
THE BROADWAY DEMOCRATS

◆ District Leaders: Curtis Arluck, Paula Diamond Román ◆ President: Mary Peppito ◆

November General Meeting: Getting Ready for 2024

How do we prepare for *yet another*
“most important election of our lifetimes”?
Come learn about volunteer opportunities
and *get organized!*

Speakers:

**Congressman Jerry Nadler
Ny Whitaker & Bill Wolfstahl, Biden+Harris NY
Swing Left (invited)
members of GoBlue 2024**

Please join us on Zoom

Thursday, November 16

Club business 7:00pm

Forum 7:30pm

Register: bit.ly/2023NovForum

for more information: DistrictLeaders@BroadwayDemocrats.org

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President's Corner: Do We Have a Perception Problem?

Mary Peppito, Club President

You may have seen The NY Times/Siena poll released recently that seems to show Trump surging and Biden losing in significant parts of his broad-based coalition (if you're the one person who missed it, the NY Times graphic is below). Although many pundits and others have pointed out that Obama, Bush (Jr.) and Bill Clinton faced similar polls at about the same time before their elections and managed to claw their way back, we shouldn't ignore that dissatisfaction with the economy is a common issue that seems to be putting Trump ahead of Biden in key battleground states.

	<i>Whom they say they voted for in 2020</i>	<i>Whom they support now</i>
<i>Nonwhite, under 45</i>	Biden +39 68-29	Biden +6 49-42
<i>Nonwhite, over 45</i>	Biden +47 73-26	Biden +34 63-29
<i>White, under 45</i>	Biden +5 50-45	Trump +8 50-42
<i>White, over 45</i>	Trump +16 57-41	Trump +17 55-39

Based on New York Times/Siena College polls of 3,662 registered voters conducted Oct. 22 to Nov. 3 in six battleground states. The 2020 vote is based on how respondents say they voted in 2020, though margins are similar to The Times's estimates of the results. Numbers are rounded.

The anecdotal evidence cited in this and other articles on the same topic find that a uniting theme among all voters is that the economy is going in the wrong direction under Biden. In fact, according to the poll, among young voters and voters of color, 59% said the economy is poor and 0% said the economy is excellent.

The fact that leading economic indicators tell a very different story – including the lowest inflation rate of any G7 country, low unemployment, historic job growth and a fast growing economy – does not register with these voters.

In fact, under Biden, in less than three years, employers have created 14 million new jobs, which is stronger than any other president has created in 4 years. Yet disaffected Biden voters don't register that economic boom. The fact that wage growth has been historic, that unions have become stronger and made incredible gains have not turned the tide of economic perception.

According to a recent Yahoo/Ipsos poll (<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/what-americans-get-wrong-about-the-biden-economy-145041189.html>), people don't credit Biden with bringing down the unemployment rate, from 6.3% when he took office to the current record low of 3.7%. Nevertheless, 50% of the sample thought unemployment was about average, while 24% thought that it was unusually HIGH! Similarly disturbing was Biden's performance on the US economy, compared to other developed nations with 38% believing the US was

worse off and 40% thinking it was about the same, despite the U.S. succeeding in bringing down inflation significantly faster.

It may not be surprising that Americans don't feel positive about the economy when they are spending more for eggs, butter and gas due to prices not coming down after the 9% inflation in 2021. Nevertheless, it cannot be dismissed that the president, and therefore all Democrats, have a perception problem on the economic gains under Biden. While the demand for workers has been notoriously strong, and wage gains in many areas have been historic, consumer confidence is registering lower now than it was under covid when there was a 13% unemployment rate.

As President Clinton successfully campaigned, for voters what matters is "the economy stupid." But somehow the economic growth that Biden should get credit for has not been effectively communicated – neither by Biden, Democrats, or the media in general.

And while polls are easily dismissed, the fact that so many voters are willing to ignore the atrocious criminal behavior of TFG who is threatening to destroy democracy is quite worrisome for democracy indeed. As activists and Democrats, we have a lot of work to do.

District Leaders' Reports

Thinking the Unthinkable

Curtis Arluck

I write this having just returned from spending half of Election Day at our biggest poll site at PS 165. Turnout was pretty low, but seemed not as low as it really was, because a lot of people in our neighborhood had gotten into the habit of Early Voting at the very convenient 112th St. and Broadway site. With this site closed, PS 165 suddenly became a much more convenient alternative than our new EV site at 102nd and Amsterdam. We saw many of our old voting friends for the first time since 2018. (The 112th St. site opened in 2021, in 2020 most people did Early Vote at 102nd, 2019 was an off-year election.)

While it was great to sing the praises of our unopposed Council Member Shaun Abreu, outstanding judges such as Leslie Stroth and Lyle Frank, and to urge people to vote for Ballot Proposals aiding upstate Sewer and School Districts, we also had many almost whispered conversations about the Elephant in the Room, what to do about our 2024 Democratic Presidential candidate.

Personally, I think Joe Biden has been a very good President. He's had real successes on the economy, the environment, saving and improving our health care system, rebuilding our country. Just here in New York, he's pushed through funding for the new Hudson River rail tunnel and the extension of the Second Avenue subway to East Harlem and the 125th St. Metro North station. Not just Trump, but *any* Republican President would have killed

these projects; if Chris Christie hadn't been such a pig when he was Governor the Hudson River rail tunnel would now be nearing completion. Biden has had great success getting bills through Congress. He's obviously more honest, intelligent, capable and knowledgeable than Trump; he could also beat him in any kind of contest, be it a word puzzle, a boxing match, the SATs, or a track race. And yet, polls show that voters think he is too old, not capable, and give him no credit for achievements which dwarf Trump's. Voters overwhelmingly agree with Biden on most issues, but polls show they think Trump would do a better job with them. Biden polls especially poorly with core Democratic constituencies such as African Americans, Latinos, and young people.

Much of this is terribly, terribly unfair. But would we rather do the right thing, and have Trump be re-elected, or begin looking around for a candidate who might be more able to win? I don't know, but maybe we should begin to think about this. Perhaps our November 16th meeting, "Looking Ahead to the 2024 Elections," is a good place to start.



Never Black and White

Paula Diamond Román

I wanted to share a few reflections and emotions that I've been battling with since October 7. These are my views, not necessarily the views of the Broadway Democrats, not necessarily my views five years ago or five years from now. Things have been pretty horrific in Israel and Gaza but it is a mistake to frame any of it as black and white, a frequent tendency of Americans.

To begin with, I am a Jew. I was raised by a post-Holocaust, former Communist to be proud to be a Jew, to be educated about what it means to be a Jew, but not to be particularly fond of organized religion (It's the opiate of the masses). I'm a progressive Zionist which basically means that I believe in the right of Jews to return to the homeland, their indigenous land that they were exiled from, as discussed in the Old Testament, resulting in centuries-long Diaspora to various countries around the world. I also believe in the cooperative agriculture movement prevalent in the beginning.

I also believe the following leaders should be ashamed of themselves (in no particular order). I suppose I should start with Benjamin Netanyahu who uses his destructive symbiotic relationship with the terrorist organization Hamas to stay in power. (Israelis have been surrounding his house protesting both his ignorance of the attacks before and how he's handling things after.) Followed by Hamas which hides itself among innocent civilians knowing that either Israel will still try to target Hamas' leaders and weapons stashed, killing those innocent civilians, and earning the world's opprobrium or Israel will worry about collateral damage and allow Hamas to keep bombing them, so win-win for Hamas. But let's not forget the leaders of all the Arab countries who, after everyone traded the Palestinians and 900,000 Mizrahim, or Middle Eastern and North African Jews, didn't rehouse the Palestinians but rather put them in "refugee camps" with no services and no future except to be weaponized by those leaders in the war against Israel. (More than 1.5 million Palestinians live in 58 "official" refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. 450,000 Palestinians live in refugee camps in Lebanon alone.)

I'm disturbed by some ordinary, everyday people as well. The organization visiting universities, including Columbia, with a truck flashing information in order to "doxx" some Gaza-oriented student protesters, identifying them as antisemites and releasing their private information, are putting children in danger. The people gleefully ripping down the posters with pictures of the people, Israeli and American, who Hamas has kidnapped need to think about never sending their children to Burning Man or Coachella. I have a problem with the people who claim any criticism of Israel is antisemitism, but I also have a problem with BDS and others who have no similar concerns about other countries causing as much or more damage yet refuse to acknowledge that some of this IS antisemitism. (BTW, the comparison of Israel to the white South African apartheid

government makes it clear that there are many at the helm of BDS who do **not** believe in Israel's right to exist.) I have an even bigger problem with those who demand that Israel participate in a ceasefire but say nothing about Hamas doing the same. I have many problems with Congressman Rashida Tlaib's positions on the Middle East but she should **not** need additional security at this time. (Same with the rise of attacks on Jews, Muslims, and Sikhs and the Palestinian restaurant downtown that is being put out of business.)

Lastly, the protesters at "Support Gaza" rallies carrying signs that "From the river to the sea" are not there to support Gaza; they are there to call an end to the existence of Israel. The protesters cheering on Hamas slitting Israeli children's throats, raping Israeli grandmothers, and calling for American Jews to have their throats slit are not there to support Gaza; they're there because they want to hurt Jews. They are why we keep thinking about Hitler's stormtroopers. I've spent the last weeks listening to people who are neighbors and political friends justify Hamas' actions because of Israel's perceived and actual treatment of the Palestinians; I wonder just a little what they would have mentioned in passing conversations to justify the actions of the Nazis. People are screaming about slitting my throat and my neighbors can come up with justifications for it?

When it comes to the Middle East, I'm only clear on a few things. The ceasefire needs to be on both sides. All the leaders of the Middle East need to take responsibility for making the lives of the Palestinians better, including on the part of Egypt providing support for opening the Rafah Passage. Israel needs to turn the water and electricity back on, and let in more reputable, trustworthy relief organizations with food and supplies. All sides need to think of all the children as their own.



Constitutional Notice

At a Special Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Broadway Democrats, held November 1, 2023, the following changes to the Club's Constitution were suggested for approval by the membership:

(1) Article V, Section 2, Terms of Office and Eligibility

Delete the last two sentences so that the Article reads:

"The Club's officers shall be elected at the annual meeting of the Club each year and shall serve until

and through the next year’s annual meeting and until a successor shall have been elected and shall have qualified.”

(2) Article V, Section 4d

In the last sentence insert the word “oral” so that the sentence shall read:

“The Treasurer shall render an oral account of the financial condition of the Club at each meeting of the Steering Committee and at the meetings of the membership.”

These changes will be put before the membership for approval pursuant to Article XVI of the Constitution.

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Rahimi: Will SCOTUS Reap What it has Sown?

Pat Almonrode

On November 7 the Court heard argument in *United States v. Rahimi*, in which the Justices must decide whether the Second Amendment allows the government to take guns away from those convicted of domestic violence. But more than that, *Rahimi* is the first major Second Amendment case to reach the Court since Justice Thomas’s 2021 decision in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen*. The *Bruen* case notoriously held that restrictions on the right to bear arms are presumptively unconstitutional unless they are consistent with the nation’s “historical tradition of firearm regulation.” Thus, as Jay Willis puts it in *Slate*, “The practical question [in *Rahimi*] is whether the court meant what it said in *Bruen* so literally that any legislative attempt to address America’s ongoing gun violence crisis must bow to whatever Clarence Thomas imagines that James Madison would have thought about it nearly 250 years ago.”

Fortunately, from the arguments on Tuesday it seems unlikely that a majority of the Justices will embrace a “strong” reading of *Bruen*. As highlighted by *Rahimi*’s case, to read *Bruen* strongly would be to hold that because the Framers did not disarm domestic abusers, modern lawmakers are powerless to do anything about a problem that kills an average of 70 women per month. But of course, modern firearms are much deadlier than what the Framers had at hand, and the fact that the Framers did not disarm abusers in 1791 does not mean they would not have done so if abusers in 1791 murdered as many people as they do in 2023. And from their comments at the argument, at least Gorsuch and

Roberts among the conservatives seem squeamish about ignoring those facts.

In its brief existence *Bruen* has shown itself to be entirely unworkable in the lower courts. Judges are not professional historians, and so are ill-equipped to determine what is or is not “consistent” with the “historical tradition” of firearm regulation, especially since the AK-47 and its kin were blessedly unknown to the Founders. Indeed, *Bruen* – “a jurisprudential train wreck that Clarence Thomas slapped on Supreme Court letterhead while putting together his luxury vacation plans for the summer” (Willis) – is ripe to be restricted, and *Rahimi* might be a first step in that process. Or the Court may just end up holding that the “historical tradition” accommodates disarming people found to be “dangerous” – creating yet another interpretive problem and leaving *Bruen* intact to continue to wreak its havoc in the lower courts.

In any event, as Willis warns, situations like this “will occasionally happen as long as the court is controlled by a six-justice conservative supermajority: When there is nothing to check Thomas and Company’s enthusiasm for repackaging Federalist Society dogma as constitutional law, sometimes they will make a mess.” And when SCOTUS makes a mess, the clean-up on First Street is usually a long slog.

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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 2023

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P.O. Box 1099
Cathedral Station
New York, NY 10025

Assemblymember: Daniel O'Donnell
District Leaders:
Curtis Arluck
Paula Diamond Román
President: Mary Peppito
Newsletter Editor: Pat Almonrode

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