

**BENJAMIN FRANKLIN REFORM DEMOCRATIC CLUB
CANDIDATE FORUM #3, Thursday, April 28, 2022
Via Zoom electronic communication**

President Krompinger welcomed the attendees and candidates. She opened with remarks recognizing Holocaust Remembrance Day and the war in Ukraine. She reported that the club's petitioning effort was very successful. We have four women on the ballot for civil court judgeships.

We will first hear from Taisha Chambers, a civil court judge candidate. Although the club overlaps only a small portion of the East Bronx area, she values our role and wanted to address those members who may live in the district.

Taisha Chambers (Civil Court Judge candidate)

Remarks

- is from the east Bronx, lives in Co-op City
- did petitioning with Mike Heller a few years ago
- worked for an attorney on a variety of types of litigation
- has worked in family court on Sheridan Avenue

Senator Charles (Chuck) Schumer (candidate for reelection)

Remarks

- thanked the club for its work in the northwest Bronx
- Democratic caucus is working on an ambitious agenda
- caucus is in a new place this year; a 50-50 Senate is hard
- expanded unemployment insurance
- funded childcare
- got funding for restaurants and small businesses so they could survive pandemic
- Save Broadway Bill
- MetroNorth extension
- removing lead pipes from buildings
- funded WiFi for the urban poor and broadband to rural areas
- got women appointed to the federal bench including a Bangladeshi, a Muslim, and a daughter of Mexican immigrants
- led the charge for relief for yellow-taxi drivers
- in future, he would like to tackle:
 - income inequality
 - racial inequality
 - legalization of marijuana
 - lowering student debt
- Senator Schumer ended his remarks by asking for the club's endorsement

Q & A

- Q: If there was one message you felt Democrats needed to emphasize when talking to voters this year, what would that be?
 - it is getting harder and harder to get into the middle class; it is getting harder and harder to stay there

Congressman Tom Suozzi (candidate for governor)

Remarks

- who can run a \$220 billion enterprise?

- a former Nassau County executive
- someone who helped oversee the 12th largest police department in the nation
- someone who won't pander to the right or the left
- someone endorsed [in the past] by the League of Conservation Voters
- someone with an F rating from the NRA
- someone who is a lifelong Democrat
- NYS is corrupt—Dean Skelos, Sheldon Silver, etc., people are sick of that
- we spend more per student without getting academic results because we aren't well run
- we could save money by being better run and then lower taxes
- people are leaving NYS to go to FL, NC, and SC
- bring health and social services into the schools to help children at younger ages

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz (assemblyman's report)

- passed the state budget
- best one he's seen since he was elected
- got things done for education and childcare
- we delivered on a lot of priorities

Q & A

- Q: Bonita Smyer, What is happening with redistricting?
 - Assemblyman Dinowitz and President Krompinger stated that another candidate would speak to this issue later in the forum. President Krompinger noted that there would be phone banking for Assemblyman Dinowitz on Tuesday and Thursday next week.

Helen Morik (district leader candidate)

Remarks

- Helen will step down as candidate for this position because of her club responsibilities and the need for twice weekly physical therapy. Fortunately, she said, Sara Liss is available to take her place on the ballot.

Diana Reyna (lt. governor candidate)

Remarks

- running mate of gubernatorial candidate Tom Suozzi
- born and raised in Brooklyn
- of Dominican descent
- husband is a police lieutenant
- has two sons in the public schools
- a former district leader
- a former city council member
- first Latina to run for statewide office
- thinks it's a shame we got a stadium for Buffalo Bills instead of more for education or childcare
- grew up in Williamsburg, wants to preserve housing stock there

Q & A

- Q: Michael Heller, What do you know about upstate issues?
 - unequal representation: DRS created to rectify this
 - need to preserve farmland
 - a community land trust to preserve farmland
 - affordability, folks are land rich but income poor
 - green NY vs. agricultural land, e.g., they want agricultural land for wind farms

City Councilman Eric Dinowitz (speaking on behalf of candidate Gov. Kathy Hochul)

Remarks

- need to elect the right person to the governorship in case of a Republican sweep of the House and Senate, which could happen
- has been effective in helping with veterans' hospitals
- investing in education for incarcerated people and part-time students
- expanding paid family leave
- investing in colleges and universities
- pre-trial services
- gun safety funding
- mental health
- expanding funding for CUNY
- investing in health care and health care workers

Remarks (speaking on behalf of city council issues)

- digital hate crimes—elevating the issue of hate on gaming platforms
- elevating the issue of anti-Semitism in NYC
- getting more water fountains in our public parks
- encouraged club members to attend the phone banking for Assemblyman Dinowitz

Sara Liss (district leader candidate)

Remarks

- is an attorney
- a lifelong resident of the Bronx
- assistant deputy director for legislative affairs at the city council
- management role at the city council
- granddaughter of Holocaust survivors
- has known since birth that democracy is important and we must fight for it every day

Q & A

- Q: Bruce Feld, You've been on the legislative staff, but haven't been a district leader. What will you say to someone who doesn't know what a district leader is?
 - district leader is active in the judicial nomination process
 - acts as a liaison to the community from the party

President Krompinger congratulated Sara on her upcoming wedding this weekend.

Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli (comptroller)

Remarks

- thanked club for cultivating political talent in the past
- responsible for accountability and transparency of state finances
- audits of state agencies
- performance audits as well as financial audits
- NYS is in the top 5 of best-funded public pension plans
- private businesses that pensions invest in support disability rights
- will focus on economic recovery
- is looking into MTA debt
- will be a tough year for Democrats, we can't take anything for granted
- looks forward to campaigning for other on the Democratic ticket

Q & A

- Q: Scott Krompinger, Q: What challenges do you anticipate?
 - accountability for all the federal money that has come in and that it's being spent the right way

- money may not be recurring money, do we continue a program if the funding isn't there?
- pension fund is a big concern, keep the plan healthy and still do good things

State Committee Member Bill Weitz (district leader candidate, spoke on redistricting)

Remarks

- The Republicans sued over the state senate and Congressional district lines. The judge tossed out state senate, Congressional, and assembly district lines, too even though Republican didn't sue over the assembly lines. The Democrats then went to the appellate division and appellate division upheld the complaint as to the state senate and Congressional lines; they left open the assembly lines in case someone did sue over those, so those lines could also be in jeopardy.
- The Congressional lines were thrown out because of the process used; a special master will be appointed to draw maps. Congressional maps will be the ones to change. One person makes a difference. Nadler/Malliotakis districts and Long Island Sound are communities of interest. This concept may also impact Jamaal Bowman district.
- Do we have two primaries? When the district lines get drawn will impact the dates of the primaries. Primary may move to August; another petitioning process may be needed as well.

Q & A

- Q: Michael Freedman, Do you think Suozzi district and Malliotakis district were the cause of the maps being thrown out? Mondaire Jones district of Westchester/Rockland changed to upstate.
 - Yes, thinks changes regarding Long Island Sound and some of Malliotakis, and 3rd and 10th (Nadler/Malliotakis) district lines did raise issues of unfair redistricting.
- Q: Bruce Feld, commenting on party leader candidacies
 - things they do to support campaigns
 - going to state party meetings
 - have to be heavily involved at the very local level and the state level

Joanna Bruján Edmondson (state committee member candidate)

Remarks

- founder of a non-profit, Female Fight Club
- 20 years residence in Riverdale community
- husband is a supervisor in Kingsbridge
- has done networking with business owners
- has done networking with food banks

Q & A

- Q: Helen Morik, what do you bring to the role?
 - Because she lives in Riverdale, she sees what is going on in the community

Michael Heller (state committee member)

Remarks

- Why he should be state committee member:
 - there's a new team, some have no experience, so we need experienced members
 - lifelong Bronx resident
 - speech writer at the city council
 - community affairs director at several Bronx hospitals
 - deputy president of the Bronx Association of Co-ops

- looking forward to running with Bill Weitz, Sara Liss, and Johanna Bruján Edmondson
- can offer advice to state committee because of his long experience
- thinks Comptroller candidate Tom DiNapoli is right, Democrats have work to do this year
- thanked everyone who carried petitions

After asking if there was any New Business—there was none—President Krompinger thanked the candidates for their presentations and closed the meeting.

Minutes recorded by Nona Louise Dunbar