



December 2014

## Staten Island Democratic Association

*est. 1961 as Staten Island's reform Democratic Club*

*www.sidems.org*

At our Next Meeting:



### • **Robert Holst**

Middle Class

Action Project

## • **Presentation of Executive Committee Candidates**



Tuesday, December 16, 2014, 8:00 P.M.  
Karl's Klipper, 40 Bay Street, 718-720-4442



## Editorial Policy

Items for publication must be submitted to the newsletter no later than the last Friday of the month before the meeting. Please send items to: [cmAXBauer@yahoo.com](mailto:cmAXBauer@yahoo.com).

Unless explicitly stated, the views herein are those of the authors and not of S.I.D.A.

*Chris Bauer, Editor*  
(917) 576-9248

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*"I hold it, that a little rebellion, now and then, is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms are in the physical."*

*- Thomas Jefferson*  
1787

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### S.I.D.A. Executive Committee

President..... Tom Shcherbenko	Member at-Large .....	Roy Moskowitz
Vice President .....	Joann Olbrich	Ex Officio.....Michelle Akyempong
Executive Secretary .....	Mark Herman	Ex Officio.....Dennis Brown
Corresponding & Recording Secretary .....	Marie Dwyer	Ex Officio.....Gary Carsel
Treasurer .....	Bonita Rothman	Ex Officio.....Paul Cinquemani
Social Secretary .....	Liz Price	Ex Officio.....Belinda Dixon
Member at-Large .....	Carl Chew	Ex Officio.....Rosemarie Mangano
Member at-Large .....	Susan Chew	Ex Officio.....John Mastellone
Member at-Large .....	Bobby Digi	Ex Officio.....Richard McMahon
Member at-Large .....	Mary Kain	Ex Officio.....John Sollazzo

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## S.I.D.A. President's Statement

December 2015

Last month long-time club member David Jones was charged with grand larceny by a Special Prosecutor in Staten Island criminal court. The prosecutor alleged that David was in criminal possession of \$5,000 that he received for his services to the Debi Rose 2009 City Council campaign. For those of us who witnessed how hard David worked in that campaign, as he has in numerous causes, the accusation was ludicrous and insulting.

Appearing alongside David in court was David Thomas, the Treasurer for the same campaign. Mr. Thomas was charged with various counts of fraud stemming from his work on that campaign. A related lawsuit was settled over four years ago, about the same time that an investigation by U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara into the campaign was dropped without any charges -- the same hard-hitting prosecutor known for his investigations of the Moreland Commission and State Senators Libous and Golden.

Why was a Special Prosecutor adamant to bring criminal charges -- where no crime was ever committed? After both men were released without bail, the prosecutor told reporters that he felt that the New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB) wasn't doing a thorough job -- the same CFB that refused matching funds last year for club-endorsed candidate John Liu. (I can personally attest to the extreme thoroughness of the CFB in determining eligibility: they scrutinize every receipt and demand accountability before releasing any funds.)

Sixteen days later, the grand jury investigating the death of Eric Garner refused to make any indictments. For many of us, it seemed nonsensical that the same justice system which accused David Jones of stealing money -- that he worked for -- could not find evidence of a crime in the death of Mr. Garner. The same justice system which continues to harass activists from the 2009 election of Debi Rose; despite the acknowledged thoroughness of the CFB, the determination of Mr. Bharara, and settling a lawsuit, a grand jury is still 'investigating' the campaign. For some of us, it seems that Staten Island has joined the America where innocent African-Americans are sent to prison and Caucasian killers are set free.

As progressives, there are a few things we must remember: Recognize the problem: as Mayor de Blasio said, these problems are the result of centuries of racism; and we should be clear that racism did not end with the Civil War or with the Civil Rights Act or with the election of President Obama.

Respond to the demonization of victims of our society: just as we were horrified when Giuliani dismissed Patrick Dorismond as "no altar boy," we should make it clear that references to Michael Brown or Eric Garner as 'violent' or a 'thug' are distractions from the necessity to change the system -- if not outright fabrications.

Separate the message from the messenger: whether or not someone dislikes Rev. Al Sharpton can not detract from the fact that four months ago he asked that if District Attorney Donovan could not make an arrest in the death of Eric Garner, he should allow the federal government to investigate.

And specifically to Staten Island, we must run an intense political campaign against D.A. Donovan in 2015; we cannot allow this dual-justice system to continue unchallenged. But solutions will not come from elections alone. We need to have conversations with people who believe that the Mayor was “siding with criminals” when he expressed disappointment with the grand jury. We need to show support for Councilwoman Debi Rose, David Thomas and David Jones against the Special Prosecutor. And we must do whatever we can to prevent another needless death of someone in police custody.

- Tom Shcherbenko



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## Middle Class Action Project

*Robert Holst of the Middle Class Action Project will be a guest speaker at our December 16 General Membership Meeting. The following was taken from their website <http://tmcap.wordpress.com/about/>.*



**W**e are a group that is committed to raising the awareness of the middle class on the issues that affect them the most. We will Strive to inspire people to action through thoughtful opinion and informed insight on current issues.

In October of 2011 the idea for a group that advocated and or worked on behalf of middle class issues was envisioned at a local political club’s awards night in Staten Island by two union members. They were at the dinner in support of their unions and the labor award recipient that evening. These two blue collar working guys were John Kubinski proud member of U.F.C.W. local 1500 since 1989 and Robert Holst proud member of I.B.E.W. Local Union #3 since 1996.

At first a club for union members in Staten Island from all unions was the goal. To bring everyone together and discuss what is important to us as rank and file members and how best we could as individuals fight for ourselves. Realizing the size of the task we were taking on we decided to ask others for help. A meeting at the local diner in January of 2012 brought Steve Spano also a proud member of IBEW Local Union #3. Ideas were thrown around at that meeting and the club turned into a group.

Not only made up of union members but anybody that considered themselves middle class and wanted to help inform others like themselves about issues that were important to us. A group made up of middle class workers that would do what they could to wake up the members of the middle class that were not perhaps aware of the issues that were having an effect on their daily lives. Staten Island presented a unique situation to try and set this up. Staten island has the highest union density rate than any other county in the United States yet consistently votes for candidates that would not be considered “friendly” to organized labor in our opinion.

Realizing that the job of advocating and speaking for working people was already being done by the A.F.L.-C.I.O. and its individual unions we decided we could be more effective in supporting them (organized labor) in their mission by being a group that would try and educate

working people about the various issues and how their government works and what each individual's role is in it. It was our contention that policemen, firemen, and teachers were not the reason the economy was in trouble. But it was the greedy organizations that wanted more of the pie for themselves. That through subverting our democracy with more money than any working person will attain in a lifetime the voice of the average working guy was being drowned out. The Middle Class Action Project (or MCAP as we have come to call it) was born.

It is our hope to make the middle class aware of what is being done to them by corporations, politicians, and the greedy alike. To dispel myths about unions and get people involved in fighting for their own futures. We hope to spark conversation, and get the middle class to make informed decisions about their own futures. After all that hope they are inspired enough to take action on their own behalf.



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## Letters

*We in S.I.D.A. like to make our views known. The following are some of the letters written by S.I.D.A. members that have appeared in print. Unless otherwise indicated, all letters were in the Staten Island Advance and/or posted on the Advance's website www.silive.com. Unless explicitly stated, the views herein are those of the authors and are not the views of S.I.D.A.*



Online November 10, 2014

Printed November 13, 2014

### **House Vote is Needed to Pass Immigration Bill**

**W**e will not have to wait for the new Congress to be seated to see if the Republicans in the House are willing to work with Democrats to get things done in Washington.

The House will have to pass by the end of the year, the bi-partisan comprehensive immigration bill that passed the Senate or the legislation will die.

Polling done during the recent congressional race showed that 61 percent of voters in this congressional district, including a majority of Republicans, support comprehensive immigration reform that includes a path to citizenship.

The Senate bill does not grant amnesty. It sets a 13-year path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. The path to citizenship includes background checks and paying back taxes.

The 13-year clock to citizenship does not start until six months after additional fencing has been built and additional Border Patrol agents have been deployed along our southern border.

The *Advance* needs to ask Congressman Grimm and all those whose names have been raised as possible candidates if a special election becomes necessary, whether they support having the House vote on the Senate bill before the end of the year and whether they would vote for the bill.

- *Richard Reichard*



Online December 4, 2014  
Printed December 7, 2014

### **Let V.A. Docs Prescribe Medical Marijuana**

Democratic Congressman Blumenauer and Republican Congressman Rohrabacher have submitted legislation, the Veterans Equal Access Act, which will allow V.A. medical personnel to recommend medical marijuana for veterans in those states that allow medical marijuana.

Studies have found evidence that marijuana can help treat post-traumatic stress disorder (P.T.S.D.) and pain.

Over 20 percent of the 2.8 million Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans are suffering from P.T.S.D. and depression.

Every day, 22 veterans take their own life.

Almost 1 million veterans receive opioids to treat painful conditions.

Between 2001 and 2012, prescriptions written by V.A. medical personnel for four opiates, hydrocodone, oxycodone, methadone and morphine, surged by 270 percent.

A 2011 study found that V.A. patients have a fatal overdose rate that is almost twice that of the general public.

A study released in August found that states that have legalized medical marijuana saw a drop in overdoses from prescription painkillers by nearly 25 percent.

We should support studies that look into the use of medical marijuana to treat P.T.S.D., depression and pain. However, while these studies are being conducted, we should not be getting between veterans and their V.A. doctors.

Therefore we should support passage of the Veterans Equal Access Act.

- *Richard Reichard*



## November Minutes

### **General Meeting November 18, 2014**

**P**resident Shcherbenko called the meeting to order at 8:05 pm. Joann reported that Oran Brown had been hospitalized and was recovering at Seaview Rehabilitation. She urged members to go visit Oran and she asked them to sign the get well card. Sally Jones thanked members for their recent support in regards to her husband David.

#### **Vice President's Report**

Vice President Joann Olbrich presented highlights from the Executive Committee meeting held on November 6. Joann also gave kudos to Liz Price for all her years of work and dedication while serving as the club's Social Secretary. She added that Liz will not be seeking re-election this year.

#### **Social Secretary's Report**

Social Secretary Liz Price thanked Joann for all the nice accolades. She also reminded members that the All Dems Holiday Party is scheduled for December 11, 7:00 – 11:00 p.m., at Da Noi Restaurant. The price per person is \$50. All the Staten Island Democratic clubs are participating.

#### **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Bonnie Rothman reported a balance on October 9, 2014 of \$12,274.00 and a balance on November 6, 2014 of \$12,997.42. Bonnie reported that she still has to pay for the Banquet Journal. President Shcherbenko needs to speak with the printer about the bill.

#### **Executive Secretary's Report**

Executive Secretary Mark Herman spoke about the results of the recent election, especially the Congressional race. He feels it's important to try to recruit new club members.

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Guest Speaker**

Sarab Abu Adib Al-Jiakli of the National Alliance for Syria is a Syrian-American spoke about the history of Syria and the problems that led to the revolution. He explained that Syria has been oppressed for 40 yrs. under the Al-Assad regime. He also explained that the National Alliance for Syria is a network of Syrian activists, community groups and organizations all dedicated to the creation and development of a democratic Syria free from Sectarian privileges, a nation to represent the people equally.

He said that the National Alliance's mission is grounded in the idea that the Syrian people, regardless of their location, background or connections have a moral obligation to support the revolution and the development of a new Syria and to provide to the Syrian ex-pat community a national framework for collective action; to connect individuals, organizations and networks working towards a free and democratic Syria and act as a mouthpiece for the democratic aspirations of those within Syria. He added that their work focuses on mobilizing the community, raising awareness and creating influence.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Guest Speaker**

Ghanim Khalil of Iraq Veterans against the War was born in England and was in the Army National Guard and the Marines. He is critical of US foreign policy. He said he spoke out before the Iraqi War started and said it would lead to more disaster.

Mr. Khalil feels we have become detached from old school learning and that we debate solving complex problems through the sound bites we receive. He feels we should go back to do real academic research and form solutions. He explained that the mission of Iraq Veterans against the war is to build a service member and veteran led movement that ends militarism by transforming ourselves, military culture and American society.

The organization functions as a community built by their collective experiences as Global War on Terror veterans. As former and current members of the armed forces, they know the values currently underpinning American military culture dehumanize our so called enemies, as well as ourselves.

Mr. Khalil said that militarism is a big problem in the world and that to counter it we have to humanize people and treat each other well. Iraq Veterans vision is to strive for a world free of unjust war - a world without the political and economic conditions allowing militarism to exist, and without structural forces pushing our youth, our poor and those facing incarceration into the military.

Mr. Khalil explained that the process is to change policies before politicians are elected and start to make changes at the local level and build from that point. After his presentation, Mr. Khalil took questions from several members.

President Shcherbenko announced that it was Soji Oluwole's birthday. Maria Vella brought a tray of cookies and we sang "Happy Birthday"

President Shcherbenko urged members to make sure their dues are up to date, so they will be eligible to vote in the club election in January.

## **Nominating Committee Report**

Nominating Committee Chair Susan Chew thanked all the members of the Nominating Committee and mentioned that the names and the report are on page 7 of the November newsletter. Susan also announced that anyone not on the slate that wants to run for office, can run by petition. You must bring the petition to the December meeting and give it to Corresponding & Recording Secretary Marie Dwyer. She also mentioned that candidates running for office will give short presentations at the December meeting. President Shcherbenko announced the slate of candidates they put together.

## New Business

South Shore Democratic Club President Rosemarie Cavanaugh mentioned that she would like to have a fundraiser to help David Jones and information will follow in the future. She also handed out invitations to the South Shore club's annual luncheon, "Sparkle of Winter," scheduled for January 4, 2015. Liz Price made a motion for the club to buy one ticket to send President Shcherbenko to the South Shore's luncheon. Motion was seconded by Mary Kain and passed unanimously. Mary Kain made a motion to purchase a full page journal ad for \$125. Someone made a friendly amendment that it was \$150. Mary accepted the friendly amendment and the motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 p.m.

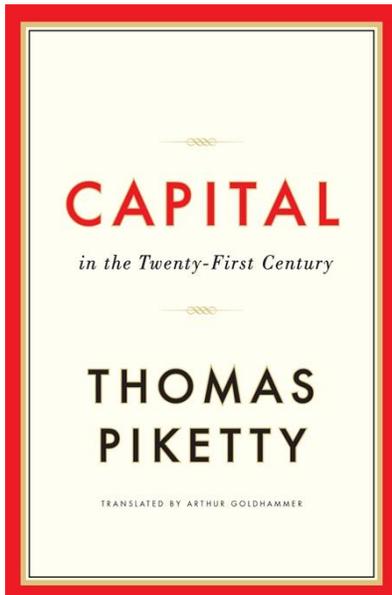
*Respectfully submitted*  
*Marie Dwyer*  
*Corresponding &*  
*Recording Secretary*  
Happy Holidays to everyone!



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## Members Recommend

*In Members Recommend S.I.D.A. members let us know which books or other things they have enjoyed.*



Piketty's much discussed work is likely to remain one of the most popular books (by sales) that most will not actually read. This is due in part to its length of 650 pages, and also the dryness of its content. Reading economics is not everyone's idea of a good time. Although the author means to make his work broadly accessible, some of the technical points require at least a passing knowledge of undergraduate economics.

The central theme is that wealth inequality naturally flows from capitalism and the less capital flows are regulated the greater the inevitable inequality - hardly an original idea. What gives the book its heft, and arguably what ties right leaning economists into knots, is the depth of his macro-economic research.

Piketty is also an historian and goes to great pains to collect big data in order to assess trends over as much time as the data allows. For example, wealth inequality in the rich countries of Europe, Japan and North America grew dramatically from 1810 to the start of WW I, and then decreased markedly until the end of WW II owing to the "shocks to capital" that diminished most large fortunes during those two generations. Unprecedented worldwide economic growth since has resulted in a resumption of the rich getting proportionately richer - especially in the United States. Just before the outbreak of WW I the top 1% controlled more than 60% of all wealth in Europe. Wealth divergence is substantially lower in the EU now (due in part to higher historic tax rates) but is widening, and widening faster in the US as we dramatically lower taxes.

Piketty explains wealth inequality with a deceptively simple formula:  $R > G$ . “R” represents the historic average annual return on capital (4% to 5%) and “G” the rate of growth and productivity as represented in wages (rarely higher than 1%). In other words, the average wage earner may do marginally better over time but the individual with a billion \$ in investments will grow their wealth much faster. Left unchecked, this dynamic will lead to ever greater wealth inequality until ‘capital’ has less value – a very long time! While other economists such as Robert Reich and Paul Krugman make the same point, Piketty successfully demonstrates how much 20<sup>th</sup> century economic history is anomalous and therefore can’t be the only basis for effective public policy.

The response he proposes is a worldwide progressive tax on capital. While utopian, this solution will be technologically feasible if central banks and their affiliates choose to collaborate with their respective governments. Some say this is redistributive and socialistic. Well, it is. But, if nothing stems growing wealth inequality, history suggests the question for the 1% may become, “How high do I need to build my walls?”

- Phil Jonas

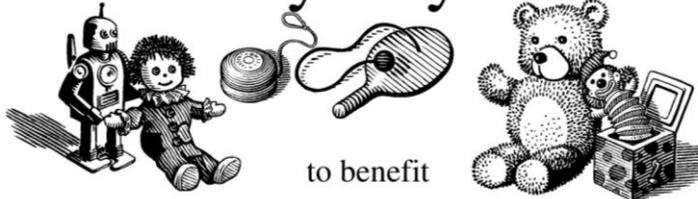


## Bulletin Board




Assemblyman Matthew J. Titone’s  
8<sup>th</sup> Annual

# Holiday Toy Drive



to benefit

**Community Health Action of Staten Island  
& Other Local Non-Profit Organizations**



New, unwrapped toys only, please,  
for ages newborn to 18.

**Drop off**  
at Assemblyman Titone’s District Office,  
853 Forest Avenue  
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Mon- Fri.  
(calling ahead recommended)  
**by December 15, 2014**  
718-442-9932



### Bulletin Board Policy



Items posted on the Bulletin Board are done so at the request of an S.I.D.A. member and are for informational purposes only. A posting on the Bulletin Board does not imply endorsement by S.I.D.A.

# A Sparkle of Winter

## *The South Shore Democratic Club*

*presents...*

### A Sparkle of Winter

*Sunday, January 4, 2015*

**Joann Olbrich**  
**Chair**

*Office Manager SI Borough of  
Engineers Office for DOT.  
Chair ~ State Adversary Chair for  
NYS Women Inc.  
VP Staten Island Democratic Club*

**John Kubinski**  
**Co Chair**

*Front end Manager, at Shop rite.  
Co Founder of the Middle  
Class Action Project.  
United Food & Commercial Workers  
Union Local #1500*

**Mark F Torkelson**

*US Postal Service  
Mail Carrier  
Postman*

**Peter Tucciarelli**

*District #3  
NYC Sanitation man  
Shop Stewart*

**Cynthia O' Donnell**

*Kindergarten Teacher  
(14yrs) at PS #23  
Grade Leader - Consultation  
Committee Member*

**John Trentacosti**  
**Danny Whitman**

*NYFD Fireman Ladder #86  
Fire Fighter  
Explorer Advisory Post 6015*

**Pat Kane ~ Nurse, RN**

*Member of NYSNA Nurses  
The Long Term recovery organization. Active, SI Community and  
Interface community, Mental Health  
and Spiritual Care Committee. Profession ~ Open Heart Operating Room.*

**Mistress of Ceremonies**

*State Senator Diane Savino*

**Keynote Speaker**

*Honorable Democratic Chairman John Gulino*

**Dinner Chair & Co-Chairs**

*Joann Olbrich and John Kubinski*

**Little Miss Democrat**

*Madison Cirelli*

**Music by**

*Vincent Mangano, Tenor Sax/Key Board  
Antonio Franciosa, Baritone Sax/Keyboard*

**Sunday January 4, 2015**

*at The Historic Old Bermuda Inn*

*501 Veterans Rd W., Staten Island, N.Y. 10509*

*One in the Afternoon to Five in the Evening*

*Guest \$65 per person, \$75 at the door*

*Please make checks payable to South Shore Democratic Association*

*American Express will also be accepted*

*A tribute to Troop #4*

For more information contact Rosemary Mangano at 917-881-8401 or [roepower1@gmail.com](mailto:roepower1@gmail.com)

Kindly Respond on or before December 15, 2013

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ will attend \_\_\_\_\_ will not attend

\$65 per person / \$75 at the door

Checks Payable to: South Shore Democratic Club  
(American Express accepted)

R.S.V.P. - Rosemarie Mangano

65 Memphis Ave. S.I.N.Y. 10312

(roepower1@gmail.com)

**The South Shore Democratic Club**  
***The Old Bermuda Inn***  
**301 Veterans Rd W., Staten Island, NY 10309**

Please indicate the type of program page you would like to purchase.

- ◇ Back Cover (7" x 7") ..... \$250
- ◇ Front Inside Cover (7" x 7") ..... \$175
- ◇ Back Inside Cover (7" x 7") ..... \$175
- ◇ Gold Star (7" x 7") ..... \$300
- ◇ Silver Star (7" x 7") ..... \$200
- ◇ Full Page (7" x 7") ..... \$150
- ◇ Half Page (3.5" x 7") ..... \$75
- ◇ Quarter Page (3.5" x 3.5") ..... \$50

Please attach your camera ready artwork or business card advertisements on the reverse of this page. Ads may also be submitted by e-mail to roepower1@gmail.com

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Company Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

*\*For your convenience, we accept American Express.*

Amount Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ Check or Credit Card \_\_\_\_\_  
Type \_\_\_\_\_  
Billing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Security Code (3 or 4 digits) \_\_\_\_\_

*Make checks payable to: South Shore Democratic Club  
Please return in the enclosed envelope.*

***Deadline for ad submissions is December 15, 2013***

December 16, 2014	January 20, 2015
<b>General Meeting</b> <b>8:00p.m.</b> <b>Karl's Klipper, 40 Bay Street</b>	<b>Annual Meeting</b> <b>8:00p.m.</b> <b>Karl's Klipper, 40 Bay Street</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robert Holst of the Middle Class Action Project</li> <li>• Presentation of Candidates for Executive Committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jenifer Rajkumar of Ready for Hillary</li> <li>• Executive Committee Election</li> </ul>

**It's Time to Join or Renew Your S.I.D.A. Membership!**

To become a member, renew membership, or make a donation, call Bonita Rothman at (917) 596-3724, or complete and return the coupon. Voting privileges begin 45 days after joining.

✂

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2015 DUES	DONATION
_____ \$15 - Family	_____ \$5
_____ \$10 - Individual	_____ \$50
_____ \$5 - Senior, Student, or Unemployed	_____ \$100
	_____ Other _____

\_\_\_\_\_ Check (payable to: S.I.D.A.)    \_\_\_\_\_ Cash

I understand SIDA is a Democratic Party club. I (or we, if this is a Family Membership) am (are) at least 17 years of age and an enrolled Democrat, or intend to enroll as a Democrat upon becoming eligible.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt # \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to S.I.D.A. and send to: S.I.D.A.  
P.O. Box 140371  
Staten Island, NY 10314-0371

For internal use only:  
 Comp: \_\_\_\_\_ Received \$: \_\_\_\_\_ Deposited \$: \_\_\_\_\_ Entered Sht: \_\_\_\_\_ Computer: \_\_\_\_\_