

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN REFORM DEMOCRATIC CLUB
GENERAL MEETING, Wednesday, July 27, 2022
Via Zoom Electronic Communication

President Virginia Krompinger began by stressing the importance of the membership telling their friends and neighbors about the primary on August 23rd and that Miguelina Camilo is the best candidate for state senate. She then recognized Assemblyman Jeff Dinowitz to give a legislative report.

Legislative Report

Jeff Dinowitz made some remarks on the most recent legislative session. He reported that Gov. Kathy Hochul called a special session of the Legislature on June 30th. Before that date, *Roe v. Wade* and New York state's 100-year-old concealed carry licensing law were both overturned by the U. S. Supreme Court. Jeff noted that these outcomes were caused by the 2016 election of Donald Trump who was then able to appoint the Supreme Court justices who made the majority in these cases. In the special session, the Assembly:

- set objective standards for who may get a concealed carry permit to cure the Supreme Court's finding that the old law was too subjective
- again relying on language in the Supreme Court decision, set specific locations where guns may not be carried—e.g., schools, hospitals, parks, among other places
- also adopted first passage of Equality Amendment, which will have to be voted on again

With these changes, the new gun law and action on the amendment were passed by the Legislature.

Primary Campaign Remarks

Jeff then made some remarks regarding the June primary. He thanked all those who supported him. He won by a large margin against a well-financed opponent. The Working Families Party came out strongly against him; suggested he was responsible for the Twin Parks fire. There is more Democratic Socialists of America influence in the Working Families Party now; many labor groups left Working Families. In the state Democratic Committee race, Johanna Lujan Edmondson came close, but was defeated by Morgan Evers; Mike Heller won. Wishes he had focused more on state committee race. He further noted that a key part of the job of state committee members is their relationship with electeds. All five of the judicial candidates were elected. Jeff recognized Cynthia Isales and Yadhira Gonzalez-Taylor, two of the club-endorsed, primary-elected judicial candidates, as attending tonight's meeting.

On March 2nd, Jeff noted, *The Riverdale Press* ran a front-page headline, "Parole Reform Takes Center Election Stage", but no one raised this issue to him during the campaign. It is hurtful to him when people say things that aren't true, suggesting that he blocked the rape intoxication loophole bill. Just because he is chair of the Assembly Codes Committee, that doesn't mean that things he supports always pass the committee. Hold Gustavo Rivera [chair of the Senate Health Committee] to the same standard. The NY Health Act, hasn't passed either, but is Gustavo responsible for its failure?

Gustavo Rivera has accused Jeff of lying about his record. Gustavo supports defund the police. He has done it on Twitter; he has taken stands against legislation prohibiting BDS also on Twitter. We have a great candidate in Miguelina [Camilo]. She is the only state senate candidate who lives in the senate district.

Jeff acknowledged that Morgan Evers and Ramdat Singh, recently elected state committee members, were attending tonight's meeting.

Virginia then opened the floor for questions. State Committee Member Michael Heller, who had been assigned to manage the "Zoom" floor discussion, recognized Vice President Helen Morik who asked, Does the new law identify where guns are permitted? In other words, what are the places to avoid? "Do

not go to a Republican rally,” Jeff quipped. Actually, the law specifically affects the concealed carry of guns. Government buildings, parks, schools, hospitals, court houses, and Times Square are places where you may not bring a gun. The law conforms to Supreme Court language that invited states only to describe where guns could not be carried.

Michael then recognized Treasurer Robin Weinstein. Robin stated she’d just returned from Chicago where she noticed No Gun signs (outline of gun in a red circle with a line through it) on shops like a Nordstrom’s she visited. This was jarring. She asked if you can forbid guns in malls and bowling alleys in NY. Jeff responded that concealed guns are not excluded where they are invited. For example, you can post your property guns welcome. You cannot bring guns into places that serve alcohol.

President Krompinger noted that our endorsed state senate candidate, Miguelina Camilo, was now in attendance and would speak later on. She also noted the attendance of Council Member Dinowitz who works with veterans, organizes our outdoor movies, hosts shredding events—which are quite popular—organizes food distribution events and works against anti-Semitism on college campuses. She called on him to give a report.

City Council Report

Council Member Eric Dinowitz spoke about the discretionary budget. He has secured \$16 million for parks and schools, including Van Cortlandt Park. He has also booked four movies for his outdoor series. His e-newsletter has detailed information about this. It also includes in depth discussions of school funding. Some of the issues facing our schools are:

- schools are given projections on the number of students in June, which determines funding; figures are adjusted in Oct./Nov., but principals must make decisions on class sizes, arts programs, etc. before Nov./Dec. adjustment, which will determine actual dollars received
- classification of students also determines dollars received; this could incentivize misclassification, putting students in programs that receive more money, but aren’t what kids really need
- anti-Semitism on college campuses has been a big issue for years: swastikas drawn with fecal matter, students being called “dirty Jews” and these violations not being addressed by CUNY
- NYS wants to end legacy admissions; this disproportionately impacts students of color who often don’t come from families that have a history of attending college

Eric also noted that redistricting is currently going on. District 11 should get larger. Give your public comments on redistricting at: publictestimony@redistricting.nyc.gov. Finally, Eric reported that Miguelina did extremely well in the recent debate. He also went door knocking with her and got a very favorable response from many residents who knew her from her past community activism.

Helen Morik asked if any money had been appropriated for mental health in the schools. Eric said yes. He pointed to the BeHeard program, which is a mental health response to non-gun/non-violent situations. He estimates \$50 million for this. Also, \$14 million for community schools that include mental health services.

Ned Klein asked about class size in public schools. Where is the federal money going? Eric responded that, with the DOE, a lot of that is opaque. For example, when it comes to students in foster care, council members asked if jobs counseling students who were in foster care were being advertised. After 10 minutes of back and forth with DOE officials, they found that these jobs were only posted internally. As for class size, that is also regrettably opaque. The City government talks about the space around the student rather than the number of students per teacher.

Senate Candidate Campaign Report

President Krompinger called on our endorsed state senate candidate, Miguelina Camilo. She has been from the beginning a candidate for district 33, formerly that of Senator Alessandra Biaggi. She reported enjoying working with Jeff. She has been an attorney in the community for 10 years, has worked with attorneys who wanted to be judges, has worked in family court, and learned the political system. She attended NYU, her dream school, and went on to New York Law School. Her father had planned to save money and return to the Dominican Republic to attend medical school. However, upon his return, he saw his brothers living in poverty and told himself he could not bring his child into this. He went back to the U.S. and gave up his dream to give her a better life.

In politics, her mentor has been attorney Murray Richman. Important concerns for her are public safety and working with law enforcement.

Ira Bigeleisen said senior citizens are 30% of Riverdale's population, higher than other neighborhoods. How do you see their needs? Miguelina responded that she is concerned about accessibility. What kinds of services are nearby? She's looking at how our nursing homes are coming back from COVID-19 and how seniors can have dignity and be part of the community. She noted the reverse mortgage bill and the elder abuse program at the Hebrew Home.

Vice President Bruce Feld asked about health issues. What is your general approach to health issues in the Bronx? How do we get better health outcomes? Miguelina replied that, as an advocate, she has learned to ask for help and to build relationships so that she can get help. It's a hard task to get everyone to agree on single payer health insurance. All your resources have to go to it at the state and district level. I know how to bring stake holders to the table. "I never went to a doctor; I didn't have health insurance. I know what it is for our families not to think of it [health care] as something they're entitled to. We have so much asthma because of our situation."

Rich Liskov made some observations. He recommended that Miguelina remind voters that her opponent supported Jamaal Bowman and Bernie Sanders. Telling voters this will help. Also, make it clear that Rivera didn't run in this district. Al Sharpton is held in disrepute in Riverdale. Note to Riverdalians that your opponent was endorsed by Al 10 years ago. Miguelina responded that Rivera has to scream, 'I'm an incumbent' because he is not the incumbent of this district. I don't have to backtrack; I stand firmly against BDS.

Susan Goldy, a real estate businesswoman, asked about affordable housing. How do we balance an owner's need for money to maintain property vs. potential rent control and good cause eviction? Miguelina says she doesn't support the current Good Cause Eviction bill, but wants the good intentions behind it to be put into practice. As an attorney, she'll be looking at the details of any legislation and the impact the law will have.

Eric Dinowitz remarked on the good relationships that Miguelina has built. DC37 [the public employees' union] has endorsed her and they generally don't do this. He encouraged club members to volunteer to phone bank and go door knocking for Miguelina.

Michael Heller pointed out that her opponent supports defunding the police. What is Miguelina's stand on this issue? Miguelina said that is absolutely a no-go for her. "I have never uttered the words 'defund the police'. And I believe we can say in the same sentence that we want to root out the bad apples who don't uphold their mandate." Youth are extremely important to me—I want them to have positive interactions with law enforcement.

Dan Barnett wanted to express the position that in 2010 many got behind Gustavo Rivera to get rid of

State Senator Pedro Espada, a corrupt politician who ended up in jail. What sets you apart from Gustavo? What would you do better? Miguelina replied that she had never expected to be running against a sitting senator. Every endorsement of hers is from someone she knows and with whom she has worked. She wants people to know her, what she has done, and know they must vote on August 23rd. She counts on all of us to tell people to get out and vote. She is honored to have the club's support.

President Krompinger asked if there was any further business. There being none, she adjourned the meeting.

Minutes taken by Recording Secretary Nona Louise Dunbar