

## Good News from Albany

On February 25, 2010, by a bipartisan vote of 55–3, the New York State Senate passed the Family Health Care Decisions Act (FHCDA).

This landmark legislation, of which I was the lead sponsor in the Senate, and which was carried to passage in the Assembly last month by longtime sponsor Assembly Member Dick Gottfried, grants medical decision-making authority to loved ones of incapacitated patients who do not have a health care proxy or clear evidence of their treatment wishes.

As the February 26, 2010 Albany Times Union declared, “Lawmakers on Wednesday did something rare: They passed a piece of significant legislation that Gov. David Paterson has indicated he will sign.”

As the Senate Health Committee Chair, I am proud that my chamber has passed this vitally important legislation that protects those who are incapacitated and powerless — and I am confident Governor Paterson will sign it into law.

*By New York State Senator Tom Duane*

Currently New York is one of the most restrictive states in the nation for end-of-life decision-making by surrogates, but the FHCDA eliminates the uncertainty that care-givers face when a patient is no longer able to make decisions for him or herself, assuring that the best interests of that individual are respected.

While the FHCDA will give New Yorkers peace of mind by allowing all parents, all guardians, all partners and all families the ability to make important medical decisions, I still urge all New Yorkers to designate a health care agent. You can download information about appointing a health care agent and get a health care proxy form by going to <http://www.health.state.ny.us/forms/doh-1430.pdf>.

I am grateful to my colleagues and all the advocates who helped make passage of the FHCDA possible and look forward to Governor Paterson’s signing it into law.

## Budget for People, Not for Profits

*A Comment on Economics*

*By Maarten de Kadt, CRDC Vice President*

The federal budget for 2011 is \$3.69 trillion. That’s approximately a 10% increase over the \$3.60 trillion 2010 budget. The budget deficit for fiscal year 2010 ending in October is projected to be \$1.6 trillion. In the following year according to the president’s proposal the deficit would decline to a still huge \$1.3 trillion.

These numbers are daunting. “Irresponsible,” the Republicans have been screaming, ignoring the fact that these huge deficits crept up during the previous administration’s watch within which two irresponsible wars were initiated and waged.

*continued on page 2*

## GENERAL MEETING

**Thursday, April 15, 2010  
7:00PM**

Hudson Guild, 441 West 26th St.  
(btwn. 9th and 10th Avenues)

### ON THE AGENDA:

At our last meeting the club once again by acclamation endorsed **Assemblymember Richard Gottfried** and also **State Committeewomen Doris Corrigan** and **State Committeeman Paul Bokun** in the 75 A.D.

The following club members were nominated at our March meeting to run for Judicial Delegates:

**Jesse Smith Campoamor**  
**David Caraway • Doris Corrigan**  
**Maarten de Kadt • Lydia Hummel**  
**John Johnson • Sandy Marsh**  
**Jon Nalley • Judy Richheimer**  
**Donthan Salkain • Leathe Vanadore**  
**David Warren**

We will take additional nominations from the floor at our April meeting; 12 are to be elected.

As well as the above, we will hear from and endorse candidates for:

**US Senate:** Current Senators are **Charles Schumer** and **Kirsten Gillibrand**

**US Congress:** current members are now **Jerrold Nadler**, District 8 and **Carolyn Maloney**, District 14 State Senate District 25 & 29 now **Liz Krueger** and **Tom Duane**

Remember, that to vote, your 2010 club due must be paid. If you have not yet paid you may do so at the April meeting.

## Budget for People *continued from page 1*

Never mind the name-calling. Let's take a moment to think about what the budget means. Budgets are planning devices. As planning devices they represent choices. In this case they represent the choices the federal government makes among expenditures that are important and should be incurred and those which should be put off, and on the funding of those expenditures. So budgets must consider expenditures on the one hand and revenues on the other.

### *The Politics of Budgeting*

What the politics of budgets comes down to then, is simply this: what does our society want to do? Does it, for example, want to continue to support its aging population after those folks finish their working lives? There is discussion about reducing the amount of Social Security people are to receive, a choice I do not support, and when in their lifetime seniors begin receiving it. There is also a discussion about reducing medical costs, now approaching 20% of gross domestic product, a choice I do support, if it means reducing duplications of tests and changing the pay for services health system to a single-payer system. Reducing health care payments is, however, a choice I do not support if it means reducing medical services for people who need them and if it means not providing health care to all of the people who now do not have medical insurance.

So designing a budget is making choices about what our society will spend money on. It necessarily also must make choices about how funds will be raised. Services, even government services, are not free. One of the president's proposals is to let the tax reductions for people with incomes over \$250,000 expire, a good choice. But we should not be afraid of raising revenues in other ways. The "we must not raise taxes" mantra of both Republican and Democratic politicians is nothing more than "we should get services for free." This is a ridiculous position especially since the United States has the third lowest tax rate of 22 states in the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

### *Social Choices, and Consequences*

Budgeting, then, is the making of social choices; what do we choose to do and what do we choose not to do. However, these choices are not without consequences. These huge United States budget deficits (remember a number of other countries, notably Greece and Iceland

also have huge budget deficits) have both national and international implications. In this regard, there is another Republican cry we as Democrats should resist. Reducing the budget deficit in a time of economic crisis and high unemployment can result in making the economic situation worse as it will diminish available funds that should be used to promote projects that put people to work. Reducing the United States' huge economic deficit must occur over time. Bush's wars will indeed be paid by future generations.

In his response to a question asking what can we do to stand up against the reprehensible national no-tax, teabag culture, New York State Assemblyman Richard Gottfried at CRDC's February meeting said, "those of us who have the luxury to talk about social justice, those of us who have the luxury to talk about the important work government does, must also talk about re-instituting progressive taxation based on people's ability to pay [both nationally and on a state basis]." We must regain control over this conversation from the Teabagers. Because services must be paid for, the "No tax increases" mantra must become a "Tax fairly" mantra. Gottfried's comments are particularly apt in an economy that prizes profits over putting people back to work. When we hear analysts saying "unemployment is a lagging indicator" (which it has been) they mean nothing more than: "profits must improve before people can go back to work." When the Federal Reserve raises its interest rate, as it recently has, the beneficiaries are banks whose primary source of income and profit comes from interest payments.

In short, the US deficit is serious, but the process of making a national budget must include making necessary social choices, providing for appropriate spending, instituting fair taxing, and putting people back to work. Now.

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## Did'ja Know ... ?

*By Gloria Sukenick, CRDC Club Member*

That if you ever fought your landlord, whether you won or lost, whether he brought you to court or you brought him to court, the likelihood of you ever getting another apartment in New York City would be very dim. Whether you won or lost makes no difference.

The reason? There is a tenant blacklist, available to every landlord and it tags you if you ever stepped through the

doors of 111 Centre Street...the Housing Court. The likelihood, if you have a moniker like “John Smith”, (and the chances of a John Smith somewhere, at some time, having entered Housing Court are high) of being accepted as a tenant is just about zero. You will inevitably bear the burden of the deeds and misdeeds of “John Smith”.

Worse yet, there is no way to verify the fact that you are not that John Smith...or that you are that John Smith, and, in your case your landlord was violating your rights as a tenant and, justifiably, lost the case...and John Smith won. But you were in housing court...the very appearance is the ‘kiss of death’, at least for getting an apartment! But at least there is some legislation pending, introduced by City Councilman Daniel Garodnick, that would enable prospective tenants to clear the record if, indeed, the tenant is not that John Smith.

Well, it’s something...but, it would have more clout if the Housing Court were prevented from selling their records to private companies who, then, sell that information to landlords. Possibly, then, finding an apartment in New York City wouldn’t be such a harrowing experience.

So now you know just one of the reasons tenants in New York City tenants are in a pretty pickle. But let me assure you...there are many more. Most importantly, tenants situation is exacerbated by the fact that our rent regulations, in the City, are in the hands of that largely dysfunctional State government...and, get this, the Housing Committee is headed by State Senator Pedro Espada, , whose interest in tenants can only be described as ‘what’s in it for Pedro ’! And, let it be said, this man’s record as a legislator is a handbook on “How to live well by playing the Republicans off the Democrats and end up chairing a Committee!”

So now, you do know! But, look, Spring is coming! Keep fighting!

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## Fate of St. Vincent’s Unclear

*by Andrew Berman, CRDC Club Member*

As we go to press, the fate of St. Vincent’s hospital and the health care services it provides in our community is unclear — whether there will be a bailout, a takeover, or a bankruptcy to deal with the crushing \$700 million debt which is currently threatening the hospital’s closure remains to be seen.

What has become clear, however, is what a terrible mistake St. Vincent’s plan to build an expensive and enormous new hospital and sell off many of its buildings for condo development was. The plan, which would have eliminated the entire current hospital for condos while building a new high-rise hospital across the street, would have cost an additional \$500 million to \$1 billion after the income the hospital would have derived from the real estate deal. St. Vincent’s hatched this plan three years ago after they emerged from their last bankruptcy. At the time they were apparently advised to seek a health care partner to help erase their debt and make them more financially solvent, but instead they pursued this real estate scheme which would have only sunk them further into debt. In some ways it is a good thing that their fiscal crisis came now, before they began a project which would have been an even greater burden for them. But even if things could have been worse, we are left with a hospital hanging by a thread, and very little time to solve a crisis stemming, at least in part, from their own very poor judgment and decisions.

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## The Census Count Has Started

*by Lee Sinovio, CRDC Club Member*

In the New York Senate, Eric Schneiderman has introduced bill S6725 which changes how inmates are counted. At present inmates are counted where they are imprisoned not their last address. This is according to the New York State Constitution which says inmates do not lose their resident address while imprisoned. When the census was taken in 2000 and district lines were drawn in 2002, seven senate districts would not have the minimum population without the prison population. I am proud to let you know that our two state senators Tom Duane and Liz Krueger are among the co-sponsors of the bill. The assembly has bill A9834.

The importance of this bill, besides getting the correct census where people belong, is that if the Democrats want to keep control of the Senate we must keep control in this year’s election when we redistrict. The prison population has been reduced a lot since 2000 and the Republicans upstate are looking at ways to keep districts intact.

Many counties where prisons are located don’t count the prison population when they draw the district lines

*continued on page 4*

PO Box 1120  
Old Chelsea Station  
New York City, NY 10113-1120

Chelsea, Madison Sq., Flatiron, Rosehill



## Census Count

*continued from page 3*

for elections. The New York City Council has passed a resolution supporting the bills in Albany. I believe they should have gone farther and not counted the prison population for the City Council.

This action is taking place in many states thanks to Peter Wagner and Prison Policy Initiative. You can look them up on the web or Facebook for more information on this topic.

## In This Issue...

### Good News from Albany

*By New York State Senator Tom Duane*

### Budget for People, Not for Profits

*By Maarten de Kadat, CRDC Vice President*

### Did'ja Know ... ?

*By Gloria Sukenick, CRDC Club Member*

### Fate of St. Vincent's Unclear

*By Andrew Berman, CRDC Club Member*

### The Census Count Has Started

*By Lee Sinovio, CRDC Club Member*

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