

Four Freedoms Democratic Club  
May General Membership Meeting  
May 13, 2019  
The Church of the Holy Trinity, Draesel Hall  
7:00-9:00pm

### Minutes

1. Welcome (2 minutes)
  - a) President Bridget Cusick called the meeting to order
  
2. The 2020 Census (25 minutes)
  - a) Guest speaker Julie Menin, who is serving as NYC's Census Director (as well as Executive Assistant Corporate Counsel for Strategic Advocacy), spoke to the Club about the 2020 census
  - b) Unfortunately, the 2010 census response rate in the city was poor – 61.9%, compared to a national average of 76%
    - i. The messaging at the time was not effective, and focused solely on the constitutional requirement & civic duty aspects of the census
    - ii. Hence the creation of the Office of the Census, a new entity devoted to improving the response rate
  - c) Two main ways in which the census is important:
    - i. Funding of critical programs is tied to census figures
      1. The most undercounted community = children under 5; programs like Head Start are hurt by such an undercount
    - ii. Political representation
      1. The City could lose 2 congressional seats because of an undercount
  - d) For the first time ever, New Yorkers will be able to answer the census online
    - i. From mid-March to mid-May 2020, 80% of New Yorkers will see a code on their census form, which they can use to complete the census online
    - ii. New Yorkers will also be able to answer the census by phone
  - e) Q&A:
    - i. How can the Club help?
      1. Make an announcement at meetings in March, April, and May 2020 – “did everybody fill out their census forms?”
        - a. Bring a laptop to the meeting, and invite members to fill out their forms online
      2. Phone banking
      3. Put tables out in front of schools and other high-traffic areas to help spread the word

4. “Dear neighbor” letters
  5. Coordinate with the Office of the Census, which will provide all collateral materials
  - ii. How will the Trump administration’s addition of a question about immigration status affect the response rate?
    1. The administration’s goal is to scare immigrants, particularly where families are of mixed legal status, in order to undercount areas with large immigrant populations
    2. We must stress to affected families that they should fill out the census
      - a. We don’t want to undercount these communities
      - b. The law is clear that no government employee can use census data, which must remain completely private
  - iii. What about the pending Supreme Court case regarding the immigration question?
    1. From oral argument, it seems that the case rests on Justice Roberts
      - a. Substantively, the case focuses on the Administrative Procedures Act (APA), and the issue is whether Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross acted in an arbitrary and capricious manner
      - b. Roberts might have no problem with the result, but agree-
  - iv. Can you be proactive and go online ahead of time?
    1. Yes – you don’t need the code, and can answer other identifiers instead
3. Public Education Funding & the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (25 minutes)
- a) Guest speaker Joe Rogers, the Director of Public Engagement and Government Affairs at the Center for Educational Equity at Teachers College, Columbia, spoke to the Club about the Campaign for Fiscal Equity
    - i. The group works towards ensuring that everyone receives an adequate education
  - b) Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit:
    - i. In 1993, the group filed a lawsuit on behalf of NYC public school students, arguing that the educational system had not provided the necessary resources to allow them to become competitive employees and effective citizens
    - ii. The plaintiffs won at the Court of Appeals in 2006, which held that New York State had been violating the Constitutional rights of school children
    - iii. In 2007, the government agreed to provide an additional \$5 billion in educational funds annually

1. But then the recession hit, and the government put a hold on the additional funds
  - iv. In 2014, the group went back to court because the government was still failing to provide basic opportunities, as required by the 2006 decision
  - c) The CFEE is not about specific dollar amounts, but instead about providing opportunities and preparing students to be effective citizens
    - i. Democracies do not function well when citizens are under-informed about their rights and are unable to keep their government accountable
  - d) Q&A:
    - i. Where do charter schools fit in?
      1. They are still subject to the constitutional requirements
      2. However, some specific regulations are grey areas, which can complicate enforcement
    - ii. How can students/families enforce rights at individual schools?
      1. CFEE has created a compendium that informs students of the different categories of rights and what specific resources they are entitled to under each category
        - a. E.g., libraries – most students (and librarians) would be surprised to learn their schools are entitled to a library media specialist
      2. The CFEE website has this, and other, resources
4. Resolution: Aid in Dying (15 minutes)
- a) John Wagner (happy birthday!) introduced the working group's proposed resolution to support the Medical Aid in Dying Act, which has been introduced in both the Assembly and Senate
  - b) The bill would allow a patient to request the means to end his/her life
    - i. Two physicians have to sign off
      1. No doctors can be compelled to participate
    - ii. The patient has to be competent
    - iii. The illness has to be physical (not mental) and terminal
  - c) Other states have similar provisions
    - i. E.g., Oregon, where roughly half the people who get the prescription never use it, but feel comforted knowing that they have the control
  - d) Discussion:
    - i. In favor, members argued that people should have control over their end-of-life options, and should not have to suffer needlessly
      1. Members also brought up personal stories of loved ones who suffered at the hands of a painful illness, and would have wanted the choice to end their lives on their terms

- ii. Against, members argued that the bill would violate the Hippocratic Oath of “first, do no harm,” and that people have a moral obligation to resist death to the utmost
- e) The resolution passed with 19 in favor, 3 opposed, and 3 abstentions

5. Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney

- a) Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney stopped in for a surprise appearance, and gave the Club updates on her work in Congress
- b) CW Maloney was a chief advocate for the Zadroga Act, which provides health care and compensation to 9/11 first responders
  - i. The health care aspect was made permanent in 2015, but the victims compensation fund expires in 2020
    - 1. CW Maloney introduced a bill to extend, replenish, and make the fund permanent
- c) The Democratic House majority has been busy passing great bills, including:
  - i. HR1 – the new House’s first bill – which included a slate of electoral and good-government reforms
  - ii. Codifying net neutrality
  - iii. Reauthorizing Violence Against Women Act
  - iv. Practicing oversight over the Executive branch
    - 1. The House was completely derelict in its duty to be a check on Executive overreach and corruption during the first 2 years of the Trump presidency
    - 2. The Mueller investigation was very narrow in scope, but there are many other possible areas of wrongdoing (e.g., corruption, money laundering, pay-to-play, foreign entanglements, conflicts of interest)
- d) The House and the Trump administration and heading towards a Constitutional showdown
  - i. The administration is refusing to turn over documents, allow employees to testify, or cooperate at all with legitimate oversight inquiries
  - ii. Contempt citations might be coming, as will court battles
- e) CW Maloney led the fight for the Credit Card Bill of Rights, which the CFPB says has saved consumers billions per year
  - i. She is now introducing a bill to crack down on abusive overdraft fees
- f) She is also pushing for the Beneficial Ownership Bill, which would require LLCs to disclose their ownership
  - i. This would help track illegal financing (of terrorism, drugs, etc.), and combat white collar crime
- g) Q&A:

- i. What is the status of recreational marijuana at state level, and how would legalization interact with federal law?
  - 1. One problem for legal pot entities is access to banking
  - 2. CW Maloney passed a bill out of the financial services committee that would allow states to have local banking that would accept accounts from legal pot businesses
    - a. But this would still leave the problem of businesses that want to bank with national banks, and only a reclassification (or declassification) of marijuana would change that
- ii. What would you like to see happen in Congress with the new NAFTA bill?
  - 1. One big concerns is the pharmaceutical section
    - a. The goal is lower drug prices, but the current versions of the bill would raise prices

6. Committee Updates (15 minutes)

a) Protect the Rule of Law working group – presentation by Jerry Ferguson

- i. Our Club has been participating in the No One is Above the Law coalition, which has organized rapid-response protests whenever Trump tests the Constitution
  - 1. We are now being asked whether we want to continue to be involved, specifically in efforts to push for impeachment hearings
- ii. Two views (embodied in two different resolutions):
  - 1. Yes, we should start hearings
  - 2. No, we should keep investigating, or focus on other issues entirely
- iii. Debate:
  - 1. We have to take a stand
    - a. We can't look at impeachment through a political lens – it's a constitutional (and moral) duty
    - b. Trump committed provable crimes and abused the powers of his office; if we do nothing, we are validating his behavior
  - 2. We risk overreaching and playing right into Trump's hands
    - a. He could play the victim, which could increase his chances of reelection
      - i. The question should always be – will this action help or hurt our goal of removing him from office?
    - b. If we impeach, the entire 2020 campaign will become about impeachment and we won't be focusing on bread-and-butter issues
    - c. Obstruction of justice is a rather nebulous concept, and requires subjective interpretations of intent

- i. If we continue investigations and find other, more concrete forms of corruption (e.g., pilfering of inaugural funds), we can impeach then
    - b) Jason Bohner proposed the creation of a FFDC Youth Board, which would be a coalition of youth activists devoted to increasing civic engagement
      - i. The primary goal would be to increase youth involvement in the Club
      - ii. The Board would partner with the Activism & Policy Committee to bridge the gap between resolutions and those they will affect
7. State Committee Updates (10 minutes)
- a) State Committee Members Lauren Trapanotto & Adam Roberts gave an update on the SC's proceedings
  - b) The SC released its 2020 delegate plan
    - i. Under the plan, participation in the primary would be limited to voters who have enrolled as a Democrat by October 11, 2019, i.e., 6 months in advance of the primary
      - 1. This is the longest waiting period to change enrollment in the country
  - c) Adam & Lauren are part of the Rules Committee within the progressive caucus, which is working on an amendment called Let Democrats Vote
    - i. This amendment would lower the lag time to 25 days, which is the national average
    - ii. The lag time is just a party rule, and therefore can be changed without legislative action
      - 1. Could be passed at next special meeting
  - d) Members can help by going to website [LetAllDemsVote.org](http://LetAllDemsVote.org) and submitting comments in favor of the amendment
    - i. Comments need to be submitted by Saturday, May 18
  - e) The 2020 primary will be especially impactful
    - i. SC Chair Jay Jacobs moved back the primary, in exchange for which NYS received more delegates, and could thus play a big role in deciding the race
    - ii. However, we lose those extra delegates if we don't adopt this amendment, because the DNC has been pushing for easier access to primaries and thus requires an easing of the lag time
8. Member Time (5 minutes)
- a) District Leader Ben Wetzler invited members to attend a happy hour hosted by Yorkville Buy Local, an initiative to promote and protect our local businesses
    - i. Thursday, May 30th, from 6:30pm-8:30pm at Mile 17

- b) All outstanding Committee/working group updates will come via email because of the time crunch

9. Adjourn