

**BENJAMIN FRANKLIN REFORM DEMOCRATIC CLUB
CANDIDATE FORUM, Thursday, February 10, 2022
Via Zoom electronic communication**

President Virginia Krompinger welcomed members and candidates. Candidates for the House of Representatives, State Senate, and State Assembly will speak. Congressman Ritchie Torres (15th CD) has a conflict and will speak next week. The format allowed each speaker to introduce themselves and give a brief “stump speech” to be followed by a Q & A with club members.

Manuel Casanova (16th Congressional District)

Remarks

- Chilean immigrant, became a citizen in 2010
- helped found Uptown Community Democrats
- member of Community Board 7
- helped people get elected on the local level in New Rochelle
- active in the New Rochelle community since 2006
- volunteered for border protection under President Obama
- here tonight because we need a change of tone in our politics
- Republicans are not working with us
- we can move forward our agenda with things like infrastructure
- has a master's degree in political campaigns from Fordham University
- thanked the club for its role in supporting democracy

Q & A

- Q: Michael Heller, How does he plan to campaign in such a large district?
 - he is making telephone calls to voters
 - voters can visit his website to arrange a phone call with him
 - in Chile, he was a farmer, so he can talk to all kinds of people from Carmel to New Rochelle
 - he has held two telephone town hall meetings
 - he has driven around new parts of the district to familiarize himself with certain areas
- Q: Helen Krim, Do you support Medicare for all?
 - Yes, as a businessperson to have a competitive market, you have to have healthcare for all.
 - someone may have a better idea, but can't pursue it if healthcare not available
 - also support private health insurance industry; we have to have diversity
- Q: Bruce Feld, Could you give a quick description of your finances and endorsements?
 - seeking support from labor groups and various clubs
 - Is a first-time candidate, so breaking the ice is difficult
 - website is *manuelcasanova.com*

President Krompinger skipped to the state senate race, but State Senator Jamaal Bailey yielded his time in favor of Representative Jamaal Bowman who was now present.

Jamaal Bowman (16th congressional district, incumbent)

Remarks

- sworn in on January 3rd and immediately faced the insurrection on January 6th
- proud to have gotten four vaccination sites within his first 100 days including some in low-vaccination rate areas such as Co-op City and Edenwald
- introduced 31 pieces of legislation
- supported American Rescue Plan which included \$181 million for the Child Tax Credit

- fought for \$56 million in grants for restaurants
- worked to get train access for Co-op City and New Rochelle
- has held meetings with area non-profit organizations
- attended 100 community events and responded to 100,000 constituent letters
- held youth mental health town halls
- supports universal pre-k, childcare, and flood mitigation funding
- assisted 12 Afghan families in resettlement

Q & A

- Q: Bruce Feld, He has been identified in the media with “the Squad” (Congresswomen Ocasio-Cortez, Tlaib, Pressley, and Omar). How would he identify himself?
 - first and foremost, he is a Black man in America; he might align with the Squad on many issues, but he is a Black man in America first
 - media labelling as close to the Squad is a “dog whistle”
 - the Squad has been weaponized to divide us from the rest of the Democratic party
 - he and the Squad are not anti-Biden or anti-Democratic party
 - a Biden aide told him to his face, “push us”
 - people need to do their research about him and not just accept media shorthand descriptions
 - endorsed by Justice Democrats

Jamaal Bailey (36th state senate district, incumbent) [this district will become the 38th]

Remarks

- elected in 2017
- sponsored 56 bills that became law
- organized clothing drives, food giveaways, and PPE (personal protective equipment) giveaways
- he works for the people of the Bronx and Mount Vernon
- emphasized that he wants and needs our communication so he can work for us
- “I’m a servant of the people. I have to fight for what you want.”
- participates in Operation SNUG (guns backward) to fight gun violence
- supports foreign language access in the courts, speedy trials, and diversion courts to give people a second chance
- can’t promise specific results because of all the steps needed to pass legislation and get policies running
- just because you are for bail reform doesn’t mean you don’t care about gun violence
- biggest job is economics, get people working; next is mental health

Q & A

- Q: Mary Ann Amodeo, What are your thoughts on criminal justice reform contrasted with increased gun violence?
 - must walk and chew gum at the same time, can’t conflate bail reform and gun violence
 - doesn’t see a conflict between bail reform and gun violence
 - bail reform has become a catch phrase for all the things that are wrong in the justice system
 - the purpose of bail is to ensure a return to court, that is all, not to be used to leverage a plea
- Q: Bruce Feld, What would be your highest priority?
 - economic recovery mode, public safety, mental health
 - on a personal level, wants to see a raise for 18B assigned counsel attorneys; hasn’t been a raise for them since 2004
 - these attorneys are often ones who will fight for troubled youth

President Krompinger stated that another state senate candidate, Gustavo Rivera 33rd district [this district will become the 35th], declined to attend. Jessica Altagracia Woolford, an 81st assembly district candidate, has also declined to appear.

George Diaz (81st assembly district)

Remarks

- has lived in district most of his life
- wants to make both subways *and* MetroNorth wheelchair accessible
- wants to achieve a living wage for New Yorkers
- was an aide to Oliver Koppell
- the incumbent won't ask the Assembly Speaker for a vote on the New York Health Act
- we've had the same representation in Albany for 20 years, we can do better
- commercial landlords get tax breaks for keeping properties vacant, I would change this
- we recently lost rent moratorium protection

Q & A

- Q: Sue Dodell, How much money have you raised and spent?
 - \$6,000 raised so far and spent most of it
 - received donation yesterday
- Q: Bruce Feld, Because incumbent has had such long tenure, is it time to have someone new? It isn't just the length of time, is it? You worked for Koppell who was in the Legislature for 25 years.
 - opposition isn't based solely on long tenure
 - it's that things aren't getting done
- Q: Georgiana Land, Is he really saying current representatives are responsible for gun violence? Because of long tenure?
 - No, what are they doing to curb it? This is the problem with a lot of the representatives. It's the unresolved issues. They've had time to do more.
 - For example, a gun should be registered within 30 days of purchase and a theft reported within 72 hours. If not, then gun misuse is "on you."
 - Incumbent tried to put a cap on the number of Black and brown students in P.S. 24

Jeffrey Dinowitz (81st assembly district, incumbent)

Remarks

- has two opponents in this race, but only one showed the respect to appear tonight
- 81st AD will remain essentially the same: Riverdale, Van Cortlandt Village, Marble Hill, etc.
- passed 175 laws and one state constitutional amendment
- authored Anti-Human Trafficking Act
- authored Tenant Safe Harbor Act
- passed no-excuse absentee ballots so people fearing COVID in crowded polling places can vote by mail
- working to make site of Visitation School a 700-seat public school and a housing complex
- has fought to maintain parkland in the district
- worked hard to get P.S. 368 InTech in our district
- office staff has assisted thousands of constituents
- chairs the Codes Committee, which is second only in importance to the Ways & Means Committee
- has organized PPE giveaways and test kit giveaways
- has lived in the Bronx his entire life; lived in district since age 10

- has helped stop evictions; this has saved lives; no assemblyman has done more on this issue

Q & A

- Q: Sue Dodell, What is happening with the voluntary intoxication loophole legislation?
 - this legislation is still in the Codes Committee; can't say what will happen with it
- Q: Bruce Feld, You have been the target of anti-vaxxers. Can we turn the corner on this?
 - extremist anti-vaxxers are part of a growing Right Wing. We may have to ride this out. Trumpers and anti-vaxxers are often the same people.
 - anti-vaxxers have demonstrated in front of my home, some displaying yellow stars and swastikas
- Q: Mary Ann Amodeo, Where do the anti-vaxxers come from? Are they local? Are they expressing a specific reason to be against vaccination?
 - very few anti-vaxxers are from this district, not even from NYC; they're from Long Island and upstate
 - doesn't know, but probably are Republicans
 - say they're against mandates, but are against vaccines
 - suggest that one Google RFK, Jr. and see how dangerous these people are

President Krompinger stated that one other congressional candidate had arrived.

Adriano Espaillat (13th congressional district, incumbent)

Remarks

- proud to announce that the 2nd phase of Second Avenue subway is now in the engineering phase; will address the East Harlem transportation desert
- subway is an economic development tool as well, working on a program to train young people in the jobs needed for this subway
- Kingsbridge Armory project has re-opened. Largest armory in the country.
- supports "ghost guns" legislation (guns that are made from kits, do not have serial numbers, and therefore can't be traced)
- worked with Senator Schumer to get \$30 million for NYCHA into the Build Back Better legislation
- wants body cameras to be worn by Border Patrol and ICE
- supports sensitive locations legislation (Border Patrol may not enter churches, funeral homes and the like)
- got PPP [Paycheck Protection Program] loans for the district
- got hospital funding (probably has more hospital beds in his district than any other in the country, New York Presbyterian, Montefiore, Mt. Sinai, etc. are in his area) in March and April 2020 in the early days of the pandemic
- working to stop drugs like fentanyl from coming into US from the Caribbean

Q & A

- Q: Mary Ann Amodeo, What about the gun trafficking pipeline from the South to NYC? Can't we have collaboration with the states to stop guns coming up on buses and in cars?
 - We need local law enforcement and ATF co-operation; we are working regionally with other states such as CT and PA
- Q: Bruce Feld, Are there any Republicans who want to work collaboratively?
 - difficult to work with people who think Trump won, that January 6th was okay, or want to bring guns onto the floor
 - willing to work with those who are sane, practical, etc.
- Q: Helen Morik, What about the issue of voting rights being eroded? Democrats should be shouting from the housetops about this.
 - voting rights affects our democracy and our standing in the world

- filibuster is a relic of Jim Crow used to stop civil rights legislation

President Krompinger ended the meeting with the announcement that the next candidate presentations would take place on February 16, 2022 when we would hear from Congressman Torres, among others.

Minutes by Nona Louise Dunbar