
THE BROADWAY DEMOCRATS

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

Endorsement Forum: Part 1

Mayoral Candidates:

Tony Avella
Bill Thompson

Comptroller Candidates:

Melinda Katz
John Liu
David Weprin
David Yassky

Borough President Candidates:

Scott Stringer

District Attorney Candidates:

Richard Aborn
Lesley Crocker Snyder
Cy Vance

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.

Thursday, April 23rd

7:45 pm sign in/refreshments * 8:00 forum

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

THE BROADWAY DEMOCRATS

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Volume 34, Issue 4

April 2009

President's Corner Luis Román

There is a saying, when it comes to extreme sports: go big or go home. After almost ninety days in office, it is clear President Obama has taken this maxim to heart.

There is no other way for the President to tackle the multitude of problems facing this country. Economic ruins, two wars, a health care system in crisis, an out of control drug war in Mexico, and now, battles with pirates(!) off the coast of Africa. Has there been, in our lifetime, a President who has faced so many complex problems at the outset of his administration?

Through it all, President Obama has approached his job with a remarkable reserve of calm and self-confidence. Watching his public displays, the President appears to know that this is the moment he was born for, and this is the job he was destined for. It is deeply reassuring to me to know our country is being led by a man of accomplishment and vision, and that he has surrounded himself with an administration of similarly accomplished, ambitious and devoted public servants.

The problem with going big, of course, is that failure can look just as spectacular as success, but with devastating consequences. If the stimulus package and banking bailout fail to spark job growth, we could be left with double-digit unemployment and double-digit inflation. If the Iraq pullout isn't managed carefully, the country could collapse into Civil War, further destabilizing the region. If the new Afghanistan strategy fails, we risk a conflict which will rival Vietnam in its intractability.

It is the political equivalent of riding a unicycle across a high wire, blindfolded, juggling flaming batons, while clowns spray you with a fire hose. The President's calm in the face of everything would be ridiculous if it weren't so reassuring. But at this particular time, fraught with so many perils, it is so important for us to have a leader we can believe in, so that we can concentrate on the everyday problems we all face. Let's all be aware and ready for any opportunity that might arise for us to make sure the President succeeds with all of his goals.



Assembly Member's Report Daniel O'Donnell

Extraordinary economic challenges face our nation and our state. Despite the largest budget deficit in history, the Assembly passed an on-time budget which closed a

projected gap by implementing spending cuts, raising revenue, and maximizing federal stimulus dollars.

New York is one of the first states to enact a budget with federal stimulus money in it. In utilizing the \$24.6 billion slated for our state, New York will create jobs, provide aid to municipalities, prevent detrimental health and education cuts, and strengthen the safety net for the most vulnerable among us—seniors, children and the unemployed.

The federal recovery money is already providing much-needed relief to New Yorkers. Low-and moderate-income individuals and families in New York City will receive additional Food Stamp dollars, \$26.5 million has been dedicated for construction and expansion of community health centers statewide, \$345 million has been announced for energy efficiency programs and clean water infrastructure projects, unemployment benefit checks will see an immediate boost, and billions of dollars will be earmarked for shovel-ready transportation projects that will modernize and build crucial infrastructure while creating jobs.

New York State is leading the way in putting stimulus money to work. For more information, please visit <http://www.recovery.ny.gov/>.



From the Steering Committee Richard Siegel

Reforming Healthcare. Over the next series of newsletters, this column will look at some of the issues that will be addressed as the country looks to healthcare reform. There are many different proposals that have been discussed. Each has positive and negative aspects.

What most of us want to see is Universal Coverage in a Single Payor system. What that means is that everyone in the country has healthcare as an entitlement. It would be paid for by the government. In a single payor system, there is one coverage plan and the reimbursement comes directly from that plan. This would eliminate the administrative costs that many people believe adds 20% to the cost of healthcare

What we have now is a mix of systems. Most people get insurance through their employment. Some purchase health insurance privately. There are many insurance companies that offer plans (Blue Cross, Aetna, etc) and each offers many different coverage packages or plans. At age 65, all citizens receive Medicare (a government paid for insurance program). The poor (based on income and assets) receive Medicaid (a government paid for insurance

plan). Veterans can receive their coverage through the Veterans administration and a series of hospitals and clinic. The disabled may receive Medicaid or Medicare (depending on income and assets). In addition, any person diagnosed with End Stage Renal Disease receives Medicare coverage, regardless of age. The uninsured (citizens and undocumented) can receive their care in public hospitals (often called safety-net hospitals). The public hospitals are the responsibilities of and funded by the states, not by the federal government (though the feds direct some money to these systems).

This year, many states are drastically cutting funding to these public, safety net systems and are accepting the fact that less care will be given to the most vulnerable in our society. (The CBS show "60 Minutes" had a segment on 4/5/09 that showed several people who many die because a safety net system could no longer afford to give them the care they needed). These cuts are occurring at a time when more people are losing jobs and health care insurance which is ironically, when they are most needed.

As you can see, we have a fragmented system that is the most expensive in the world. Many see it as a dysfunctional system. There are huge gaps in who is covered, how it is paid for, and the quality of care provided. It is a DISEASE model, not a WELLNESS model. The systems pay for treatment when we get sick (when there is a medical problem). Most forms of insurance do not pay for preventive care. There is little incentive in our healthcare system for people to act in ways that lessen the chance they will get sick.

Clinton Years. President Clinton tried to reform healthcare in the 1990's. These efforts were sabotaged by the Insurance Companies. One very effective tool was the "Harry and Louise" ads. However, once Hillary's task force was stopped, the insurance companies made dramatic changes that revolutionized healthcare anyway. In the 1990's, most private insurance allowed individuals to go to any provider (doctor, hospital, therapist, etc).. The basic plan usually covered 80% of the costs. Many people also had a 'major medical policy' to cover the 20%.

The insurance companies came up with the concept of managed care. It involved putting together provider networks. The insured were restricted to using a provider in the network (just what Harry and Louise feared). The providers (physicians) fees were cut, but were guaranteed a certain number of patients. The insurance companies made a lot of money by offering employers reduced costs. The result of this initially reduced the increase in the cost of healthcare. It had the potential of providing significantly better coordinated care by designating a primary care physician (PCP) to manage all services provided.

The insurance companies realized they could make even more money by further restricting the care offered by physicians. The concept of prior approval was developed and flourished. So did the concept of 'pre-existing conditions'. As a result of the need for prior approval, an administrator of a healthcare plan was now part of the doctor patient relationship. The pre-existing condition

concept was designed to exclude people that needed the care the most. These money saving efforts undermined many of the supposed benefits of a managed care system. It shifted the concept from managing comprehensive care to managing COSTS. It undermined the overall concept of insurance- shared risk over large pools of individuals- by creating a huge financial advantage to 'cherry pick' healthy (often younger) people to cover.

So we have a system that is the most expensive in the world yet the United States does not rank well in the world on many important metric of health – (e.g. infant mortality). We have a system that provides fragmented care with many gaps. We have a system that enables insurance companies to make very large profits. Our citizens are not satisfied.

Next month's article will review some of the major proposals to fix the healthcare system. Please e-mail any question or comments to healthcare@broadwaydemocrats.org.

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"Letters to the Editor" Policy

The Broadway Democrats welcome letters to the editor. Letters are to be no more than 250 words. Letters will be printed at the discretion of the editor and if space permits. All letters must be signed by the author.

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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.)

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Hold the Date

May 14th

Endorsement Forum: Part 2
(Public Advocate, City Council)

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: _____

Spring Fling -- Sunday, April 19, 2009

On Sunday, April 19, 2009, Broadway Democrats will host its annual Spring Fling, at the popular Upper West Side restaurant 107 West, on Broadway, between 107th and 108th Streets, from 1:00-4:00 p.m. This year, the club will present its Annual Award to State Senator Eric Schneiderman and the Ida and Jesse Frankel Community Service Award to the Granny Peace Brigade. We have a great deal to celebrate this year. We hope that you will take this opportunity to contribute to the success of this event as Benefactor (\$500), Patron (\$300), Sponsor (\$150), Guest (\$125), dues-paid Member (\$50), or dues-paid Senior Member (\$35). E-mail to LuisAngelRoman@aol.com or call 917-757-6058 to RSVP or for further information.

The Broadway Democrats
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New York, NY 10025

FIRST
CLASS

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President: Luis Román

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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