

**The Staten Island Democratic Association Records, 1961-2010
(SIM-18)**

**Archives & Special Collections
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Finding Aid for the Staten Island Democratic Association
Records, 1961-2006

Volume: Approximately 1.5 Linear Feet

Collection Identification Number: SIM-18

Finding Aid Creator: Catherine Healey

Collection Processor: Catherine Healey

Acquisition: The collection was donated by Dan Kramer on behalf of the Staten Island Democratic Association in September 2006.

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ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY

The Staten Island Democratic Association (SIDA) was founded in 1961. At that time, New York politics was characterized by local groups within parties that were organized by neighborhood, by special interest, or by ethnicity. These groups, known as “clubs,” became networks of political influence or street mobilization.¹ The purpose of the Staten Island Democratic Association, as stated in the club’s constitution, is “to provide an independent, vigorous, liberal Democratic organization in Richmond County; to promote the basic principles of the Democratic Party on the national, state and local levels; to encourage the participation of all Democrats in the affairs of their party; to seek and support candidates for public and party office of ability and integrity who are dedicated to public service, to promote measures designed to serve all the people, and to encourage the appointment of qualified public officials and employees without regard to political sponsorship; and to further the interest and participation of all citizens in the civic affairs of our community.”

SIDA was organized by members of the defunct Committee to Vitalize the Democratic Party who were interested in extending the spirit and meaning of the former committee by forming a new group to challenge the existing structure of the Democratic Party. Upon its formation in 1961, SIDA received its charter from the State Democratic Committee. Initially, the club named a temporary chairman, vice-president, and secretary-treasurer, with the election of a complete slate of officers to be held at its first annual meeting in January 1962. Current officer positions are President, Vice President, Executive Secretary, Corresponding and Recording Secretary, Social Secretary, and Treasurer. Officers are elected at the club’s annual meeting in January of each year and serve until the next annual meeting and until their successors have been elected and have qualified. The Executive Committee meets within 21 days following the annual meeting and thereafter once every month. In addition to the annual meeting, there are at least nine general membership meetings during each year. Special meetings may also be scheduled.

According to its Web site <<http://www.sidems.org/>>, SIDA is a progressive Democratic club that addresses today's political and social issues. The club holds informative meetings with experts and activists, presenting the latest information on a wide range of issues. SIDA takes positions on these issues and works to advance its positions with legislators and the community.

In 2006, the Staten Island Democratic Association celebrated its 45th anniversary.

¹ “Charter member recalls four historic decades of SIDA,” *Staten Island Register*, September 11, 2001, 5.

LIST OF PAST PRESIDENTS, 1961-2006

1961	Terence Benbow
1962-1963	Claude Campbell
1964	Dan Davis
1965	Rudy Ripp
1966	John Soldini
1967	Mark Herman
1968	Edwin Mishkin
1969-1970	Bill Kenney
1971-1972	Tom Murphy
1973-1974	Bob Tirone
1975	Vincent Montalbano
1976	Phil Blitz
1977	Mark Canu
1978	Richard Mudgett
1979	Mark Herman
1980-1981	Chris Benbow
1982	John W. Lavelle
1983-1984	Bob Domina
1985-1986	Peggy Johnston
1987-1988	Joe Knowles
1989-1990	Bob Dunne
1991-1992	Helen S. Settles
1993	Cindy Voorspuy
1994	Dave Poleschuk
1995-1996	Tyrone Butler
1997-1998	Chris Bauer
1999-2000	John F. Lavelle
2001-2002	Joy Robins
2003-2004	Anne Taylor
2005-2006	Shawn Dwyer

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Staten Island Democratic Association (SIDA) records consist of approximately .5 linear feet of material covering the years 1961 to 2006. The collection contains organizational records, minutes, agendas, reports, membership lists, correspondence, candidate questionnaires, position papers, newsletters, and news clippings. While each of the series has significant time gaps, the collection also has several areas of strength. Most notable are the organization's position papers and newsletters. The position papers, dating from 1982 to 2006, provide insight into timely Staten Island concerns and broader regional and national issues. The newsletters, dating from 1977 to 2006, contain an overview of relevant topics and activities. The material in this collection is of particular relevance to those interested in grassroots politics, local political organization and activity, and the history of the Democratic party on Staten Island.

The Staten Island Democratic Association Collection has four series, one of which has several subseries, as follows:

ORGANIZATIONAL RECORDS

ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS

- Meeting Minutes, Agendas, Notes & Reports
- Action Items
- Special Events
- Correspondence
- Membership Lists

PUBLICATIONS

PRINTED MATERIALS

The organizational records contain two folders that relate to the group's formation. The most significant papers in this part of the collection are the minutes of the two organizational meetings held in October and November 1961 which, along with early reports and notes, document SIDA's beginnings and the shaping of its purpose and functions. Also included are copies of a 1964 petition to amend the SIDA constitution, a proposed 1975 amendment of Democratic Party County Committee by-laws, and a copy of the SIDA revised constitution from July 17, 1979.

The administrative records comprise the majority of the collection material. Although chronological coverage is incomplete, the administrative records document the organization's history and activities over the years. Meeting minutes are a large part of the administrative records, with executive committee and general meeting minutes

constituting the most useful source of the activities of the organization during its early years, 1962 to 1971. There are no general meeting minutes after 1968, and no executive committee minutes for the year 1969 or after 1971, with the exception of the January 1998 and August 2005 executive committee meetings. There are also several agendas for executive committee meetings held in 2003 and one meeting in 2004. Other committee meeting minutes, reports, and resolutions are sporadic. The newsletters, which provide monthly news and updates, are a good resource for filling in more recent gaps (2003 to present) created by the absence of meeting minutes.

As mentioned earlier, the position papers address timely concerns directly impacting Staten Island as well as broader issues. Position papers from the 1980's include national topics such as nuclear war and nuclear weapons, nuclear waste disposal, economic issues, income distribution, public elementary and secondary education policy, and plant closing legislation. Local issues include the Stapleton Navy Base, air pollution, homeless shelters, land development, public transportation, garbage disposal, and the Rossville Prison. In the 1990's there are position papers on local issues of public transportation and Staten Island secession, as well as comments on the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998. On the national level, social security reform, health care, and the illegal immigration reform and immigrant responsibility act of 1996 are addressed.

Also within the administrative records are candidate questionnaires and the organization's correspondence. The questionnaires relate to the 1998 election and were completed by candidates running for local and state-wide office. There are also lists of questions for city council, state, and federal candidates in the 2003-2004 elections, which were developed for use during candidates' forums.

The correspondence file is mostly comprised of monthly member meeting notices with agendas and several miscellaneous letters. There are wide gaps between correspondence items, with monthly meeting notices for most of 1965, 1966, 1967, and 1968. After that time, there are a scant number of items from 1969 through early 2006.

The remainder of the collection is made up of event invitations, membership contact lists, poll watcher instructions and checklists, and news clippings. While there are only a handful of news clippings, a September 2001 copy of an article from the *Staten Island Register* is of particular interest because it looks back at the history of the Staten Island Democratic Association on the occasion of its 45th anniversary.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Series 1: Organizational Records, 1961-1979

This series consists of two folders. One folder contains the earliest records of the Staten Island Democratic Association (SIDA); namely, minutes of the two organizational meetings held in October and November 1961, along with early reports and notes on shaping SIDA's functions and influence. The second folder contains a 1964 petition to

amend the SIDA constitution, a proposed 1975 amendment of Democratic Party County Committee by-laws, and a copy of the SIDA revised constitution dated July 17, 1979.

Series 2: Administrative Records, 1962-2006

This series, comprised of 17 folders, encompasses the administrative records of the Staten Island Democratic Association from February 1962 through June 2006, with significant gaps. Administrative records include meeting minutes, agendas, reports, annual banquet invitations, membership contact lists, correspondence, candidate questionnaires, position papers, newsletters, and news clippings.

Subseries A: Meeting Minutes, Agendas, Notes & Reports

This subseries of 9 folders includes minutes and agendas of executive committee meetings; general, annual and special meeting minutes; and minutes of the issues and nominating committees, all arranged in chronological order. There is also a notebook with hand written notes, with entries spanning the years 1984 to 1997.

Executive committee and general meeting minutes, which offer insight into SIDA's activities, are the bulk of the records available, although coverage is incomplete for many years. Executive committee minutes from most meetings are available for the time period March 1963 to October 1971, with the exception of 1969, for which there are no minutes. Other notable gaps for which there are virtually no executive committee minutes are the years 1972 through 2006, although there are minutes for the January 1998 and August 2005 meetings, and several agendas for executive committee meetings held in April, June, July, and August 2003 and April 2004.

General meeting minutes from most meetings are available for the time period February 1962 through December 1968. There are no general meeting minutes after December 1968.

Issues committee minutes are available for January 1982, January 1984, March 1998, and October 1999. Coverage is more comprehensive from 2000 to 2006, with minutes available for most meetings for the time period January 2000 to June 2006.

Other meeting minutes and treasurer's reports are extremely limited. Annual meeting minutes exist for the January 1966 and January 1967 meetings only. Special meeting minutes exist for July 1962 and September 1971 only. Nominating committee minutes exist for November 1972 and November 1976 only. Treasurer's reports for February and April 2003 and April and June 2004 are included in the collection.

Subseries B: Action Items

Action items comprise 4 folders consisting of resolutions, position papers, and candidate questionnaires. All materials are arranged chronologically. There are two resolutions: an endorsement of support for delegates to the Democratic National Convention dated April 1968 and a nuclear non-proliferation resolution dated April 1995.

Position papers in the collection span the time period February 1982 to September 2006. They are a good source of background information, as well as the organization's views on timely local and national issues. Papers from the 1980's address national topics such as nuclear war and nuclear weapons, nuclear waste disposal, economic issues, income distribution, public elementary and secondary education policy, and plant closing legislation. Local issues from that decade include the Stapleton Navy Base, air pollution, homeless shelters, land development, public transportation, garbage disposal, and the Rossville Prison. Papers from the 1990's focus on the local issues of public transportation and secession, as well as comments on the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998. On the national level, social security reform, health care, and the illegal immigration reform and immigrant responsibility act of 1996 are addressed.

The candidate questionnaires folder contains questionnaires for the 1998 election completed by candidates for local, state, and federal candidates and lists of questions used for the 2003-2004 election forums. This material provides valuable information on the campaign issues of the time, candidates' viewpoints, and insight into the candidate endorsement process.

Subseries C: Special Events

The special events subseries comprises two folders. The annual banquets folder includes several invitations for the organization's yearly dinner, where the Paul O'Dwyer Humanitarian Award is bestowed on a public official and the Peggy Johnston Club Service Award is given to an active member of the Staten Island Democratic Association. There is a very wide gap in material. The earliest invitation is for the 1977 banquet; the other invitations are from 2003, 2004, and 2005. The other social events folder also has wide gaps. It contains material related to a pool party held in 2003 and an attendance list for a picnic held in 2004.

Subseries D: Correspondence

The correspondence folder spans the time period January 1965 to February 2006.

The file is mainly comprised of monthly member meeting notices and several miscellaneous letters. Meeting notices are informative in that they summarize actions undertaken at previous general meetings and include the agenda for the upcoming meeting. This is useful in filling in some of the blanks created by missing meeting minutes. However, wide gaps between correspondence items exist, with monthly meeting notices for most of 1965, 1966, 1967, and 1968. After that time, there are a scant number of items from 1969 through early 2006.

Subseries E: Membership Lists

Records in the membership lists file contain contact information for members of the organization dating from the 1970's and 1980's, as well as more recent 2003 and 2005 lists. The most notable gaps are that there is neither membership information from the organization's inception nor from its progression over the years.

Series 3: Publications, 1968-2006

This series of 6 folders includes detailed instructions for poll watchers, including a description of duties, ballot procedures, fraud and irregularities, and handling voting machine malfunctions and voting challenges; newsletters; and a 45th anniversary journal.

The newsletters range in date from February 1977 to October 2006. There are significant gaps in coverage, with only three issues from the 1970's (February, March, and June 1977) and no newsletters from the 1980's. There is only one newsletter issue from the 1990's (August 1998), and none from that time until January 2003. Beginning with January 2003, nearly every monthly newsletter issue is available through November 2006. The newsletters offer a wealth of information. First, each includes timely committee reports, minutes of the most recent general meeting, upcoming events, and updates. Second, the newsletters provide another link to missing information about the organization's past activities. For example, each issue reprints minutes from general meetings that took place decades previously.

The commemorative journal marks the 45th anniversary of the founding of the Staten Island Democratic Association and was distributed at an anniversary banquet held on September 28, 2006.

Series 4: Printed Materials, 1965-2006

The printed materials folder contains several news clippings ranging in date from January 1965 to September 2006. While the 8 clippings relate mostly to issues of interest to SIDA, a September 2001 copy of an article from the *Staten Island Register* is of particular interest because it looks back at the history of the Staten Island Democratic Association on the occasion of its 45th anniversary.

Series 5: Ephemera, 2004

This series contains only one item, a City Council Citation given to Dan Kramer, a member of the Staten Island Democratic Association. The certificate was given in 2004, in recognition of his being awarded the Peggy Johnston Club Service Away at the Staten Island Democratic Association's 43rd Anniversary Banquet.

Arrangement

The Staten Island Democratic Association Collection has five series, one of which has several subseries, as follows:

ORGANIZATIONAL RECORDS

ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS

Meeting Minutes, Agendas, Notes & Reports

Action Items

Special Events

Correspondence

Membership Lists

PUBLICATIONS

PRINTED MATERIAL

EPHEMERA

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Index Terms

This collection is indexed under the following terms. Manuscript collections are not included in the College of Staten Island's library catalog at this time.

Subject Topics

Democratic Party (N.Y.)

Elections -- Staten Island (N.Y.)

Staten Island (N.Y.) -- Politics, Practical.

Staten Island (N.Y.) -- Politics, Practical -- Social Aspects.

[The following box/folder inventory is in the form of a table. If you are visually impaired and using a pdf reader you may need assistance and should contact the Archives at 718-982-4128.]

Container Listing

Series 1: Organizational Records, 1961-1979.

Box	Folder	Title
1	1	Constitution & By-Laws, 1964-1979
1	2	Organizational Meeting Minutes & Reports, 1961

Series 2: Administrative Records, 1962-2006.

Subseries A: Meeting Minutes, Agendas, Notes & Reports

Box	Folder	Title
1	3	Executive Committee Minutes, 1963-1971
1	4	Executive Committee Minutes, 1998-2005
1	5	General Meeting Minutes, 1962-1968
1	6	General Meeting Minutes, 1970-1977, 1998
1	7	General Meeting Minutes, 2003-2004
1	8	Annual Meeting Minutes, 1966-1967
1	9	Special Meeting Minutes, 1962-1971
1	10	Issues Committee Minutes, 1982-2006
1	11	Nominating Committee Minutes, 1972-1976
1	12	Meeting Notes, 1984-1997
1	13	Treasurer's Reports, 2003-2004

Subseries B: Action Items

Box	Folder	Title
1	14	Resolutions, 1968, 1995
1	15	Lathrop Voorspuy Scholarship Committee
2	1	Position Papers, 1982-1987
2	2	Position Papers, 1990-1999
2	3	Position Papers, 2000-2003
2	4	Position Papers, 2004-2006
2	5	Candidate Questionnaires, 1998-2006
2	6	Press Conference: "Staten Islanders United to Take Back the House," 2005

Subseries C: Special Events

Box	Folder	Title
2	7	Annual Banquets, 1977-2014
2	8	Other Social Events, 2003-2004

Subseries D: Correspondence

Box	Folder	Title
2	9	Correspondence, 1965-2006

Subseries E: Membership Lists

Box	Folder	Title
2	10	Membership Lists, 1973-2005

Series 3: Publications, 1968-2006.										
	Box	Folder	Title							
	3	1	Poll Watcher Instructions, Check List, & Petition, 1968-1977							
	3	2	Newsletters, 1977, 1992, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2002-2003							
	3	3	Newsletters, 2004							
	3	4	Newsletters, 2005							
	3	5	Newsletters, 2006							
	3	6	Newsletters, 2007							
	3	7	Newsletters, 2008							
	3	8	Newsletters, 2009							
	3	9	Newsletters, 2010							
	4	1	Newsletters, 2011, 2012, 2013							
	4	2	Newsletters, 2014							
	4	3	Newsletters, 2015							
	4	4	Newsletters, 2016							
	4	5	Newsletters 2017							
	4	6	Newsletters 2018							
	4	7	Newsletters 2019							
	5	1	Anniversary Journal, 2002							
	5	2	Anniversary Journal, 2003							
	5	3	Anniversary Journal, 2004							
	5	4	Anniversary Journal, 2005							
	5	5	Anniversary Journal, 2006							
	5	6	Anniversary Journal, 2007							
	5	7	Anniversary Journal, 2008							
	5	8	Anniversary Journal, 2009							
	5	9	Anniversary Journal, 2010							

	5	10	50 th Anniversary Journal, 2011 and slide show						
	5	11	Anniversary Journal, 2012						
	5	12	Anniversary Journal, 2013						
	5	13	Anniversary Journal, 2014						
	5	14	Anniversary Journal, 2015						
	5	15	Anniversary Journal, 2016						
Series 4: Printed Materials, 1965-2006.									
	Box#	Folder#	Title						
	5	16	News Clippings, 1965-2006						

Series 5: Ephemera, 2004.

Box#	Folder#	Title
5	17	City Council Citation, 2004