



April 2010

Staten Island Democratic Association

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www.sidems.org

At our Next Meeting:



- The Historic Health Care Vote and Where Do We Go from Here?
Dan Cantor of the Working Families Party

- Hydrofracking Position Paper
- Sally Jones Nuclear Q&A
- Endorsement Votes:
 - State Senator Diane Savino
 - Assemblymember Michael Cusick
 - Assemblymember Janele Hyer-Spencer
 - Assemblymember Matt Titone

**Tuesday, April 20, 2010, 8:00 P.M.,
at 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.

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

*Chris Bauer, Editor
(718) 273-3796*

S.I.D.A. President's Message

In 1983, a bipartisan deal that increased social security taxes, taxed some social security benefits and gradually raised the retirement age to 67, extended the solvency of Social Security. However due to the current recession which has caused high unemployment, early retirements, and stagnant wages, social security tax receipts are down. For the first time since the 1983 deal, Social Security will pay out \$29 billion more in benefits than it collects in taxes.

The Congressional Budget Office is projecting that Social Security will for the next three years; pay out more in benefits than it collects in taxes. Then after posting small surpluses for two years, will return to yearly deficits in 2016.

Even though Social Security is paying out more in benefits than it collects in taxes, its balance sheet continues to grow because it collects \$120 billion a year in interest on the \$2.5 trillion in debt held by the federal government. The interest payments add to the national debt, which is now \$12.5 trillion.

However it is projected that later this decade, interest earned will not be sufficient to make up for the shortfall between taxes collected and benefits paid. At that point the Trust Funds will need to redeem the bonds held by the federal government. In 2009 the Social Security Trustees estimated that by 2037, the Trust Funds will have redeemed all the bonds held by the federal government and will then only be able to pay 76% of scheduled benefits.

What is needed to address Social Security's solvency issue is a bipartisan agreement like the one that was reached in 1983. However given the current political climate, where the Republicans have adopted "just say no" as a campaign strategy, addressing the solvency of Social Security has become a much more politically difficult thing to do.

Our position should be to press for the establishment of a bipartisan commission to address the solvency issue. Although 2037 may now appear to be far off in the future, the longer we wait the much more difficult and costly the solution will be.

Sincerely,

Richard Reichard

President, S.I.D.A.

Dan Cantor, Working Families Party

Dan Cantor, the Executive Director of the Working Families Party, will be a guest speaker at our April 20 General Membership Meeting to discuss the topic: The Historic Health Care Vote and Where Do We Go from Here.

Biography

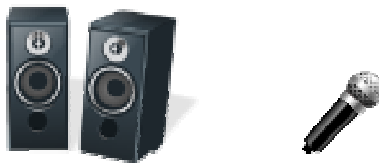
Dan Cantor is the Executive Director of the Working Families Party - New York's progressive third party. The WFP uses fusion voting to hold politicians from the major parties accountable to progressives and working people. Since its founding ten years ago, Cantor has helped lead the WFP's successful campaigns to raise New York's minimum wage, to reform the state's draconian Rockefeller Drug Laws, keep mass transit affordable and reliable, and prevent devastating state budget cuts by raising taxes on the wealthy.

Cantor and the WFP have also helped to elect dozens of progressive candidates across New York, from City Council members to Mayors, state legislators and Members of Congress.

Cantor is a frequent commentator on economic policy and New York City and State politics. Before going to work at the WFP, Cantor was a community organizer in Texas, Arkansas, and Missouri, a union organizer in Detroit and New Orleans, and a political organizer with the predecessor to the WFP (the "New Party"). He also served as Labor Coordinator for Rev. Jesse Jackson's 1988 Presidential campaign.

He has written numerous articles on American politics, and is co-author, with Juliet Schor, of a book on US foreign policy called "Tunnel Vision." Cantor was born and raised in Levittown, Long Island. He began working in politics at age 10 during the 1965 Levittown Library Board election campaign of his mother.

Cantor lives in Brooklyn, New York with his wife and two wonderful kids.



Do you have a microphone and speaker that you would loan to the Club to use at our general meetings? If yes, email the Club at islanddems@aol.com or bring it to the next meeting. Thanks

Hydrofracking Position Paper

The S.I.D.A. Issues Committee put together the following paper on hydraulic fracturing. Susan Chew was the primary author, and Loretta Prisco, Bonnie Rothman, Paul Scublinsky, and Richard Reichard helped edit it. The paper will be presented for an endorsement vote at the April 20 General Membership Meeting.

Hydraulic Fracturing Threatens New York City's Water with Contamination

New York City's water system, one of three in the country exempt from filtration because of our pristine water and NYC's maintenance, will be contaminated from the proposed drilling by hydraulic fracturing (hydro fracking) for natural gas in the Marcellus Shale, a geological formation in New York State. The Marcellus Shale includes the New York City watershed and spans three other states. The 1997 NYC Watershed Memorandum of Agreement recognizes the need for clean water for the state, but particularly for the NYC watershed.

What is hydraulic fracturing? And why is it dangerous?

Hydraulic fracturing is an unconventional vertical and horizontal drilling process in which toxic chemical mixes are forced thousands of feet into the shale to release natural gas. Chemicals travel to ground water, streams and reservoirs. There is no way to treat the potential billions of gallons of wastewater per year, a by-product of drilling. The federal Energy Act of 2005 exempted the fluid used in this process from the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). Therefore, fracking fluid is unregulated under the SDWA and supersedes any state and local attempt to regulate these fluids.

The Marcellus Shale has a high naturally-occurring radioactive material content (NORM): radium-226, a derivative of uranium, which gives off radon, has been discovered in wastewater from drilling, and is 267 times higher than the safe limit for release into the environment and thousands of times higher than the safe limit for drinking (Abraham Lustgarten for *Propublica*, timesunion.com, November 9, 2009).

In addition to using, per well drilled, millions of gallons of ground water, a precious commodity, fracking fluids are "proprietary": the producers are not required to disclose the chemicals nor the chemical formulations. Currently, in the U.S. Congress, bills H. R. 2776 and S. 1215, in committee, would remove the exemption of fracking fluids from the SDWA and mandate that the chemical contents be made known to the public. Some of the chemicals presently used in fracking have been found to be "endocrine disruptors" which cause learning disabilities and testicular and breast cancer.

The Public Service Commission (PSC), which regulates natural gas transmission, has done no evaluation of the environmental impacts of the amount of transmission lines and infrastructure that will be needed to bring the gas to market. The PSC has not evaluated the impact on water, wildlife habitat nor air quality.

The NYC Department of Health's concerns for disposal of radioactive wastewater from drilling has been brought to the attention of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), which has not addressed this problem. Currently, there are no wastewater treatment facilities which can process radioactive waste in New York. Treated by municipal plants, the wastewater is discharged back into public waterways. Filtering only leaves sludge with higher concentrations of radioactive materials, and sludge accumulates in pipes and waste pits at drilling sites. *Contaminated drilling equipment emits higher levels of radiation than wastewater.*

Governmental Studies and Actions

All governmental studies of this drilling process agree on its many negative impacts. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said that it had serious reservations about whether gas drilling in the NYC watershed is consistent with the vision of long-term maintenance of a high-quality, unfiltered water supply and will now conduct a scientific study, likely to include New York State (*Propublica* March 18, 2010).

The NYC Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) December 2009 release reports that fracking poses unacceptable risks to the 9 million people drinking NYC's unfiltered water, and calls for the prohibition of drilling in the NYC watershed. According to the final Impact Assessment Report prepared for the DEP, drilling causes industrialization of rural and agricultural areas and a risk of chemical contamination. The DEP calls upon the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to rescind their draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement (dSGEIS) as it "does not meet the requirements of the NYS Environmental Conservation Law." It is also inadequate in its assessment of the risks to public health and air quality, and does not account for the cumulative impact of as many as 6,000 wells which will require thousands of acres of land clearing and millions of truck trips, as well as other infrastructure requirements of fracking. NYC's water tunnels could be penetrated and contaminated as fracture systems transmit fluid and pressure along the same geological formation as our drinking water.

In September 2009, the NYC Council, recognizing the detrimental effects of hydraulic on humans and the environment, called upon the NYS Legislature, the NYS DEC and Governor Paterson to "prohibit hydraulic fracturing combined with horizontal drilling for the extraction of natural gas within the boundaries of NYS."

Only the oil and gas industry is allowed by the U.S. EPA to inject *known, unchecked* hazardous material near or into drinking water supplies. The 2004 EPA study, **conducted with industry**, concluded that hydro fracking poses no threat to drinking water. The EPA ignored, however, among other things, that *benzene* – a known component of fracking fluids – migrates deeper than believed and is carried by groundwater. In 2007, the U.S. House of Representative's Oversight and Government Reform Committee began hearings, and found that scientists found toluene, xylene, and benzene – known carcinogens – had entered the drinking water where fracking was

conducted, and “identified 245 different chemicals, 92% of which have adverse health effects” (*Propublica*, January 2010).

Rep. Henry A. Waxman, D-CA, announced that the House Committee on Energy and Commerce which he chairs is launching an investigation into potential environmental impacts from hydraulic fracturing” (February 19, 2010).

The Environmental Impact Study was Inadequate

The current NYS DEC draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Study (dSGEIS) is a supplement to a 1992 study, which was incomplete. The current dSGEIS does not take into consideration the impact to air quality, increased road use or need for new roads to carry traffic from drilling sites.

Catskill Citizens for Safe Energy issued a report which raises some concerns and issues that the DEC dSGEIS draft report does not consider:

- Increased seismic activity as experienced in other shale formations impacted by fracking.
- Long-term analysis of well safety.
- Remediation of negative consequences of hydro fracking.
- Consequences of a spill (and there have been many “accidents”).
- The impact of noise (drilling goes on 24-7).
- The lack of independent verification of data which was supplied by the gas companies.
- Enforcement or compensatory framework for violations, contamination or damages caused, nor consideration of failed companies.
- The second-home market which provides a great part of the upstate tax base in the watershed, while not impacting schools, etc. (land purchase is based on scenery, a quiet environment, etc.).
- The impact on property values.
- The impact on tourism: hunting, fishing and hiking, and *industrializing a rural, agricultural area*.
- Cumulative impact of a potential 6,000 wells.
- Exploration of alternative methods of gas extraction without the use of hydro fracking.
- Regulations that have not been updated since 1985.
- The need for compressor stations and pipelines.
-

For a more complete itemization of concerns, please refer to the Catskill Citizens for Safe Energy website: Comments to draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement.

Can We be protected?

The Steward Council of Division 169 of the NYS Public Employees Federation, which includes professional, scientific and technical staff of the NYS DEC, recommends in their

December 2009 letter to the NYS DEC Division of Mineral Resources, that the DEC provide better evaluation and planning and that NYS should set higher than other states; further, the DEC is currently understaffed and will need new employees to provide oversight; and other oversight agencies must be identified. As well, the cumulative effect of multiple wells requires study.

The NYS PEF therefore recommends that the NYS wait for the federal EPA to complete the reevaluation of safety and environmental impact in the Marcellus Shale using fracking, and that the state issue a moratorium of at least one year before issuing permits.

Economic Impacts

The cost of building filtration plants could run as high as \$30 billion. Because of our pristine water, currently we pay nothing for filtration. Our taxes rise to underwrite the bonds to be floated to build the plants, and our water bills will rise 10.5% annually to maintain these new filtration plants (NYC Independent Budget Office, Fiscal Brief, Dec. 2009). In addition, filtration will not be able to remove all toxins (toxictargets.com).

The economic benefits to communities where fracking is done is transitory: most workers are from out-of-state because energy companies do not call New York State home. The “boom and bust” economies never outweigh the permanent loss to clean water and air, deforestation of millions of acres, plentiful and healthy wildlife and fish, and the beauty for which our upstate area is well known. Experience shows that other means of economic development, other than energy exploitation, prove to be more permanent means of improving the economy of communities. The impact to the NYS small dairy farmers will occur as these farmers allow their cows to graze the grass on their land: contaminated grass eventually becomes contaminated milk.

Industry involved in hydro fracking places the burden of proof for impact to human health on the people affected, with recognition of violations long after the damage is done. The book and movie, “A Civil Action” (Jonathan Harr), based on water contamination by big industry in Woburn, Massachusetts, is a good example of how difficult it is to prove injury and obtain damages from industry after it has finished work and walked away, leaving high cancer rates in its wake.

Why We Urge Extreme Caution: The Experience of Other States

The experience of hydro fracking in other states has been a disaster. There have been 207 known accidents in the process of hydro-fracturing.

Texas: The Mayor of Dish, Texas, which has experience with fracking, visited Callicoon, NY, to warn New Yorkers about the devastating ramifications of this process. The fumes from the process were unbearable and the noise was deafening and incessant. There was an extraordinary-high incidence of diseases. Goats died from the water; contaminated wells are unusable; and seeping methane caused a house explosion. And, multiple companies performing different operations on each site make it harder to hold responsible any entity for damage done.

Colorado: An emergency room was evacuated and locked down when a worker involved in a “spill” was admitted. Medical personnel did not know what they were dealing with. The ER nurse, after 10 minutes of exposure, found days later that her skin turned yellow, she couldn’t breathe and she had multiple organ failure from chemical poisoning. Of course, the fracking fluid producers, Weatherford, said that they weren’t sure their fluid was responsible, and the nurse’s doctor was sworn to secrecy in order to obtain information about the chemicals to which she was exposed.

Pennsylvania: Chesapeake Energy, a company that holds leases in the Marcellus Shale, was fined for spilling hydrochloric acid. Range Resources, another company, was fined for spilling 5,000 gallons of wastewater into a tributary of the Cross Creek Lake, killing fish in the lake (Propublica, January 2010). Polluted substances were not contained and were discharged into a forested area where trees died (The River Reporter, No. 52.). In Dimrock: Fracking caused methane to enter the drinking water, and residents are still without potable water. Gas industry lobbyists prevailed in disallowing local Soil Conservation Districts to have the authority to review gas well permits.

Wyoming: Caustic chemicals were found in 11 private water wells. Residents of the Wind River Indian Reservation reported foul-smelling water, and elevated levels of arsenic, methane and other chemicals.

According to Propublica, “Two of the largest companies involved in natural gas drilling have acknowledged pumping hundreds of thousands of diesel-based fluids into the ground in the process of hydraulic fracturing, raising further concerns that existing state and federal regulations don’t adequately protect drinking water from drilling.”

Conclusion

It has been the sad and costly experience of municipalities across this nation that the use of hydraulic fracturing to extract gas from shale deposits is neither benign nor generally beneficial to their citizens.

The cost in permanently-destroyed property, in poisoned and unsellable live stock, in the permanent loss of potable water supplies, in the loss of forested recreational land and water, in the destruction of property, health and human life, have all accrued to the voters and to their state. What money is to be made through such extraction goes to the drillers, who have shouldered **no responsibility** anywhere for the downside of their ventures, and the astronomical costs for the variety of reparations required have been born exclusively by the citizens.

In New York State we are now faced with the possibility of hydro fracking in our watershed area. Without additional treatment, this area provides the water supply for eight million people in the downstate area – half the population of the state (and one million more in Putnam and Orange Counties) – and yet, in spite of all we know about the terrible and permanent poisoning and destruction that can (and does) result from such drilling, our elected officials are prepared to take the chance that such drilling can be

conducted without harm. The foolhardy nature of this bet cannot be over emphasized, especially at a time of economic stress.

The Staten Island Democratic Association is strongly opposed to such drilling and urges our state legislators to oppose it as well – in law – and for the future well-being of their own families and the voters of the state. We ask that our Congressional representatives put fracking fluids back under the Safe Drinking Water Act

Rally

to prohibit
hydraulic fracturing
in our watershed
and in NY State

Thursday, April 29, 2010,
6:00 - 7:00 p.m.
on the steps of Staten Island Borough Hall
Richmond Terrace Side

Dan Kramer

September 23, 1934 – March 11, 2010

Nuclear Q & A

Sally Jones of Peace Action of Staten Island prepared the following Questions and Answers.

Nuclear Q & A

Most people don't think very much about nuclear weapons. No one you know is building a bomb shelter in their basement. Your kids are not being trained to hide under their desks during air raid drills. Nukes get mentioned when a U.S. President wants to invade some territory. In that situation, the "enemy" has found a way to hide a nuclear weapon from us and we must go in and bomb cities and occupy land, for the people's own good – of course.

Why do we have this casual attitude toward weapons that could wipe our species off the face of the earth? With Earth Day coming up on April 22nd and the United Nations reviewing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in New York during the first week of May, it's time to ask some questions.

Q. After all the uproar in the 1980's about freezing the nuclear arms race with the former Soviet Union, weren't all our weapons put in lockdown?

A. No, all our nuclear weapons are not in lockdown. There are currently 3,500 nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert. Around the world, there are over 10,000 operationally deployed weapons, and stockpiles of another 10,000. Over 90% of these weapons belong to the U.S. and Russia. American weapons are found all around the world. The rest belong to China, the U.K., France, India, Pakistan, and Israel. North Korea may have a handful.

Q. With the end of the Cold War and the normalization of relations with Russia, we must be ready to eliminate our respective nuclear arsenals, right?

A. Wrong. It is the end of the Cold War, but each year the U.S. Department of Energy presses for more advanced and reliable nuclear capability. The proposed 2011 budget includes money for a new plutonium production facility in Los Alamos, New Mexico and one for uranium in Oakridge, Tennessee. There are hints that the new U.S. Nuclear Posture Review that will be published this year by the Obama Administration will still contain language that allows for a nuclear first strike.

Or maybe 1/4 right. On March 26, 2010, the U.S. and Russia announced a trimming of their nuclear arsenals, which would cut back deployed strategic warheads by 1450, launchers by 388, and deployed ballistic missiles and strategic bombers by 98. (See NY Times, March 27, 2010.)

Q. If we stopped Iran and North Korea from getting nuclear weapons, everything would be under control, wouldn't it?

A. No, everything would not be under control. It is 30 years since 189 countries signed onto the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) which promised global elimination of nuclear weapons as the reward for non-proliferation. Countries like Pakistan and India have already abandoned the treaty. There are numerous countries besides Iran and North Korea with the capability of building nuclear weapons. Unless the nuclear powers live up to their side of the bargain, it is only a matter of time before other countries will conclude that they need the same nuclear option as we have.

Q. But, isn't the genie out of the bottle already? How can we possibly reverse the trend of more and more countries acquiring nuclear weapons?

A. There is an opening right now with Barack Obama as President of the United States. Last April 9, 2009 in Prague, President Obama said, "Today, I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons."

Building force behind President Obama is an array of nuclear abolition groups across the political spectrum. One of these groups is a wide-ranging collection of world leaders who call themselves Global Zero. They see new technologies as the key to detect fissile material.

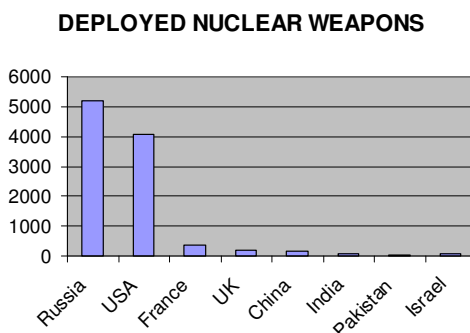
Thousands of abolition advocates will be in NYC for an international disarmament conference on April 30-May 1st and a march to the United Nations on Sunday, May 2nd. Japan alone is bringing a delegation of 2000. We will be delivering stacks of petitions to the President asking for him to follow through on his promise.

Q. How can one person make a difference?

A. Here are some ways:

- You can sign a petition. Go to www.peaceandjusticenow.org to sign the petition to President Obama to live up to his promise of a world without nuclear weapons.
- If you are a student, a teacher or a club member, you can endorse the petition and invite a speaker to your group to educate more people. Call the Peace Action of Staten Island Speakers Bureau at 917-362-0897 or email sjones1@si.rr.com.

You can bring friends and family to the Sunday, May 2nd march to the United Nations, starting at 2 pm at Times Square. Go to www.peaceandjusticenow.org for details.



Minutes

General Membership Meeting March 16, 2010

President Richard Reichard called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m.

Minutes

A motion was made to accept the previous month's minutes as written by Corresponding and Recording Secretary Marie Dwyer and published in the newsletter. The motion carried.

Vice President's Report

Vice President Dennis Brown presented highlights from the last Executive Committee meeting held on February 24th, 2010.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Gary Carsel gave the following balances:

Balance 2-28-10\$5,851.89

Balance 3-16-10\$4,810.51

Gary reported that he closed the books on the 2009 holiday party and distributed money to all Staten Island Democratic Clubs. He also reminded members to pay their dues for 2010.

1st Guest Speaker

Ronnie Lowenstein Director of the New York City Independent Budget Office, was the first guest speaker. Ms. Lowenstein explained that IBO's primary responsibility is to provide nonpartisan information about the city budget and tax revenues to every elected official except the Mayor. She also spoke about the history of the Independent Budget Office, and the City Charter Advisory Board.

Ms. Lowenstein spoke about the economic forecast for the city and explained that NYC is actually coming out of a downturn. Tax revenues are rising. It's expected that New York City will end the fiscal year with a 3 million dollar surplus and will use the money to balance the fiscal year 2011 fiscal budget. After her presentation, Ms. Lowenstein took questions from several members in attendance.

2nd Guest Speaker

Marianne Maloney of the United States Census Bureau was the second guest speaker. Ms. Maloney explained that every 10 years as mandated by the U.S. Constitution, our nation conducts a census, an effort to count every person living in the United States. The aim of this endeavor is to ensure that every household fills out and mails back a completed census form on or around April 1, 2010. She stressed that participation is critical, as the results determine how representation in Congress is apportioned and how more than \$435 billion in federal funds will be distributed annually to states and communities during the next decade.

Ms. Maloney explained the census form is easy to fill out, as there are only 10 questions. She also mentioned that in 2000 only 62% of the population on Staten Island responded to the survey and that we lost funding.

Ms. Maloney asked S.I.D.A. members to reach out to their neighbors and friends and urge them to fill out the forms. She also mentioned that responding to the census is safe and easy. The U.S. Census Bureau guarantees confidentiality, as they don't share the information with anyone.

Ms. Maloney mentioned that there are 99 "Be Counted" sites on Staten Island. After her presentation, she took questions from members.

Social Secretary's Report

Social Secretary Alex Baltovski discussed the three awards that are given out at the Annual S.I.D.A. Dinner each year and that the Executive Committee is looking for nominations for these awards. If you want to nominate someone, you can call Alex on his cell at (347) 524-2888 or email him at siralex@gmail.com.

Issues Committee

Loretta Prisco mentioned that after Assemblywoman Janele Hyer-Spencer's presentation on Hydro fracturing at S.I.D.A.'s December meeting, Susan Chew wrote an in-depth paper about the subject. Loretta mentioned that the next Issues Committee meeting is scheduled for March 18. Loretta also mentioned that future issues papers will be given out to elected officials instead of being mailed out.

S.I.D.A. Legal Committee

John F. Lavelle mentioned that he had a meeting with other S.I.D.A. members (mostly attorneys) to discuss the idea of starting an S.I.D.A. legal committee. He reported that the

committee will focus on three areas: 1) litigation, 2) education, and 3) elections. John also mentioned that he plans to submit a full report to the Executive Committee and will ask President Reichard to make it a regular committee. John also reported that the next meeting is scheduled for April 2 at 8:00 p.m. Finally, John mentioned that many attorneys have been attending the meetings but it is open to everyone.

President Reichard announced that a memorial service is scheduled for Dan Kramer on Sunday, April 11, 11:00 a.m. at the College of Staten Island Library located on the 2nd floor. President Reichard explained that Dan had chaired the Issues Committee. Mark Herman added that Dan had been an S.I.D.A. member for over 40 years.

President Reichard asked Vice President Dennis Brown to take over as chair so that President Reichard could make the following motion: Motion – S.I.D.A. supports passage of Senate Bill S 6725 and Assembly Bill A 9834. President Reichard explained that these pieces of legislation would change how the state and counties use the Census Data. The legislation would require the state to collect and maintain home address data for each incarcerated person; the information would then be used to adjust the census data. The corrected census data would be provided to state and local redistricting bodies that will then use it to draw state and local districts. Adjusting the census data to reflect prisoners' home communities would address under representation in the city and over representation in upstate New York. The motion passed.

Hydro-fracturing

Susan Chew addressed the club about the work she has been doing on the issue of hydro-fracturing. She mentioned that she wanted to create a flyer regarding this issue and do a distribution at the Ferry Terminal. Susan requested money to cover the cost of printing 1,000 flyers. There was some discussion, and it was suggested that she create a palm card instead of a flyer, keeping information brief and directing people to a web site. President Reichard felt that we should create a special web site for this issue. Susan sent a form around the room urging members to sign up to help with the ferry terminal distribution.

Health Care Reform Discussion

There was discussion about Congressman McMahon's stand on the Health Care Reform Bill. Many members said that we should call Congressman McMahon's office and ask him to support the bill. Carmen Cogna (Congressman McMahon's Chief of Staff) was at the meeting and he thanked everyone for their honest candor. He made some comments regarding the issue on behalf of the Congressman. Finally, he assured the members that he would relay their concerns to Congressman McMahon.

Lathrope Voorspuy Memorial Scholarship Fund

Anne Taylor, President of the fund, thanked S.I.D.A. for their recent \$200 contribution to the L.V.M.S. fund, mentioning that it was very generous. She also reported that the application period for the scholarship had ended and the committee planned to interview the applicants soon.

Oran Brown made a motion that S.I.D.A. give Susan Chew \$400 as a limit to print the flyers on hydro-fracturing. Joy felt that Susan should actually come back to S.I.D.A. with the dollar amount she needs. But since time is of the essence, Ralph Dickar made a friendly amendment to Oran's original motion that we set up a limit of \$400 for Susan to print flyers. The motion to give Susan Chew up to \$400 for printing flyers passed unanimously.

Treasurer Gary Carsel spoke about the document he prepared which explained S.I.D.A.'s expenses. He also mentioned that the Executive Committee is looking at new ways to raise money.

Al Albanese, Democratic Candidate for New York State Assembly 62nd District briefly addressed the membership. He mentioned that S.I.D.A. supported him last time he ran and hoped the club would support him again. He also mentioned that he would be having a fundraiser on March 24 at The Old Bermuda Inn. He asked everyone to come out and support this event.

President Reichard mentioned that the next Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for Wed March 23 at his home 8:00 pm. The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marie Dwyer

Corresponding & Recording Secretary

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.

The following letter appeared in the UFT's newspaper New York Teacher.

On-line March 4, 2010

Failing to Endorse Hurt

To the Editor: To no one's surprise, the Staten Island borough president's rep to the Panel for Educational Policy voted [on Jan. 26] with the mayor's appointees to close 19 schools. So why didn't the UFT work to prevent the re-election of the mayor and the borough president?

The UFT refused to endorse their opponents, but now the union bemoans their policies. John Luisi, a graduate of Staten Island public schools who ran against the borough president without UFT endorsement, likes to say: "If you don't vote, don't complain."

Maybe the UFT should figure that out: If you don't campaign against someone, don't complain when they do things that hurt you. Unfortunately, everyone in New York gets hurt by people that the UFT wouldn't oppose. The UFT's "no endorsement" policy has to go.

- Tom Shcherbenko

On-line March 7, 2010

Printed March 7, 2010

Republicans Want Obama to Fail, Not to Find Bipartisan Solutions

President Obama said that he was open to including four specific ideas raised by Republicans at the health-care summit.

The Republicans quickly dismissed his offer.

This should not come as a surprise to anyone who has been following the health-care debate. In order for there to be a bipartisan bill, there needs to be a willing partner sitting across the table from the Democrats. However, when Republican leaders such as Sen. Jim DeMint say they want to stop health-care reform in order to give President Obama a major defeat, it is obvious that they are not interested in a bipartisan agreement.

This leaves the Democrats with only one choice, the reconciliation process.

The purpose of the reconciliation process is to improve the government's fiscal position by decreasing deficits or increasing surpluses. According to the Congressional

Budget Office, the Democrats' bill would decrease the deficit by more than \$100 billion over 10 years.

The Republicans do not refute this.

Though Republicans protest its use, they fail to mention that 17 of the 23 reconciliation bills passed by Congress were signed into law by a Republican President and that 16 of 23 reconciliation bills were passed by a Republican-controlled Senate.

- *Richard Reichard*

On-line March 16, 2010

Printed March 16, 2010

**Why was Tea Party Allowed
to Promote Itself
at St. Patrick's Parade?**

Practicing what they preach, thumbing their noses at laws and rules, the Staten Island Tea Party blatantly handed out pamphlets and recruitment literature while marching in the Staten Island St. Patrick's Parade.

While I watched the parade, a man and a young boy from their marching group approached me and attempted to hand me a recruitment flyer. I told them they were not allowed to do this, but they continued breaking the law while the rest of their group waved American flags.

The St. Patrick's Parade Committee is a non-profit organization, and by allowing this group, with the purpose to influence politics, hand out pamphlets and recruit from the Parade is putting their non-profit status at risk.

Where was Chairman Charles (Chip) McClean, of the St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee, while this took place?

I called him to make a complaint and ask that this group be held to the same standards as every other group involved in politics and that this not allowed in the future.

- *Kathleen Kelly*

The following letter, though not by an S.I.D.A. member, was written in response to a member's letter, and so is being reprinted here to further the conversation.

On-line March 20, 2010

Printed March 20, 2010

**Objections to Tea Party's
Presence at Parade are Absurd**

Only the most disgruntled members of the left, such as Kathleen Kelly of MoveOn.org, [Your Opinion, March 16] could complain that the Staten Island Tea Party's participation in the St. Patrick's Parade was offensive or political in any way.

What exactly was it about the Tea Party contingent, one of the largest in the parade and loudly cheered and supported, that so offended Ms. Kelly? In her letter, she wrote that we “waved American flags” and “blatantly handed out pamphlets.”

Yes, Ms. Kelly, we did. As proud Americans, we waved flags and were not ashamed to do so, and as far as the “pamphlets” to which you so strenuously objected, they were pocket copies of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

We are deeply sorry if flag-waving offends you, and if you consider the U.S. Constitution to be “promotional material,” well, so be it.

I would remind you that men fought and died under that flag that so perturbs you, in order to defend the Constitution which guarantees your freedom to have a letter such as yours published in a newspaper that is at liberty to print anything it chooses.

- Lorraine Scanni

On-line April 1, 2010

Printed April 2, 2010

Tea Party Shouldn't Have Used Parade to Recruit New Members

In response to Tea Party [leader] Lorraine Scanni's letter (March 20): You're very good at telling half-truths. The issue that I raised about the Tea Party's actions is that they were handing out half sheet recruitment flyers on how to join, with contact info, while marching in the Staten Island St. Patrick's Parade. They attempted to hand one to me. This puts the non-profit St. Patrick's Parade Committee at risk of losing that status.

They did not attempt to hand me a Constitution of the United States or The Declaration of Independence. I know the difference. Do you, Lorraine?

The Tea Party members preach for a world with no government, no laws, no rules. This disregard for the rules and laws of the parade was in line with their credo. I wouldn't like to see the St. Patrick's Parade Committee lose their status because of Tea Party anarchist behavior.

- Kathleen Kelly

On-line March 26, 2010

Printed March 27, 2010

Congressman was Stamped into Voting the Wrong Way

In response to Congressman McMahon's letter in the March 24 Advance: Mike, I am so sorry that you missed the boat and are stranded on the wrong side of history.

Even the administrators of the hospitals that you were so worried about are figuring out that they will survive. (See Judy Randall's article of March 23.)

The last two paragraphs tell the tale. The feared “changes won't occur until 2013 or 2014,” which “is good from a planning standpoint.”

Meanwhile, both hospital heads saw upsides in the bill: “Terrinoni noted the lifting of insurance penalties for patients with pre-existing conditions, while Ferreri said he is ‘pleased it expands coverage to so many who have no coverage.’ ”

McMahon’s concern for our seniors seems hollow. My husband and I are seniors. He will directly benefit by being rescued from the “donut hole.”

The Medicare Advantage programs Mike was defending cost both seniors and the government more and provide a profit to the insurance companies. So who was he really protecting?

McMahon may have been fooled by the sound and fury of opponents and been deaf to the cries of “Help” from the people of his district.

- *Joy Robins*

On-line March 29, 2010

Threats against Democratic Lawmakers Go Beyond the Pale

The recent reports that the lives and offices of Democratic congressmen and women who voted for the health care bill have been threatened and vandalized are truly disgusting.

They show that opponents of the health-care bill do not understand nor appreciate American democracy. When you do not have the votes, you do not win.

It’s probably a vain hope, but it would be healthy if the loudmouths put their energies elsewhere, like reading the Constitution.

- *Richard Currie*

On-line March 29, 2010

Printed March 29, 2010

Cut Unemployment by Cutting Foreign Imports

Let me see if I have this right. Big business imports everything from foreign countries so they can realize bigger profits and we can better afford to buy these things. Problem being, we can no longer afford to purchase anything because we’re out of work.

The main reason is because 80 percent of the items on the store shelves are made in foreign countries. We won’t be able to collect unemployment because the government will go bankrupt. That will happen when we can no longer pay the taxes the government needs to survive.

Consequently, big business goes bankrupt because sales are way off. Can anyone with half a brain see how to fix this?

Cut imports. We're on the road to becoming a fourth world country. Who do you think will give us foreign aid? Don't look for any lines to form.

CUT UNEMPLOYMENT BY CUTTING FOREIGN IMPORTS. By buying these imported commodities, we're cutting our own throats. Let's put our own people back to work.

- Paul Cinquemani

On-line April 2, 2010

Printed April 4, 2010

Needs of His Constituents

Came First for Lawmaker

Happily, the health-care reform bill passed. It is far from perfect, but it is a step in the right direction. While I disagree with Congressman Mike McMahon's vote, I urge those who, like me, supported reform, not to abandon our congressman now.

I commend Congressman McMahon on his efforts and understanding and recognize how difficult his decision was. The congressman took the needs of his constituents into consideration. He listened, he read, he researched, he decided. He made a decision, and did his job. And, despite my disagreement with him on this issue, I am confident that his decision was based upon what he believed were the best interests of the district.

The Congressman has represented my interests, those of a liberal Democrat, on issues such as fair pay for women, veterans mental health services, hate crimes, and stimulus funding, among other things. I will continue to be honored to have him as my congressman.

- Laura Sword

Flashback

We keep our history alive by reprinting articles from past newsletters, minutes from past meetings, or other items of interest from the past. If you have items that might be appropriate for the Flashback column, please call Joy Robins at (718) 816-4128.

Membership Meeting Minutes

January 18, 2000

resident John F. Lavelle called the meeting to order at 8:10 p.m. The Minutes were accepted as read. Treasurer Ralph Dickar gave the Treasurer's Report, with a new balance of \$2,147.42, 49 members paid up for the year 2000, and 61 paid for 1999. 108 members were eligible to vote, as two members had joined less than 45 days before the meeting. The Treasurer's Report was accepted as read.

President Lavelle read the rules for voting for the Executive Committee and for the Primary candidate endorsement. A motion was made to close the ballots at 9:45 p.m.

The motion was seconded and passed with one opposed and one abstention. Ballots for the endorsement and the club elections were passed out.

President Lavelle introduced the speaker, NYC Councilman Herbert Berman, who is running for the office of NYC Comptroller. He has been on the Council for 25 years, and has chaired the Finance Committee. He advocated a system where the Mayor appoints the School Chancellor, with the approval of the Council.

Issues Committee Chair Joy Robins distributed a position paper on the issue of gun violence, and asked the members to consider adopting it as the club's position.

President Lavelle introduced Dick Buegler, President of the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods, who spoke on the issue of the development of the land at Seaview. The land there had been landmarked and protected, but the mayor and the borough president have given the land to developers for senior housing. There are several other areas as well, where the Protectors are fighting development of land that had been protected, and fighting zone changes to residential in other areas. Dick Buegler stated that the Economic Development Council does everything in secret, preventing us from knowing ahead of time what they have planned.

Chris Bauer announced that the Staten Island AIDS Task Force was having its Valentine's Day Dance on February 12, with tickets for \$50, and also selling 50/50 tickets. Helen Settles announced that on Sunday, the Staten Island Special Olympics was having a bowling tournament.

Todd Turner announced that as Chairman of the Staten Island Democratic County Committee's Public Policy Committee, he was having a series of Saturday Morning Speakers, with Mark Green speaking on February 5. The cost was \$30 David Goldfarb announced that on January 15, there would be a vote on a variance for the developer of Spanish Camp, by the Board of Standards and Appeals. He suggested writing to the Board and objecting to any variance.

Liz Goldfarb announced that on January 27, at 1:00 p.m., the City Council would have hearings on filtering the Internet at public libraries and schools. She suggested attending to oppose this.

Nick Popolo, President of Staten Island Young Democrats, announced that he and several other members of the Young Democrats would go to New Hampshire the week before their primary to work on Democratic primary campaigns.

Chris Brown made a motion to give \$100 to the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods to help with their fight; the motion was seconded and passed with one abstention.

The results of the primary candidate endorsement were 17 for Bradley, and 16 for Gore. The S.I.D.A. endorsed Bradley for the New York primary.

The results of the S.I.D.A. Executive Committee election were: President, John F. Lavelle; Vice President, Anne Taylor Butler; Executive Secretary, Jeff Stonehill; Corresponding and Recording Secretary, Joann Olbrich; Social Secretary Vanessa Mercurio; and Treasurer, Ralph Dickar. The At-large Members elected were: Linda Rispoli, Joy Robins, David Goldfarb, Loretta Prisco, and Gene Prisco.

President Lavelle announced that there would be a fundraiser on January 20, for Stephen Di Brienza. He also announced that as Chairman of the Staten Island Democratic County Committee's Youth Committee, he would work with Todd Turner on sponsoring events to bring in young members to the Staten Island Democrats.

Joy Robins, Issues Committee Chair, announced that the next committee meeting was on February 8, 2000, at the Prisco's. Lathrope Voorspuy made a suggestion that the Executive Committee raise the number of At-large members to six from five.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

*Joann Olbrich
Corresponding &
Recording Secretary*

dine out against hunger

Co-Hosted by the
Young Democrats of Richmond County
and the Richmond County Young Republicans



\$35/person includes:

unlimited beer, wine and soda
passed hors d'oeuvres
sit-down dinner (choice of entree)
dessert and coffee/tea

Join. Dine. Give.

Thursday, April 22
8 p.m.

The Lake Club
1150 Clove Road

**RSVP by April 15 to samantha.r.giordano@gmail.com
20% of proceeds go to Project Hospitality**

For more info visit us on

facebook

A tisket, a tasket, please help us
fill our baskets



for the Lathrope Voorspuy Memorial
Scholarship Fund Breakfast!

If you have a suitable basket, or items to help fill one
please contact **Joy Robins** by **May 1**, at **718-816-4128**.
Help make our basket raffle the best ever!

Suggestions:

- ★ Women's items: handbags, scarves, jewelry, watches, bath stuff.
- ★ Gourmet basket: coffee, tea, cookies, candy, mugs, infusers, etc.
- ★ Literary basket: books, book light, fancy bookmarks, stuff like that.
- ★ Kitchenware items” dish towels, pot holders, etc.
- ★ Restaurant or other gift certificates.

The mission of the Lathrope Voorspuy Memorial Scholarship Fund is to encourage grass-roots activism by underwriting students in selected programs that train for community organization or for political candidacies.

The Lathrope Voorspuy Memorial Scholarship Fund is a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit corporation. Your gifts are tax deductible.

**Lathrope Voorspuy
Memorial Scholarship Fund
Awards Breakfast
Come celebrate with us!
Saturday May 22, 2010, 10 AM to 1 PM
at the Colonnade Diner, 2001 Hylan Blvd.**