
THE BROADWAY DEMOCRATS

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

November General Meeting

PAROLE REFORM:

Helping our Aging Prison Population

In the last decade, nearly 1,300 New Yorkers died in prison. 56% of these deaths were of people 55 or older, and one-third of those who died behind bars had served at least 15 years. Roughly one half of all New Yorkers who die behind bars are Black.

Proposed legislation would begin to address these and other inequities faced by older inmates.

Confirmed Speakers

Steve Zeidman

Director, Criminal Defense Clinic at CUNY School of Law

José Saldana

Director, Release Aging People from Prison (RAPP)

online, via Zoom

Thursday, November 11

7:30 p.m. Club Business

8:00 p.m. Forum

register in advance at
bit.ly/broadwaydems-nov11

for more information: DistrictLeaders@BroadwayDemocrats.org

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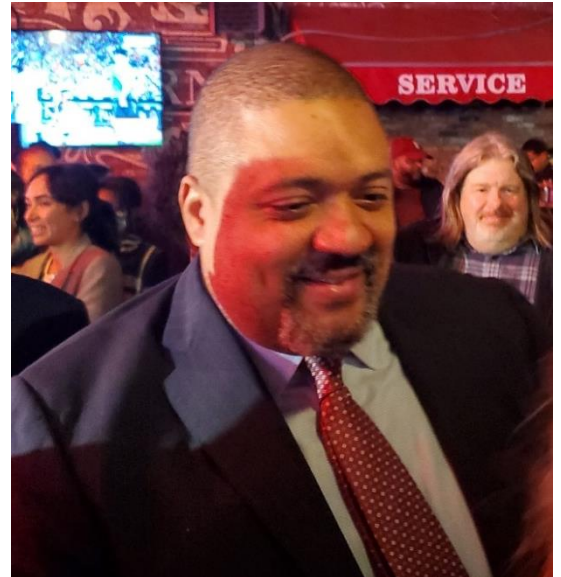
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November 2021

All Our Endorsed Candidates Win!

Congratulations to our winning Manhattan candidates Mark Levine and Alvin Bragg, shown here at their victory party at Harlem Tavern. Our other overwhelming victors were locals Gale Brewer, Shaun Abreu, and Cordell Cleare, and citywides Eric Adams, Jumaane Williams and Brad Lander.

Our local and citywide results were islands in what looks to be a bad national storm. We Democrats will have a lot of thinking and organizing to do next year. But last night, we celebrated!



President's Corner

Joe Nunley

Our Fight for Human Rights for Prisoners

How do we make things better? That's the question we're constantly asking ourselves as political activists for the Democratic Party. Mostly we make things better by getting Democrats elected: Democrats of quality, intelligence, compassion, energy and vision. Democrats who reflect our diversity: White, Black, Latino, Asian, Arab, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Indigenous, male, female, straight, gay, cis-gendered, trans.

We also make things better by supporting groups and movements we believe in. There has been enormous participation by club members in the Black Lives Matter protests and actions. Inspired by this we formed the Racial Justice Action Committee. In the past we campaigned for the Marriage Equality Act. Our own Assemblymember Danny O'Donnell

became a national leader on this issue and we were successful in enacting same sex marriage in New York.

I would hope in the future that we will support other movements. Personally, I support the Sunrise Movement and Code Pink. Sunrise and other environmental groups have already impacted our politics and created much of the climate change and environmental measures in the Build Back Better Act (although it looks like much of it will be stripped away because of two corporate mercenary Democratic senators). Code Pink, which is taking on the military-industrial complex and American wars and imperialism has been less successful but it is awakening people's consciousness.

The Broadway Democrats has advocated for the reform of the criminal justice system and the entire prison system as it now exists. Our September 11 forum on the Less is More bill, spearheaded by Meika Mustrangi, was a great success. For six

months Governor Cuomo refused to sign the bill after it was passed both houses of the state legislature. We mounted a campaign of phone calls and emails and on September 18 Governor Hochul signed this excellent bill which eliminated technical parole violations as a means for re-imprisonment. I'm convinced that our advocacy was a factor in her decision.

On November 11 we will have what promises to be an exciting forum on Elder Parole. Since 2000 the number of prisoners over 50 years old in New York prisons has increased by 90%. Many incarcerated elders have records of positive achievement in prison and are praised by prison officials as peacemakers and role models. "Still", as Laura Whitehorn, a member of Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP) and former prisoner herself, says, "The vast majority of seniors in prison are routinely denied parole and compassionate release by the state." It should be added that the vast majority of these elders are Black and Brown people.

Two bills have been introduced in the state legislature and we should get behind them. The first is the Fair and Timely Parole bill (S.1415A). This bill would change the standard of parole eligibility to consider a person's rehabilitation while in prison instead of basing eligibility on the original crime. Our assemblymember Danny O'Donnell is a co-sponsor in the Assembly version.

The second bill is the Elder Parole Bill (S.15A). This bill would allow any prisoner 55 years old who has served 15 years of their original sentence to go before a parole board, regardless of their original sentence. I like what Melissa Tanis of the Center for Justice has to say:

"These bills would help to mitigate the harm caused by white supremacy and decayed harsh sentences and the dehumanization of incarcerated people by offering meaningful opportunities for people to be released from a system that perpetrates harm trauma and violence."

This will be a fantastic forum on November 11. You don't want to miss it. RAPP (a great organization) will be represented and Steve Zeidman, much in the news of late, will talk to us. Several of the six to whom Cuomo granted clemency on his last day in office are Zeidman's clients, as is David Gilbert, the revolutionary member of the Weather Underground, who served forty years in prison. You won't want to miss it!

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Another Poll Shows Just What We Face in the Midterms

Pat Almonrode

A stunning poll from the nonpartisan Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) found a deep split between those who trust right-wing media and the rest of the nation — and even a divide between those who trust Fox News and those who trust outlets like One America News Network and Newsmax.

The poll found about three in ten Americans believe the 2020 election was stolen from Trump. More than eight in ten who trust Fox News more than any other media outlet have this belief, as do fully 97 percent of those who trust far-right outlets like One America News Network and Newsmax.

Scariest of all, 18 percent say that America has gotten so far off track that "true American patriots may have to resort to violence in order to save our country." The poll found 30 percent of Republicans agree that violence might be warranted, compared with 17 percent of independents — **and even 11 percent of Democrats!** Fully 40 percent of those who buy into the farthest-right media outlets accept the idea that such "patriotic" violence may be necessary.

In an interview with The Hill in response to the PRRI poll, John Pitney, a political scientist at Claremont McKenna College and a former top RNC official during George H.W. Bush's presidency, said the data reflected the wholesale reinvention of the Republican Party.

"Back in the 1980s, Republicans aspired to be the party of hope and opportunity. Now it is the party of blood and soil. The culture war is front and center,

and for many Republicans, it is close to being a literal war, not just a metaphorical one,” Pitney told The Hill.

“I’m not an alarmist by nature, but I’m deeply disturbed by these numbers. I think that we really have to take them seriously as a threat to democracy,” Robert Jones, the founder and chief executive of the Public Religion Research Institute, told The Hill. “There’s a kind of wistfulness and nostalgia, the power of the mythical past. It is an ethno-religious identity, it is a white Christian America and specifically a white Protestant America that people are harkening back to,” Jones said. Pitney agreed, saying “Republicans have a nostalgia for an America that never really existed.” Indeed.

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More than half of those polled, including 55 percent of independent voters and even nine percent of Republicans, said the Republican Party today has been taken over by racists. In comparison, 44 percent said the Democratic Party had been taken over by socialists, a number that has not risen in recent years.

It’s important to remember that Trump’s malignance did not *cause* the slide of the Republican Party into racism and nativism. Trump took advantage of an environment of fear and angst that already existed. “Trump walked onto a stage that was already set. The set was painted, the props were there, he turned out to be considerably effective at using those props and strutting about that stage, but it’s not a stage of his creation,” PRRI’s Jones told The Hill.

And as the midterms approach, it’s also extremely important to remember that the economic anxiety behind these poll numbers seems to be increasing. More than eight in ten told pollsters that costs of housing and everyday expenses are rising faster than their income, and four in ten are concerned about their ability to pay for basic goods. This angst crosses racial and demographic lines, but is felt most strongly by Black and Hispanic Americans. And this exacerbates the cultural

conflicts, Jones pointed out. “If people are feeling like the pie is too small and it’s a zero-sum game, that’s not a great place for political compromise or finding common ground.” And it certainly gives Democrats much to think about as we craft our messaging and outreach for the midterms.

The Public Religion Research Institute poll was conducted from Sept. 16 to 29 among 2,508 adults over the age of 18. It carried a margin of error of plus or minus 2.1 percentage points. For more information, go to <https://tinyurl.com/PRRI-poll>.



Help Pass Bills to Protect Election Integrity!

Susan Crawford

The New York State Legislature is currently considering purchasing new electronic voting machines that will *not allow* for verifiable audits, and that are capable of changing votes. To remedy this, two bills have been introduced that will correct for those deficits. The bill in the Senate (S309) is moving forward. The one in the Assembly (A1115) has been stalled, awaiting Speaker Heastie’s decision to release it from committee.

Several NYS chapters of Indivisible, along with other good government groups, have joined with SMART Elections to coalesce around getting this legislation passed. To understand more fully what the bills address, will correct, what’s wrong with the machines if this legislation is NOT passed, and what you can do go here: <https://smartelections.us/home>.



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We Want To Hear What *You* Have To Say!



Email submissions to the editor (in MS Word, please) at palmonrode@gmail.com.

Please note that we will consider all submissions,
but we reserve the exclusive and final right to determine what to publish.

Send to: The Broadway Democrats, P.O. Box 1099, Cathedral Station, New York, NY 10025

Special Interests: _____

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To join the Broadway Democrats, please fill out the form below and mail with your check (made out to "Broadway Democrats") to the address at the bottom. Welcome!

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; senior dues are \$10.

Membership

The Broadway Democrats Newsletter – November 2021

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 Paula Diamond Román
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Newsletter Editor: Pat Almonrode

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