

Democratic eagles gather at East Side forum

by Meg Laporte

It was an all-star cast of Democrats that gathered in the auditorium of the N.Y.U. Medical Center on Sunday, May 7th.

The occasion was the Statewide Democratic Candidate Forum sponsored by seven East Side Democratic clubs, including our own.

Moderating the event was Edward-Isaac Dovere, political editor of *Our Town* weekly newspaper.

Joining Dovere on stage were State Assembly Members Jonathan Bing, Pete Grannis and Sylvia Friedman. Each welcomed the audience and candidates with brief remarks.

State Senator Liz Krueger, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer and Council Members Dan Garodnick and Rosie Mendez were also present to hear the candidates.

Attorney General

Denise O'Donnell, the only woman and upstater seeking the Attorney General nomination, was the first candidate to speak.

She emphasized that her background as a professional prosecutor in the U.S. Attorney's office was the best qualification for the State Attorney General position.

Next came **Charlie King**, former lieutenant governor hopeful, who stressed his plan for education, health care, government accountability and protecting the American dream.

Sean Patrick Maloney, perhaps the most partisan candidate, outlined his progressive priorities that included fighting back against the regressive Bush policies, including suing the National Security Administration over wiretapping.

East Sider and former public advocate

Mark Green argued that becoming New York's attorney general was the logical continuation of his public service career that began with Ralph Nader, went on to being the city's commissioner of consumer affairs and then the city's public advocate, where, among other things, he fought against cigarette advertising by "demolishing" Joe Camel.

Former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development **Andrew Cuomo** wrapped up the attorney general portion of the forum.

He was the only candidate whose staff blanketed the neighborhood with signs. Cuomo cited his experience working with his father in Albany, running a not-for-profit housing agency, and his years with the Clinton administration. Cuomo called for social justice to make a difference in people's lives and for political reform to repair the dysfunction in Albany.

Lieutenant Governor

State Senate Democratic Leader **David Paterson**, the unopposed Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor, described his priorities for the office as stem cell research, economic development, energy policy and crime prevention.

The final candidate to speak was introduced by Assembly Member Jonathan Bing as a fellow East Sider and constituent.

Standing ovation

State Attorney General **Eliot Spitzer**, candidate for governor, was welcomed with a standing ovation. He harkened back to all the great political ideas that originated here in the Empire State and reminded us of the ideals and passions we all share as Democrats. **LDC**

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Attorney General Eliot Spitzer addresses forum. Assembly Member Pete Grannis, Our Town editor Edward-Isaac Dovere and Assembly Member Jonathan Bing listen.



Scott Stringer and Dan Garodnick put their heads together. Hmmm. Who will it be?

Jonathan Bing delivers a forum on budget successes and setbacks in Albany

by George Morin

Jonathan Bing began the members' forum at Brown Gardens on April 20th with a tutorial on the Albany budget process and how it works (or doesn't).

Governor proposes

The governor proposes his budget at the end of January and has 30 days to make amendments. That leaves the Legislature just five or six weeks to determine how to spend \$110 or \$120 billion.

But with 12 new bi-partisan conference committees created through legislation that Scott Stringer carried and Bing sponsored last year, the process worked. Each of the 12 conference committees studied and made recommendations on a different subject. The results were then reported to the "mother ship," the speaker and majority leader, to be put into the final budget.

Legislative open process

The entire process was done entirely in the open. So much so that viewers could watch the conference committees on cable TV.

With the second on-time budget in as many years, after 22 years of missing the deadline, Assembly Member Bing praised both houses and parties for working together to approve the budget before the April 1 deadline – with some nine hours to spare.

Governor vetoes

Bing also reported that the governor vetoed 207 lines in the budget and those items will not become law unless they are overridden by the Legislature.

Items that the governor did not veto have already become law.

NYC Education

"The number one issue we have been dealing with has been education, specifically the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (C.F.E.) lawsuit," Bing said.

"As it has gone through the courts, the governor has appealed it every step of the way, spending about \$13 million ... fighting against the notion that New York City deserves a fair share of education funding.

"In the Legislature we took a big step in fulfilling the C.F.E. mandate.

"In fact in capital funding the budget satisfies the C.F.E. decision allowing the building of more schools, more classrooms and expansion to the

tune of \$2.6 billion. And over five years it will allow over \$10 billion more for school construction throughout the state.

"However," Bing continued, "the governor did veto the operating funding of \$501 million more for New York City. We expect to override that veto."

Library funding

Library funding is of particular interest to Bing because the city has also been shortchanged on that.

The state has been using 1990 census figures instead of the 2000 figures that reflects the city's growth in population. "The state will provide \$1.5 million more in library funding for New York City," Bing reports.

"That's the difference between a branch library being open or closed on weekends, and having enough books and computers."

Higher education

The Legislature's budget also added \$239 million for SUNY, CUNY and community colleges across the state while blocking the governor's tuition hikes of \$500 for SUNY students and \$300 for CUNY students.

Health care

"The final budget issue is health care," Bing said. "The governor proposed an eight-fold increase in family co-payments for hospitals in the city, including Mt. Sinai, New York University Medical Center, and New York Presbyterian-Cornell.

"We restored the funds and the governor vetoed the restoration."

Vetoes overrides

In the week following the forum, the Assembly and Senate overrode nearly all of the 207 vetoes, restoring much of funding for education, health care and other priorities.

But it's not over yet

A final twist to the battle between the Executive and Legislature over the budget is a court order that stated only the governor can change the language in the budget, allowing Pataki to claim vetoes are not valid if they change the budget's language.

"We believe our vetoes are legal," said Bing.

Stay tuned. **LDC**



Assembly Member Jonathan Bing conducts New York State budget tutorial at Club forum

On the front line of NYC's garbage crisis

New York City has had a garbage crisis for over 100 years. And in all that time, no public official has done anything good about it.

Mayor Bloomberg is no exception.

What the City needs is a world-class, state-of-the-art processing and recycling system that will be a model for the world.

Instead, the mayor proposes a series of marine transfer stations in the five boroughs that will pack the putrescible, i.e., stinky, garbage into containers and send it by barge, rail and long-haul trucks to landfills in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Virginia— where the stuff is *already* going.

Remember the Barge to Nowhere?

One of the more insane ideas is to rebuild Yorkville's old 91st Street Marine Transfer Station and haul the garbage over the ramp that cuts through the largest recreational complex on the East Side – Asphalt Green. With a toddler's playground on one side and a large playing field used by kids and adults from all over the city on the other, the stinky loads will queue up 24/6 for the next 20 years.

"Not in anyone's backyard."

The mayor stands staunchly against all protests claiming they're the expected "not in my backyard" mentality.

In response, the Yorkville residents and elected officials scream back, "Not in anyone's backyard."

Huge problem, puny solution

While the reopening of the 91st Street Marine Transfer Station seems like a local problem affecting only one Manhattan neighborhood, in fact it's a key part of an unsatisfactory attempt to solve an enormous city problem – a problem that will only get worse unless it's tackled on a scale equal to it.

Once voted down

The 91st Street site had been voted down by the City Council in 2005 but there weren't enough votes to defeat the mayor's veto.

It is now up to our own Jessica Lappin, the Council District 5 member, to lead the fight in the Council. A vote on the entire plan will come sometime in late spring or early summer.

Contact the speaker

Because the new speaker, Christine Quinn, has not yet weighed in on the issue, Jessica has requested that opponents of the plan contact Speaker Quinn *immediately* to express their views.

The speaker can be reached by mail at City Hall, New York, NY 10001, by phone at 212 788-5615 or at www.nycouncil.info (Click on "Contact the Speaker")

—George Morin

On a personal note

by June Goldberg

Along with petitioning, flyer-ing, and campaigning with candidates, part of what a political club should do, and what this Club does very well, is provide club members with forums to discuss current important issues with our elected officials.

These meetings are the only real opportunity many of us have to meet with our representatives at length in an informal atmosphere.

Social Security and Avian flu

Over the last couple of years there have been several exceedingly informative meetings.

One was on the issues facing Social Security with our Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney along with expert opinions from an accountant and an actuary.

There was also a carefully thought out meeting on the Avian flu that was presented by high-

ly qualified physicians.

Garodnick & Bing

In addition, there have been wonderful discussions with Council Member Dan Garodnick and Assembly Member Jonathan Bing. Plus a thought-provoking meeting on the prospect of building a Westside stadium.

Despite the superb effort of Program Chair Arthur Schiff in lining up the programs and of club volunteers who sent out the mailings to inform the membership about the programs, the attendance at these meetings has been very, very small.

Too good to miss

I want to urge people to attend them. They have been exceptional, and really too good and interesting to miss. **LDC**

Reviews: Two new books and one golden oldie for Democratic activists

Hostile Takeover

by David Sirota

This is the definitive handbook about how the country has been taken over by the far right and its allies and what we must do to take it back.

Thoroughly footnoted and indexed, it's a must read and invaluable reference for everyone on the streets, on the phones, and at the doors during the battles ahead.

Foxes in the Henhouse

by Steve Jarding and Dave "Mudcat" Saunders

Here are the downhome recipes for Democratic victories in the South and the Heartland. While aimed at rural voters, the principles and strategies are easily applied across all demos. Very informative section on how Democratic leadership under FDR, JFK and LBJ have made America the great country it is today.

This book aims to help keep it that way.

The Republican Noise Machine

by David Brock

This 2004 book by the former Conservative journalist lays out the massive neocon propaganda machine from talk radio to stealth character attacks. A must read if you want to know what's really going on.

Marching for humanity

by Lawrence Goodman

On April 30, 2006, I proudly joined tens of thousands of Americans in Washington, D.C. for a rally to demand an end to the genocide occurring in Sudan's Darfur region.

People united

Bus loads of students, evangelical Christians, Jewish groups, African-American civic organizations and others came together at the National Mall in front of the Capitol, chanting "enough is enough" and waving placards that read "stop the genocide."

Genocidal horror

Since February 2003, Sudanese government forces and their proxy militia known as *Janjaweed* (which in Arabic means "evil men on horseback") have been engaged in a genocidal campaign to wipe out communities of African tribal farmers in Darfur.

Three million homeless

According to the American Jewish World Service, the Janjaweed attacks have displaced three million people from their homes, forcing them to flee to barren refugee camps. The group estimates that 400,000 civilians have been killed as a result of the violence, malnutrition and disease since the crisis began.

"Never again," redux

The central theme conveyed by the more than thirty speakers who spoke at the rally was that the United States could not and should not allow a repeat of 20th century genocide, includ-

ing the Armenian massacre, the Holocaust, Bosnia and, more recently, the killings in Rwanda and Somalia.

"Stop the massacre!"

"We are here because of leaders who are timorous, complacent, and unwilling to take risks," Elie Wiesel, the Holocaust survivor and Nobel laureate, told the crowd.



"We want them to take risks and stop the massacre."

Barack Obama, the junior senator from Illinois said, "Today we know what is right and wrong. Silence and acquiescence in the face of genocide is wrong."

Where the U.S. stands

Congress and President Bush have declared the killings in Darfur to be genocide.

The United States has allocated \$123 million in supplemental funding to support the ill-equipped African Union troops who are protecting civilians in Sudan.

Both the House and the Senate have passed amendments to add another \$50 million to his amount for a total of \$173 million for Darfur peacekeeping.

Russia and China blocks U.N. effort

The United States also supports transferring the task of protecting civilians to the United Nations, which has more resources than the African Union, but thus far Russia and China have blocked the move.

We must speak up

We cannot allow the atrocities in Darfur to continue. It is imperative that we maintain the pressure on our elected officials to support the full fiscal year 2006 emergency supplemental funding request (\$514 million) for continued peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance in Darfur.

In short, we must speak up.

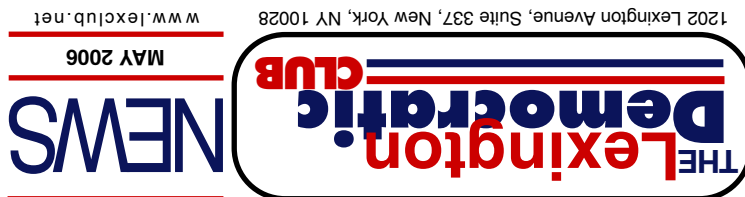
The danger of doing nothing

The downside to indifference is an intolerable burden to bear.

As Einstein said, "The world is too dangerous a place to live not because of the people who do evil, but because of the people who sit by and let it happen." **LDC**

INSIDE: Report on the East Side statewide candidate forum, Bing's forum on the budget, a weekend marching for humanity, the garbage crisis and more.
ABOVE FOLD: News and views from our representatives

**ENDORSEMENT
MEETING
AND VOTE**
 Thursday, June 1, 2006
 6-9 p.m.
Ruppert
Community Room
 222 East 93rd Street
 (btwn 2nd & 3rd Avenues
 across from Brown Gardens)
 Lex Club members will vote for the
 Democratic candidates to endorse in
 the September primary and for the
 Judicial Convention delegates.



OFFICIALS' ROUNDUP

Recent news and views from Club's elected officials

State Senator Liz Krueger and Assembly Member Jonathan Bing worked in their respective houses of the Legislature to override the governor's budget vetoes and now are faced with the governor's claim that some vetoes are unconstitutional, demonstrating that more budget reform is urgently needed.

Liz Krueger announces East Side senior housing opportunities.

Senator Krueger is informing constituents that East Side Senior Housing is now accepting applications for 12 affordable studio and 1-bedroom apartments under construction at 231 East 77th Street. Rents will be \$837-\$895 a month depending on unit size. To be eligible you must be 62 or older. If a couple, the younger must be at least 55. Send a SASE to East Side Senior Housing, P.O. Box 428, Woodmere, NY 11598 for an application. Deadline for a submitted application is a 6/12/06 postmark.

New light bulbs save money and energy

Senator Krueger notes that the new gener-

ation of compact fluorescent light bulbs offer high-quality light and use only a fraction of the power. The new, improved bulbs last 15 times longer than old fashioned bulbs.

Jonathan Bing announces passage of Rockefeller Drug Law Reform bill.

The Assembly passed the bill that Assembly Member Bing sponsored to reform New York's ineffective and outdated Rockefeller drug laws. The plan would steer non-violent offenders into compulsory drug treatment instead of prison, saving the state and estimated \$123 million a year. The bill also cracks down on violent offenders and helps treat the causes of drug-related crime.

Bing's Summer Reading Challenge

Assembly Member Bing has issued his annual challenge to students in his district. Students reading 15 minutes a day for at least 40 days this summer will receive a NYS Assembly Excellence in Reading certificate.

Carolyn Maloney reports developments in the 9/11 health crisis.

Congresswoman Maloney confirmed that the toxic soup at Ground Zero in the days and weeks after the the 9/11 attack is responsible for killing some who worked at the site. An autopsy of an NYPD detective confirmed that his death was caused by Ground Zero toxins.

The tragic death proves that the 9/11 health crisis is one the federal government can't ignore. After prodding by New York representatives the federal 9/11 Health Coordinator offered some hope that the federal response to the crisis will be beefed up.

Dire new warnings about tanning beds

The millions of Americans who use tanning beds need to be informed about the grave dangers of skin cancer. Warnings now posted on the beds are inadequate. Americans must be informed that even one tanning on a tanning bed might cause melanoma. Ms. Maloney has introduced legislation that will address the issue. **LDC**