighborhoods, and communities with similar needs and demands (http://www.nyc.gov/html/cau/downloads/pdf/community_board_basics.pdf). While the people within those lines have changed over time, the lines themselves are still true. If the Task Force is looking for a guide to what districts should look like, I urge them to compare their lines to the lines of the community boards. The closer to those community board lines the election districts are drawn, the happier their constituents will likely be. Thank you for your time and consideration.”

State Committeeman Cohen's September submission

Welcome back. It has been a year since I was elected State Committeeman, and I wanted to give a brief report looking back, and forward to the year to come.

It has been a tumultuous summer—a both good (I got engaged to be married to a wonderful woman, Dr. Jill Drossman) and frustrating (about everything coming out of Washington these days).

I am particularly disappointed in President Obama, who I feel totally caved to the Republicans on the debt ceiling. I wish he had followed former President Clinton's advice and invoked the 14th Amendment and gone ahead and raised it on his own rather than kicking the can down the road to the Congressional super committee that will likely create another month of drama that we don't need. Where is the jobs bill we DO need?

The question of who would be the next State Committee Chairman was up in the air for a while, with rumors about his being replaced almost immediately after last November's elections, but it appears that Governor Cuomo has settled on keeping Jay Jacobs in the job. Enough on this subject unless there is a major change.

The Reform Caucus of the State Committee has met several times this year, and we submitted 2 resolutions at the Spring Committee meeting which I have printed in full in newsletter articles previously, one addressing ethics, and the other gas fracking. They were defeated after a floor fight but at least made it clear to the Governor that we were paying attention. The ethics law signed by the Governor is relatively weak, but it is better than nothing. It will have to be strengthened, probably when there is a particularly egregious ethics violation in Albany, which considering the state's

capital, is only a matter of time. On the fracking issue the governor's position remains a disappointment. Cuomo is set to let the moratorium expire, which is unacceptable, and energy companies are pushing for renewed drilling rights. New Jersey, hardly a paragon of environmentalism, has **banned** fracking, and so should New York. We must carry this battle forward in the fall.

Over the summer I continued to call attention to stopping gas fracking, and, particularly in light of the tsunami disaster in Japan, joined in pushing for the closing of the nuclear power plant at Indian Point, NY, only 35 miles or less than an hour's drive from New York City. On this latter point, Cuomo appears to support closing the plant, but is using his support for the closure as justification for support gas fracking. We cannot poison our water to save ourselves from radiation exposure. We need other alternatives. The NY Times suggested in June that almost two-thirds of NYC's buildings could host photo-voltaic cells—generating 15% of the energy from the sun that the city needs annually. According to the Pratt Center for Community Development, the city is particularly friendly to solar energy systems, with property tax breaks laws that enable property owners to sell back excess energy to the power company. Total government financial incentives cover as much as 62% of the costs, if not more. We should certainly push for this to be mandatory in all new construction, and figure out a way to retrofit existing buildings.

Going forward I want to reiterate that redistricting is upon us, and I urge folks in the 69th AD to pay close attention. We are currently split between **2** Congressional districts, **3** State Senate districts and **4** Council districts—the more concentrated we are in fewer districts, the more impact we can have on the political process. As hearings are scheduled going into 2012, I will have more information about public comments and avenues for registering your views on the district lines. This process happens only every 10 years, so keep an eye out. See you at the club meeting in the fall.



From the Steering Committee

Richard A. Siegel

Getting Prescription Drugs or Bundling Pharmacy into Managed Care

As of October 1, all Medicaid recipients in managed care plans will receive pharmacy benefits directly through their plans. This is a major change that has many repercussions—some minor and some very significant. Medicaid recipients:

- will now have to present a health plan card at the pharmacy

- will have to use a pharmacy that is 'participating' with their plan
- will be subject to their plan's formulary (the list of drugs that the plan agrees to provide)
- may now have to get prior approval for certain medications
- may have to switch to a generic brand of their medications
- may have the plan insist that an MD prescribe drug A instead of drug B

These changes came from Proposal # 11 of the Medicaid Redesign Team. The main reason these changes have been implemented is to cut costs. It remains to be seen what impact it will have on the quality of care and the health of each recipient. It will clearly require physicians to spend more time on the phone seeking prior approval. In addition, physicians may be prevented from prescribing the drug they prefer to treat a specific problem. As more Medicaid recipients are moved into managed care, this change will have a greater impact in the city and the state.

This change is a very good example the practical implications of proposals to cut the cost of Medicaid and Medicare. In this particular case, we are moving from a single payer system (the state) to a multi-payer system (the managed care plans). It seems counter intuitive that having several plans—each with its own list of cover medications, each with its unique method of obtaining prior approval and each with its own billing policy—will cut costs rather than increase costs. The only way this will cut costs is if a plan forces an MD and patient to use generic drugs, to choose less expensive drugs and to limit the prescribing of drugs.

Let's see how this plays out. Please let us know specific problems that arise as a result of this change.

Please read the following materials by Prof Weiman and about labor leader Bill Henning in preparation for the October Forum.

Imagining a world without the New Deal

By David F. Weiman

Published: August 12 2011

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The tea party's backlash against the federal government envisions a return to an earlier, supposedly golden era in American history. Rep. Paul Ryan's budget plan floated in April would essentially privatize Medicare and Medicaid while lowering taxes on the top income bracket to their pre-1930 rate. House Republicans' plan to solve the recent debt crisis would have shrunk the government to its 1950s size.

In other words, conservative plans like these would effectively repeal Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal.

So, what would a world without the New Deal look like?

It would be a fight for economic survival with no coordinated effort at recovery. The New Deal shifted responsibility for social welfare and economic development from city halls and state capitols to Washington. Starting in 1933, New Deal programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps created more than 3 million jobs over the next three years. But like the recent Recovery and Reinvestment Act, New Deal spending was too modest — by 1932, nearly 12 million workers, or more than 25 percent of the labor force, were unemployed.

Still, FDR exercised his authority to put America back to work. Any who doubt the New Deal's effectiveness need only look at the double-dip recession of 1937, after a conservative backlash in Congress scaled down relief spending. Without Roosevelt's intervention, the economic recovery that lasted from 1933 to 1937 would have been weaker and shorter — not unlike our own recovery after the Great Recession.

But the New Deal brought more than jobs — it enhanced quality of life, especially among the most vulnerable. We can see its impact on infant mortality, which increased during the early years of the Depression after falling sharply for more than a decade. Without the New Deal's health and nutrition initiatives as well as investments in water and sewage-treatment infrastructure, millions of lives would have been lost.

This new idea of a federal safety net not only inspired Social Security in the 1930s, but also Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society of the 1960s. FDR and LBJ asked all working adults to care for American seniors and the poor. Before the New Deal, it was unthinkable that retired people could turn to the government for income or medical care. That responsibility fell directly to their children, if they had them. That's why the Republicans' proposed cuts to Medicare are so shocking — they shift these costs from the federal budget back to the family budget.

But even if these cuts get through Congress, they can't take away America's infrastructure. The New Deal's Public Works and Works Progress administrations spurred rapid productivity growth in the midst of the Depression. New roads and electrical power networks paved the way for post-World War II economic expansion built around the automobile and the

suburban home. Astonishing 21st-century innovations such as next-day FedEx deliveries and Wi-Fi still rely on these aging investments. We associate FDR with massive hydroelectric dam projects — including the Grand Coulee and Hoover dams in the West, and the Tennessee Valley Authority in the South — but the New Deal also electrified rural America through cooperatives that distributed cheap, reliable power. Nearly 12 percent of Americans still belong to these collectives. Without the New Deal, they would be stuck in the much darker 1920s.

As would modern travelers. Without the New Deal, New York commuters would be without the FDR Drive, the Triborough and Whitestone bridges, and the Lincoln and Queens-Midtown tunnels. There would be no air traffic at LaGuardia and Reagan National airports. D.C.'s Union Station, wired for electricity during the New Deal, would have a very different food court. Between New York and Washington, Amtrak runs on rails first electrified during the New Deal.

Out West, the New Deal gave us Golden Gate Bridge access ramps, the Oakland-San Francisco Bay Bridge, the first modern freeways, and San Francisco and LAX airports. Between the coasts, it brought more than 650,000 miles of paved roads, thousands of bridges and tunnels, more than 700 miles of new and expanded runways, improvements to railroad lines, and scenic routes such as the mid-South's Natchez Trace Parkway. Without the New Deal, of course, some of these would have eventually been built by state and local governments or the private sector — years after America's recovery from the Depression.

Moreover, private infrastructure improvements would have bypassed poor regions such as the South. Because of its vision and virtually unlimited borrowing capacity, the New Deal underwrote Southern modernization with new roads, hospitals, rural electrification and schools. These public investments paid off. After 50 years of stagnation, average Southern incomes began to catch up with the national average during the New Deal era. Even today, the South receives more federal money than it pays in taxes. Though the South has embraced tea party conservatism, the former Confederacy would probably lag behind the rest of the country in a world without the New Deal.

Across America, the New Deal fashioned a new social order that empowered marginalized groups, notably industrial workers. Through support for unions and the Wagner or National Labor Relations Act, FDR codified workers' power to bargain for fair wages,

reasonable hours and safer working conditions. These policies, as well as steeper, more progressive income taxes, secured a more equitable income distribution from the end of World War II to the late 1970s. And the Fair Labor Standards Act — mandating a minimum wage, a 40-hour workweek and improved working conditions — brought benefits to all workers, not just those in unions. The New Deal gave us the weekend. Would we have one without it?

Beyond days off, a New Deal for labor built on the founders' principle of countervailing political power. Unlike his cousin Teddy, FDR was not a famed "trust buster." Still, while endorsing cartel-like control over key industrial sectors, his New Deal encouraged trade unions to curb the economic power of big business. With the dramatic increase in private-sector union membership in the 1940s, millions of workers could assert their collective voice in the political process on par with large corporations, while federal agencies mediated conflicts and forged compromise between organized private interests.

This last legacy of the New Deal — fairness — may be its most important. If House Republicans have their way, we may be stranded in a world without it.

Also see *The Post-9/11 Tragedy: Reflections on 9/11*, an article by Prof. Weiman which is posted on Barnard's website:
<http://barnard.edu/headlines/post-911-tragedy-reflections-911>

Bill Henning Bio

Since 1982, Bill Henning has been Vice President of Local 1180 of the Communications Workers of America, with a membership of nearly 10,000 government and non-profit workers. He is also a trustee on the union's welfare and annuity funds.

He was a founding member and serves on the national steering committees of US Labor Against the War and the Labor Campaign for Single Payer Health Care.

Since 1986, he has hosted the union's weekly radio program *The Communique*, which airs Wednesdays at 1 p.m. over WNYE, 91.5 FM in New York.

He currently teaches labor studies at the City College Center for Worker Education and has taught at Cornell University-New York School of Industrial and Labor Relations and at Queens College. He regularly participates in the Fulbright Institute on the Civilization of the United States, based at New York University, speaking on "Class Consciousness and Organized Labor in the United States."

Letter to the Editor

Alan Flacks

Why Vote "No Endorsement" for Judges? Despite the good quality of the lawyers who appear before us (more on this below) seeking endorsement, there is good reason to vote a no endorsement. The process was quite flawed this year.

Under the new County leader Keith Wright, the County-wide judicial screening panel was far from "independent." Worse, it was secret. All of this was at variance from all the panels prior to Wright and going back to 1977, the year when the process was codified in the County rules.

This year, the organizations who participated in the panels were again kept secret. The persons who appointed the panelist were kept secret. The names of the panelists were kept secret. The number of applicants was kept secret. [Only the names of the applicants are confidential.] This did not happen before even under Denny Farrell, the leader for the past 25 years. [The argument for keeping the panelists' names secret to prevent people calling them on behalf of a candidate is without merit because there has been no proof adduced that it occurs. If it were to occur, the panel has written instructions to deal with it. Such approaches redound to the detriment of the applicant, and applicants know this.]

Even all the more outrageous was the panel for the 5th Civil Court District [from W. 60th Str. to W. 110th Str., C.P.W. to the River.] Not only was it as secret as described above, but also the judge it was replacing (Karen Smith) served as the panel's administrator, which was unheard of. Further, the administrator intruded in the process by asking questions of applicants, a prerogative which was not hers and is not allowed. She also "fed" questions to some of her panelists! Judge Smith essentially selected her own replacement.

Vote "no endorsement." Now, as to the calibre of the applicants, 3 factors obtain. However flawed the panel, the panelists—as do most jurors—rose to the occasion. Second, the lawyers in New York County who are seeking judgeships are generally a cut-above average. And third, most importantly, many of these applicants have applied in years past and were vetted by proper panels.



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.

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The Broadway Democrats
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FIRST
CLASS

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

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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