



December 2011

Staten Island Democratic Association

est. 1961 as Staten Island's reform Democratic Club

www.sidems.org

At our Next Meeting:

- **Luke Nasta**
Executive Director
of Camelot, on the
prescription drug
problem



- **Presentations by
Candidates for Executive Committee**

Tuesday, December 20, 2011, 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.

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

S.I.D.A. President’s Message

December 2011

Dear Members and Friends of S.I.D.A.,

I would be remiss if I did not thank members for their efforts and many accomplishments. S.I.D.A.’s Executive Committee worked together – with many of our members – to re-energize our club, to plan and execute many significant actions in the political arena, and to inform and activate our membership. Many of our members stepped up and joined in these activities, and I thank you all.

This year S.I.D.A. not only looked outward to make a difference and work for positive political change but also looked inward to celebrate our 50th anniversary. I want to thank the six recipients of our awards, Sally Jones, Denis Hughes, Debi Rose, Ellen Pratt, Gary Carsel, and Mark Herman. We had over 230 guests (226 paid seats) at our 50th Anniversary Gala Banquet and Awards Ceremony.

Again, my admiration and thanks are extended to those whose efforts brought about such great success. We were animated, joyful, and enthusiastic as we remembered our past 50 years. We pledged our renewed activity as we look forward to the 2012 election cycle.

We realized just how far we have to go – and how hard we have to work – especially on Staten Island. The extremely poor turn out in the recent District Attorney race left us all stunned. We can be proud of our candidate Mike Ryan, and thankful for his efforts, but w now know,

more than ever, what an uphill battle it is to energize the electorate and get them to vote for their best interest.

We are the 99%, and we must work very hard to convince the Democratic base, as well as many thoughtful Republicans and independents, that they too are part of the 99%. They are not being served by the Tea Party Republicans who have held our country hostage since the disastrous mid-term Congressional elections in 2010.

The Republican House majority has voted against the healthcare reform legislation, obstructed job creation, voted at least 17 times against Democratic efforts to create jobs, and continues to oppose the American Jobs Act. They voted to protect special interest and the top 1% (billionaires and Big Oil), at the expense of scuttling Medicare, Social Security, universal healthcare, and jobs programs for the vast majority of Americans, the 99%.

We must gain the majority in Congress once again to advance progressive legislation for the 99%. We must also work hard to elect the state, city, and borough officials who stand for solid progressive, Democratic principles. As S.I.D.A. enters its 51st year, we look back on our history with the political successes and causes we have espoused. We should also look forward to the excitement of working for and securing future victories.

Look at the names and titles of your offices and Executive Committee members in this newsletter. Thank them as I also thank them for their dedication and hard work this past year. And thank you too, dear reader, for your involvement, participation, leadership, and membership in S.I.D.A., and for our mutual efforts. Thank you for a great year, and Happy New Year!

Dennis A. Brown
President



Nominating Committee Report

The Nominating Committee, which was selected at the October 18, 2010 General Membership Meeting, met on November 2 at the home of Mary Kain. Committee members Chris Bauer (Committee Chair), Dennis Brown, Susan Chew, Mary Kain, Joann Olbrich Rosemary Palladino Liz Price, and Richard Reichard nominated the following candidates:

2012 SLATE

President

Dennis Brown

Vice President

Rosemary Palladino

Executive Secretary

Mark Herman

Corresponding & Recording Secretary

Marie Dwyer

Treasurer

Tom Shcherbenko

Social Secretary

Liz Price

Member At-Large

(5 to be Elected)

in alphabetical order

Michelle Akyempong

Norma Dwyer

Richard Florentino

Phil Jonas

John Lavelle

Roy Moscowitz

Nicole O'Loughlin

Loretta Prisco

Jasmine Robinson

Bonita Rothman

All nominees will have the chance to address the club at the December 20 General Meeting. In addition, each candidate will be expected to submit a 200-word statement for the January newsletter. Statements should be submitted to newsletter editor Chris Bauer at cmaxbauer@yahoo.com no later than January 1, 2012. Elections will occur at the Annual Meeting of the Association on January 17, 2012.

As stated in the S.I.D.A. bylaws, the Nominating Committee report shall set forth the procedure for nomination by petition. Therefore, if any additional people would like to run for a position on the Executive Committee, they may do so as explained by the following section of the bylaws:

ARTICLE VIII Elections

Section 2: Nominations

b) Nomination by Petition Additional nomination may be made by petition signed by 15% of those members in good standing or 15 members, whichever is fewer, as of the final date for the submission

of such petitions namely the December meeting at which all candidates shall be presented to the membership as an order of business. Nominating petitions shall be submitted to the Corresponding and Recording Secretary, or in his or her absence to an officer designated by the President or Acting President.

c) Nomination from the Floor Nominations from the floor may be made only in the event that no eligible candidate has been otherwise nominated for an office.

d) *Notice* All names of persons nominated will be included in the mailed notice of the annual meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Bauer
Chair
Nominating Committee
November 15, 2011



Luke Nasta

Luke Nasta, the Executive Director of Camelot, will be the guest speaker at our December 20 General Membership Meeting and will talk on the dangers and the proliferation of legally and/or illegally procured prescription drugs. The following was provided by Camelot.

Luke Nasta & Camelot

Luke J. Nasta is an Executive Director and Educator, with extensive experience in the non-profit substance abuse rehabilitation arena. He is a dedicated leader, and a true man of distinction. He has contributed distinguished services to humanity sharing his personal and professional gifts within the New York City region. Throughout his career, he has touched many lives, all which have been grateful to him.

Born and raised in Staten Island, New York, Nasta endured a turbulent adolescence. A school dropout at 15, he thereafter became addicted to heroin and his continued downward plunge was punctuated by repeated arrests, short periods of incarceration, and several sentences to probation. The turning point came in 1973 when he was 25. Mr. Nasta entered Exodus House, a drug treatment facility in Harlem. He remained there for the next 2 ½ years, in a therapeutically intensive campaign to win his personal war against drug usage. He made remarkable progress in many areas, but especially in those efforts through which insight and heightened self-awareness are realized through peer relationships. This experience would later serve as the foundation for his professional convictions and achievements.

Mr. Nasta has been Executive Director of Camelot Counseling Centers since 1976. Camelot is the largest drug treatment program on Staten Island. He oversees a \$5 million plus budget, with 65 full and part time workers. His staff provides residential and outpatient services to those affected by addictive disease, as well as other counseling programs in the boroughs of Staten Island, Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. Nasta's leadership has increased the number of clients serviced from 40 to 900, and the number of prevention services has risen to 3,000 annually.

Mr. Nasta created and established the only Staten Island residential chemical dependency treatment program, and has received approval for an additional residential program for women. He has also founded and developed multi-site prevention/intervention borough-wide projects. Through his position, Nasta been able to lobby and educate government officials, related professions and the public. He has striven to effect change in law, social policy, and regulations relative to addictive disease, health services, insurance, family, juvenile, and criminal law matters.

In 1987, Mr. Nasta earned a Bachelor of Science degree in community and human services at Empire State University in Manhattan, part of the State University of New York system. In 1991, he made the dean's list in earning a Master of Science degree in public administration at Metropolitan College, also in Manhattan.

Since 1990, Mr. Nasta has been the Public Policy Officer for the Coalition for Community Services, a lobbying group for drug treatment providers in the New York City region. Mr. Nasta was a former member of the New York State Governor's Advisory Council on Substance Abuse and Alcoholism, and the New York City Bureau of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services Commissioners Advisory Group. In 2001, Mr. Nasta received the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services Commissioners Award for 25 years of Outstanding Service. In 2006, Mr. Nasta received the Community Services Award for his 30 years of dedicated services and commitment.

Nasta is the author of many chemical dependency related articles which are published regularly in the *Staten Island Advance*.

Nasta and his wife, the former Mary Rose McBrien, reside in Frenchtown, New Jersey with their two sons, Cole, 19, and Sean, 16 and their daughter, Madeline, 13.

Nasta also has a son, Luke, 35 from a previous marriage, and four grandchildren.



View from the First Row

The Tale of Two Students, or How Can You Possibly Blame the Teacher?

*I*t was the best of times, it was the worst of times...

In one of the richest cities in the world, live two children, though a few miles apart, they might as well live in two different worlds.

Miranda lives with her college graduated Mom and Dad and two siblings in a home flush with magazines, newspapers and a library full of books. Her mother is a free-lance writer which gives her time to attend school functions, and her dad is in finance.

Not quite a white picket fence, but they live in a full service condo with a concierge for package deliveries, pick up and drop off dry cleaning, and a pool and gym on the 12th floor. They employ baby sitters when needed and cleaning help. Fresh-Direct groceries and take out food are delivered regularly.

Miranda was in a play group until age 1 ½ and then went to a private competitive nursery school. A family illness is a trip to a private doctor with costs paid for by medical insurance. Miranda's grandmother is not well and lives in a nearby private nursing home.

Sometimes on long school vacations, Miranda's homework is not done as the family dashes off to some Caribbean island.

Joelle lives with her working parents and two siblings. Her mother has a GED and works as a nurse's aide, and her father dropped out of school when his dad died, is a custodial worker in a public school.

The family lives in a 4th floor walkup. The water that puddles on the floor from the leaky roof cannot be compared with Miranda's 12th floor swimming pool. And who needs a gym when

there are four flights to carry up groceries? All the daily chores are done after work or on the weekend leaving little time for recreation.

Joelle's family is tight knit and supportive. Their grandmother cared for the children until they began kindergarten. Without medical insurance, an illness is a trip to the emergency room. All three children are taken out of school when one is ill because there is no guarantee that one of Joelle's parents will be home by 3:00 p.m. to pick up the well children.

Joelle's grandfather is not well and lives with the family. Aunts, uncles, and cousins take care of him during the day when Joelle's family is at work. When one doesn't show up, one of Joelle's parents must stay home and lose pay. Her mom's boss is threatening to fire her because of her attendance.

They enter school and we use the same measuring stick to evaluate their teacher's effectiveness.

Let's go to the research.

With knowledge that vocabulary experience is the building block of reading, it is no surprise that children with low vocabulary struggle with reading.

On their first day of kindergarten, average achievement scores for young children in the most impoverished families are 60% lower than scores for children in the highest income families. (*Inequality at the Starting Gate*, News Conference. September 2002)

After a 2 ½ year longitudinal study, researchers Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley found that "the average child in the professional families with 215,000 words of language experience, the average child in a working-class family provided with 125,000 words, and the average child in a welfare family with 62,000 words of language experience. In a 5,200-hour year, the amount would be 11.2 million words for a child in a professional family, 6.5 million words for a child in a working-class family, and 3.2 million words for a child in a welfare family. In four years of such experience, an average child in a professional family would have accumulated experience with almost 45 million words, an average child in a working-class family would have accumulated experience with 26 million words, and an average child in a welfare family would have accumulated experience with 13 million words."

Is poverty an excuse for non-achievement? – absolutely not. But don't ask teachers or students to perform without the necessary resources and support services to make achievement even a possibility.

- Loretta Prisco



Minutes

General Meeting November 15 2011

President Brown called the meeting to order at 8:25 p.m. and reviewed the agenda for the evening. He spoke about the great rally held on November 12 "Occupy Wall Street on Staten Island". He thanked S.I.D.A. members that participated as well as the members that helped set it up and arrange for media coverage. He thanked Mike Ryan for his spirited efforts in the recent race for Staten Island District Attorney.

President Brown announced that the next Executive Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 22 instead of November 23 due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

A correction was proposed for the October minutes. President Dennis Brown had not only thanked Mark Herman for the "Reflections" booklet for the 50th Anniversary Banquet but he had also thanked Tom Murphy for contributing and for getting it printed through the UFT.

The Motion to accept October's minutes as corrected passed.

Nominating Committee Report

Nominating Committee Chair Chris Bauer presented the report, which will appear in the December newsletter. President Brown mentioned that Peter Killen is stepping down from his at-large position on the Executive Committee to give someone else a chance to run. He said that Susan Chew is also stepping down and John Lavelle is stepping down as Vice-President. He has decided to run for an at-large position. President Brown thanked these members for their service.

Guest Speakers

Political Bloggers Gatemouth (Howard Grauburd) and Michael Bouldin were the guest speakers. President Brown explained how the Blog forum would be conducted. He reported that Roy Moskowitz was instrumental in setting up the blog panel and would serve as the moderator.

Both bloggers introduced themselves and gave a brief biography. They said they were here to speak on the work they do as bloggers. They discussed various topics; the 2011 election, the upcoming Congressional race for the 13th District, Former Congressman Weiner, same sex marriage and the Occupy Wall Street Movement.

Mark Herman asked the bloggers questions about whether the OWS movement would fizzle since the police moved in on them. Several other S.I.D.A. members asked questions as well. President Brown thanked Michael Bouldin and Howard Grauburd (the bloggers) for their spirited discussion.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Tom Shcherbenko stated that the balance on November 15, 2011 was \$9,877.68. Tom reported that he has paid all the Banquet expenses. He is still looking for people that owe money for journal ads.

Social Secretary's Report

Social Secretary Liz Price said she feels we will have a great party on December 8th (All Dems Holiday Party). The party will be held at The Crystal Room. She encouraged members to R.S.V.P by calling the number on the flyer. She asked people to send in their money for the party. Liz said that she needs help at the event and passed a sheet around so members could sign up to help.

Political Action Committee

Chair Richard Reichard thanked those that came out to participate in the OWS movement in St George. He also announced that the anti-Hydro fracking rally will be held on Saturday, November 19 at Silver Lake Park (exact location overlooking reservoir near Victory Blvd and Forest Avenue). He urged members to come out and participate at this rally as it is our last chance to do something. He said that they will be voting on this issue soon. Richard praised Susan and Carlton Chew for all the work they have done on this issue.

Issues Committee

Chair Loretta Prisco reported that Rich submitted a paper on Inequality and Democracy. They will have another meeting regarding this paper on November 20, 4:00 p.m. at her home.

Executive Secretary's Report

Executive Secretary Mark Herman spoke about Mike Ryan's recent race and felt that he was a good candidate. He also mentioned that the polls indicate that President Obama's approval rating has gone up a little bit. He said we should target ourselves to make a new commitment for next year.

Vice President's Report

Vice President John Lavelle provided highlights from the executive committee meeting held on October 26, 2011.

Cindy Lowney suggested that we use an egg timer to limit the time people can speak at S.I.D.A. meetings.

Publicity and Public Relations

Chair Roy Moskowitz mentioned that he has spoken to Laura LoBianco Sword (Democratic Organization of Richmond) about setting up a PAC (political action committee). He said he felt that we got good media coverage for the Occupy Wall Street event held in St. George. Mark Herman commended Roy for his work as Publicity and Public Relations chair.

NY for Clean Water

Peter Killen spoke for Susan Chew and said that they will be voting on the hydro-fracturing issue soon and encouraged members to do what they can by attending the rally, giving out flyers and making phone calls.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:36 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.

On-line October 16, 2011

Printed October 16, 2011

Occupy Wall Street's Message Will Stand Strong Come Election

“**M**any media outlets have downplayed the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) protests, saying they lack a cohesive message. Sadly, Congressman Grimm has gone a step further, derisively labeling the protesters as ‘hippies and anarchists that just want to join in making traffic jams.’” (Your News Now, Syracuse, Oct. 7).

OWS has tapped into the reality of life for America’s youth. The frustration is potent and real among them. Instead of the Lost Generation, we are becoming the Generation of Lost Hope, with dreams for the future all but dead.

We are educated; we are active; we are many in number and we know the truth, that you and your congressional colleagues sit comfortably in your ivory tower with a government pension and health care, while you smugly laugh at us.

Rather than engage us in conversation, you call us names. Rather than work in Washington on our behalf, you are a staunch member of the Party of “NO.” Rather than listen to our concerns, you make jokes about traffic jams.

But today’s youth and tomorrow’s leaders will continue to protest; they will continue to march; they will continue to organize. And soon, they will vote against you in great numbers.

- Mike O’Brien

[The writer is president of the Young Democrats of Richmond County, on whose behalf he has written this letter.]

On-line October 16, 2011

Printed October 16, 2011

Change Tax Rules to be More Fair to Low-Wage Earners

Is tax fairness wrong?

Should oil companies continue to receive billions of dollars in tax breaks?

IRS data shows that almost 19,000 taxpayers with incomes of \$200,000 or more paid no income tax in 2008.

Also many high income taxpayers pay a lower tax rate than middle income taxpayers.

Warren Buffett, who is the second richest person in the country, said he paid a tax rate of only 17.4 percent, which is a lower tax rate than someone with a taxable income of \$50,000 paid.

- Is Warren Buffett trying to keep the current tax system in place? No, in fact he is a leading voice for tax fairness. He said, “I think that people at the high end — people like myself — should be paying a lot more in taxes.”

President Obama has put forth a plan to close tax loopholes, treat all forms of income equally and make the tax system more progressive and fair.

Congressman Grimm supports additional tax cuts for those with high incomes.

Which tax plan do you support? Tax fairness or additional tax cuts for those with high incomes?

The 2012 election will be a referendum on which tax plan the country will follow.

- *Richard Reichard*

On-line October 16, 2011

Printed October 16, 2011

Wall Street Protesters Speak for Many, No Matter What GOP Says

Rep. Eric Cantor, the Republican House Majority Leader, talks about the Wall Street protesters as “growing mobs.”

Nothing could be further from the truth. That’s a typical Republican strategy — and one that our own Rep. Michael Grimm engages in often — of demonizing anyone who disagrees with him rather than engaging in the discussion.

These are peaceful demonstrations cropping up all over the country of people frustrated with a broken government totally out of touch with the needs of its citizenry.

Cantor goes on to describe the protesters as “pitting Americans against Americans.”

Surely he was looking in the mirror when he said that. He has presided over one of the most polarized Houses in our history; one where fanatical adherence to an anti-tax ideology trumps all reason and paralyzes the government.

We are a country that has lost its moral compass where corporations, considered people by our Supreme Court, can buy Congress, where the middle and lower classes have seen their jobs, pensions, health-care coverage and home equity gone or severely depleted; a country where the people who wrecked the economy got off Scot free leaving the rest of us to hold the bag.

- *Susan Rappaport*

On-line November 9, 2011

Printed November 9, 2011

Writer Twisted Lawmaker's Tea Party Comment

I read with some confusion a letter [on silive.com] from Michael Bilotti of Great Kills.

He alleges I called Tea Party members “Nazis.”

That is absurd.

Here is the exchange in the Nov. 2 article:

“Grimm pointed to recent reports that the liberal activist group ACORN, or groups affiliated with it, are behind the protesters.

“‘It’s not even a legitimate cause any more,’ he said.

“Ms. Savino called the charge ‘nonsense.’

“That’s the same as the left saying that the Tea Party protests are being run by Nazis,” she said.”

So, you see, Mr. Bilotti, I am in some way defending them from the rhetoric used by the far left. It leaves me to wonder what your motives are by misrepresenting the truth.

- *State Sen. Diane Savino*

[The writer represents the 23rd Senate District (North Shore and South Brooklyn) in the New York State Senate.]

On-line November 10, 2011

Printed November 21, 2011

Justice Thomas Should not Rule on the Affordable Care Act

Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens wrote, "It is confidence in the men and women who administer the judicial system that is the true backbone of the rule of law."

This month, the Staten Island Democratic Association, in agreement with Justice Stevens, passed two motions regarding lack of confidence in one of the men who administers the judicial system.

The first motion asks that Justice Clarence Thomas recuse himself from deciding the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act. The SIDA believes that since Justice Thomas' wife was president and CEO of a political organization whose sole purpose was to oppose the Affordable Care Act, a ruling by Justice Thomas might be based on political considerations and not the rule of law.

The second motion supports the request made by Congresswoman Louise Slaughter and other members of Congress, that the Justice Department investigate whether Justice Thomas was in compliance with the Ethics in Government Act. He indicated on his financial disclosure forms that his wife did not earn any income, when in fact she earned almost \$700,000 from another political organization, the Heritage Foundation.

Congresswoman Slaughter's letter to the Justice Department can be found on SIDA's web site www.sidems.org.

- Dennis Brown

[The writer is president of the Staten Island Democratic Association.]

On-line November 13, 2011

Printed November 13, 2011

O'Reilly Paints a Distorted Picture of Our Nation's History

In his Op Ed column of Oct. 30, Bill O'Reilly claims that America (I presume he meant the United States, because his premise doesn't apply to rest of America) was built on self-reliance and personal achievement.

However, he omits other important considerations such as slave labor and abundant natural resources. He then notes Lyndon Johnson's failed leadership regarding the Vietnam War, but somehow fails to mention Nixon's involvement.

O'Reilly claims that this country wasn't built by "pinheaded bureaucrats." He doesn't define or identify these bureaucrats, but would probably include cabinet members. But immeasurable contributions were made by William Seward, Frances Perkins, George Marshall and countless others. He may call them "pinheaded bureaucrats," I prefer to think of them as public servants.

O'Reilly then notes, referring to a period that existed only in his mind, there were rules of conduct. I guess those rules included stealing land from the Native Americans, the Mexicans, the Spanish or whoever else had it, renegeing on every treaty we made with Indians, and conducting genocide against them.

And all of this was done, as Superman, that undocumented alien said, on behalf of, "Truth, justice and the American way."

- Philip Blitz

On-line November 16, 2011

Printed November 17, 2011

Republicans Fail to Tell The Whole Truth about Taxes

When asked why they believe it isn't fair to have millionaires pay additional income taxes, Republicans respond by saying why should millionaires pay more income taxes when almost half of all taxpayers do not pay any income tax.

Who are these taxpayers that Republicans believe should be paying income taxes?

Eight percent are over the age of 65 and 6 percent are students. About three quarters make less than \$25,000.

Half of these taxpayers had their taxable income reduced below the threshold for paying income tax due to the personal exemptions for taxpayers and dependents, and the standard deduction.

About another 40 percent had their taxable income reduced below the threshold because they are entitled to the extra standard deduction for the elderly, a tax exclusion for a portion of their Social Security benefits, the child tax credit, and/or the earned income tax credit.

The reason Republicans never spell out how they would make these seniors, students and low-income taxpayers pay income taxes is because they would need to eliminate the exemptions, deductions, exclusions and tax credits.

However, by doing so, every middle-income taxpayer, who also benefits from them, would see their income tax increase.

- Richard Reichard

On-line November 17, 2011

Grimm Faces a Decision on a Radical Gun Bill

Coming soon to your neighborhood: Lax gun laws from Texas , Georgia , Alabama and every other state. That is, if the NRA and the gun industry get their way in Congress.

A bill that would strip New York 's ability to enforce its own laws when it comes to who should be able to carry a hidden loaded gun in public will be voted on this week in Congress.

The bill, HR 822, would create the first federal reciprocity for gun laws throughout the country. That means New York would be forced to allow people with out-of-state gun permits to carry here, even if they were not allowed to own or carry a gun under New York law.

Many states have much weaker rules on getting a permit to carry a gun in public, including no safety training requirements, denying law enforcement discretion and issuing permits to violent misdemeanors.

In addition, a newspaper investigation in Florida found that more than 1,400 gun permits were issued to convicted felons over a 6-month period by the State of Florida . If HR 822 passes, those convicted felons would legally be able to carry guns in New York.

This dangerous bill is part of a radical gun industry agenda to force all states to put gun interests ahead of public safety. It undermines New York 's right to determine our own laws. It endangers law enforcement working to keep guns out of the hands of criminals. Prepare to see guns flood our neighborhoods as dangerous criminals rush to get permits from other states so they can legally carry concealed weapons on our streets and traffic firearms with no fear of prosecution.

Rep. Michael Grimm, has accepted large campaign contributions from the National Rifle Association. Rep. Grimm needs to make a decision. He can either stand up for public safety and

stand with New Yorkers by opposing this legislation, or he can stand with the gun industry, support this bill, and undermine New York gun laws.

- Phil Jonas

On-line November 21, 2011

Printed November 21, 2011

Too Many Unanswered Questions about 'Fracking'

The following was sent to Gov. Andrew Cuomo:

We are writing to ask that you ban hydraulic fracturing - “fracking” - in New York State. There are too many unanswered questions regarding the safety, and the probable risks are too catastrophic to take a chance on allowing this practice.

However many jobs the process would bring to New York State, the very possible consequences of contaminating the drinking water of millions of residents far outweigh any possible benefits.

The environmental disasters that have occurred throughout the country have demonstrated that the natural gas companies cannot be trusted to be diligent in protecting the environment. Once our pure water has been contaminated, there is no going back - ever.

Some of the questions that are unanswered are:

- What is in the fracking fluid?
- How could they prevent the millions of gallons of water tainted with toxic fracking fluid from migrating into our watersheds?
- How could they recover this tainted water?
- And, how could they dispose of this tainted water safely?

- Joann Olbrich

On-line November 25, 2011

Printed November 25, 2011

Grimm Should Care More about Jobs than about Protesters

Your coverage of Michael Grimm’s outburst against Occupy Wall Street (Nov. 18) shows that he does not “get it.”

OWS is a spontaneous protest of the unwillingness of people like Grimm to help solve the present economic quagmire.

He is insensitive to the plight of many of his unemployed constituents and oblivious to their prime obstacle, the lack of JOBS.

He has opposed bills to provide those jobs which would have hired now jobless workers to rebuild crumbling roads, buildings and bridges. They would have spent the money to live, rather than hoard it as the wealthy people Grimm favors do. The latter simply do not need to buy much that they don’t already have. These works will serve many generations.

He refuses to tax the wealthiest, who gained many of their advantages from government services and programs paid for by taxes.

The protesters want, desperately, to rejoin the working force but no openings exist.

- Ralph Dickar

On-line November 27, 2011
Printed November 27, 2011

Smug Critics of OWS Protesters are Out of Touch with Reality

Re: "Grimm to 99ers: Hit the showers!" Advance Nov. 18:

I never realized how out of touch John and Derek Tabacco are with reality.
"Occupy a Desk?" "Occupy a Job?"

Talk to recent college graduates, business majors like my son, and ask them what it's like in the real world, Jobs are few and far between, and desk jobs are practically non-existent.

Ignorance of unemployment statistics should disqualify these two from seeking public office.

But maybe they're not as foolish as Michael Grimm, who voted for the Korea Free Trade Agreement while criticizing Occupy Wall Street. Thanks, Mike, maybe some college grads in Korea will have desk jobs.

- Tom Shcherbenko

On-line November 27, 2011
Printed November 27, 2011

Guantanamo Continues to be a Stain on Our Nation's Honor

This has been sent to Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta:

I am writing to let you know that at least part of the American Public has not forgotten the stain on American democracy that is the continued detention of prisoners at Guantanamo.

This is a human rights violation and President Obama has acknowledged as much.

I am aware that much domestic policy has been stymied by the Republican "just say no" policy in Congress, but this is not domestic policy.

The American people want action to show that this administration, unlike the last, has respect for human rights and the rule of law.

One case that could at least show some progress in that direction is that of Shaker Aamer.

He has been held without charge for over nine years, despite the British government's request for his return. The U.S. government should either charge and fairly try him in U.S. federal court, or release him to the U.K.

- Joy Robins

Printed November 30, 2011 in the *Daily News*

Voicer Sean Tenety blames President Obama and congressional Democrats for the exploding national debt. But the trillions added to the debt in recent years, as well as most of the deficit, are due to the Bush tax cuts, which went to the wealthy; the unfunded Bush wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; the Bush unfunded Medicare prescription drug program, written by and for the pharmaceutical industry, and the repeal of regulations put in place after the Depression to prevent it from happening again.

- Joann Olbrich

On-line December 2, 2011

Park Service Should Heed the Warnings of Local Experts

For the past 35 years, we have been very lucky on Staten Island to have an organization of naturalists and environmentalists who understand our local flora and fauna.

That organization is the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods (PPOW).

When our local parks departments work in conjunction with PPOW, only good things happen — witness the Greenbelt.

I was a little surprised, then, to hear that the National Park Service is going ahead with a project to plant 1,000 trees at Crookes Point without listening to the concerns raised by our local experts.

They are saying that using herbicides and bulldozing to destroy the existing natural area at Crookes Point makes no sense.

Dear NPS — please listen.

- Sally Jones


The Grimmch Who Stole Christmas

The following poem was sent in an e-mail from Teresa Caliarì.

Twas the night before Christmas,
when all through the house,
all the congressman were stirring,
even the mouse.

The people were waiting
by their TVs with care,
in hopes that the Republicans
would give them their share.

The children were nestled
all snug in their beds,
while visions of better schools
danced in their heads.

And mamma in her Snuggie,
and I in my robe,
sat on the old sofa
and tried to feel hope.

When out on the TV screen
there arose such a clatter
we turned up the volume
to see what was the matter.

Away to the House floor
They cut with great speed
The anchor was ready
to pick up the feed.

The floodlights on the steps
of the great hall
Gave a sense of importance
to what was about to befall.

When what to my wondering eyes should appear
But Representative Grimm
smiling from ear to ear.

With a nod to the folks
a quick fix of his tie
we crossed all our fingers
and gave a big sigh.

More rapid than eagles his wishes they came,
And he chortled and shouted and called them by name.

"No Medicare" "No Medicaid" "No payroll tax relief"
What do you lowlifes expect -Good grief-
"Cut Medicaid doctors' payments, unemployment benefits too, Social Security is a Ponzi scheme.
You don't need this stuff do you?"

"Stop your complaining.
Don't give me a call.
Now dash away dash away dash away all."

In a wink of an eye and a twist of his head.
He soon gave me to know I had plenty to dread.

He spoke these words
That went straight to my heart
And filled me with sadness
Where can I start?

A tear trickled down the side of my nose
For we got a thorn for a present instead of a rose.

I sprang from my couch,
to my family gave a shout,
"All I want for Christmas
is to get this guy out!
You are the 99%
Don't forget that my dears
Happy Holidays to all- CHEERS!"



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TEACHING
We're not in it for the income;
We're in it for the outcome.



If you miss the way it used to be - then tax a millionaire, support a union, and buy American.

Upcoming Meetings

| December 20, 21 | January 17, 2012 |
|--|---|
| General Meeting Karl's Klipper, 40 Bay Street | General Meeting Karl's Klipper, 40 Bay Street |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker Luke Nasta, on the prescription drug problem • Statements by candidates for Executive Committee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker TBA • Executive Committee Election |

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