

Knickerbocker Ledger

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Top Story > Judicial Candidates Make Their Cases With One Week To Go



An Albany native wages a battle against an six year, entrenched incumbent for the race for Albany City Court Judge

BY LEDGER STAFF - ALBANY/CAPITOL BUREAU info@knickledger.com

With the Albany County Executive race now a battle between a ballot-line heavyweight and two write-in challengers, the focus for this primary season will now be on the Albany City Court race between incumbent Helena Heath-Roland and challenger Sherri Brooks.

Heath-Roland, 48, has been on the bench since April 2005 and was elected to a full six-year term later than year. Last year, she attempted to run for Albany County Surrogate Judge against incumbent Cathryn Doyle and attorney Murray Carr (Heath-Roland ended up third in the race for the Democratic primary behind Doyle - the eventual winner - and Carr).

Originally from Queens and an alum of New York University School of Law, Heath-Roland served in a number of capacities in state government, including a senior counsel position for Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver at one point.

"Our community has faith in our justice system when judges serve the public interest with competence, good judgment, and a passion for treating every individual equally and with respect. These are the values I care deeply about and are embodied in my daily work as an Albany City Court Judge. As I seek re-election this year, I ask for your support based on my experience, high ethical standards, and dedication to the well being of our community," according to Heath-Roland on her website.

Heath-Roland is known for her propensity to attend political events, sometimes edging on the lines of legality. Judicial campaigning, unlike campaigning for other political offices held either in the executive or legislative spheres, is much tighter in terms of variable ethical provisions and what a judicial candidate can or cannot do.

"A judicial candidate who is not currently a judge may be a speaker or guest of honor at a charitable fund-raising event. By contrast, a sitting judge may not be the speaker or guest of honor at a charitable organization's fund-raising events, even during his/her window period," according to the New York State Advisory Committee on Judicial Ethics.

Heath-Roland was the keynote speaker for the Capital District YMCA's 6th Annual Outstanding Student and Educator Awards Breakfast in May as well as was the commencement speaker at Albany High School's 2010 graduation last year at the SEFCU Arena, during her Surrogate Court race.

Heath-Roland's opponent, Sherri Brooks, 33, is a life long Albany resident and an assistant public defender with Albany County. A graduate of Albany High School, the University at Albany, and Albany Law School, Brooks announced her candidacy earlier this year.

"I understand that Albany City Court is where most people will have their first encounter with the legal system, whether it is as a result of being accused of a crime, or in a dispute with a landlord, tenant or neighbor. City of Albany residents need a city court judge who can be fair, impartial and compassionate," said Brooks in a statement.

The primary challenge looms large for Brooks, who is facing an incumbent judge with the support of the Democratic establishment including the endorsements from Rep. Paul Tonko, State Sen. Neil Breslin, a majority of the Albany Common Council, and business owners that include Bombers owner Matt Baumgartner, Tess Collins from Lark Tavern, and former Albany Police Chief Robert Wolfgang, who now runs the Albany Aquaducks.

According to the New York State Board of Elections, Brooks has \$4,995.93 on hand compared to Heath-Roland's \$4,624.95. Brooks counts attorney James Long and longtime defense attorney and former Albany City Court judge Cheryl Coleman as contributors, whereas Heath-Roland has former Albany County District Attorney Sol Greenberg and Nancy McNulty-Ryan as contributors.

Heath-Roland also raised more money from outside the city than Brooks - over \$3,500 compared to \$700.

The Democratic primary is Tuesday, Sept. 13. • KL

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

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Exclusive > SMALLBANY



Submitted by Dan A. - By Dana S. Owens
For more SMALLBANY cartoons from Dana Owens, visit KnickLedger.com for exclusive, digital content.

Events & Happenings Around Albany ...

September 9 - 7 p.m. - Schoharie Co. Fundraiser Benefit Show Hudson River Coffee House, 227 Quail St., Albany, N.Y.

September 9 - 8 p.m. - Benefit Show for Flood Victims Valentine's, New Scotland Ave., Albany, N.Y.

September 9 - 8 p.m. - Grand Opening Olde English Pub, Quackenbush Square, Albany, N.Y.

September 10 - 8 p.m. - Lucky Jukebox Brigade Hudson River Coffee House, 227 Quail St., Albany, N.Y.

Find more happenings events online at KnickLedger.com

Primary Election Watch - Your Choice 2011

Polls will be open Tuesday, September 13 from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. For voting information, visit the web sites for the Albany County Board of Elections and the New York State Board of Elections (links for both found at knickledger.com).

Albany City Court - Sherri Brooks v. Helena Heath-Roland (inc.) Albany Co. Leg. Dist. 6 - Brian Scavo (inc.) v. Noelle Kinsch Albany Co. Executive - Dan McCoy v. Write-In Candidates Albany Co. Leg. Dist. 28 - Terry Hurley v. Dennis Feeney Albany Co. Leg. Dist. 3 - Sam Coleman v. Virginia Maffia-Tobler

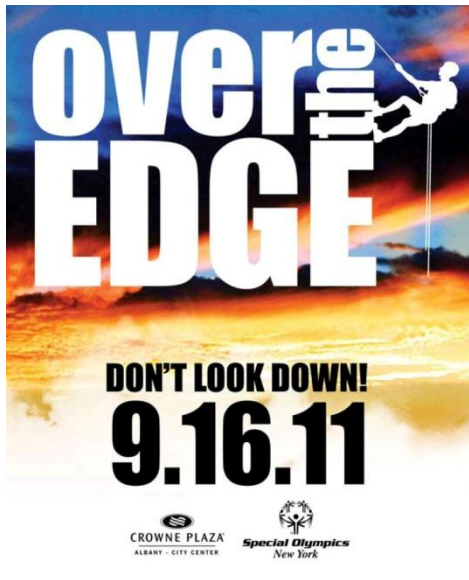
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BAS @ LarkFest Sept. 17, 2011



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Opinion > Cheer Up Albany Young, educated, and progressive population, public transit, and stable employment make Albany attractive to new business

BY JUDD KRASHER - ALBANY
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As I mentioned in my first post, it's not just the places that make Albany great. Without people who contribute, care and energize the city, it would be an empty shell.

Anton Pasquill is someone who is part of Albany's unique DNA. He owns the Hudson River Coffee House located on Quail Street, in the heart of the infamous student ghetto. I wanted to pick Anton's brain and hear what he has to say about Albany and why he chose to invest here. Here's our conversation:

Q: First, a little background. Where are you from? And what brought you to Albany?

A: ... I'm originally from Scotia, a small village right across the Mohawk from Schenectady. My father is the son of two teachers in eastern Massachusetts who now works in international education, my mother is from Moscow, they met when my father was studying in Russia. My first language is Russian, although English is my best language. I attended Lincoln Elementary, Scotia-Glenville Middle School, then I transferred to Doane Stuart, a small school here in Albany. When it came to college I attended UAlbany, partly because I wanted to stay in range of my three younger brothers and partly because both my father and my older brother received their master's degrees there and I feel a bit like I grew up on the campus, having been there for almost twenty years. I majored in economics and minored in public policy, although most of my resume derives from working at different restaurants from the age of 14 and on. I worked full time to help pay for high school from 16 on, was a manager of a store here in Albany at 18, and I opened the Hudson River Coffee House at 23.

Q: What's Albany's best feature?

A: The best feature of Albany for me is, without a doubt, the architecture. A lot of people hate the Empire State Plaza and the SUNY Albany uptown campus but I myself (maybe because I never had to live in the dorms) love it. I love it even more so when you juxtapose it against the sometimes centuries old Albany landscape. It's not even just downtown either, I was wandering around in upper Pine Hills a while back and stumbled upon an old estate-farm that had been converted into apartments, easily more than a hundred years old.

Q: What's Albany's biggest misconception?

A: The biggest misconception people have about Albany is that there's nothing to do. I've travelled a lot, and while we could never compare to a metropolis like New York or Chicago, there is a breadth of activities going on right in this city every evening that rivals cities two or three times larger than us. It just seems that there's this cloud of apathy hanging over so much of the youth here. So you hear a lot of "There's nothing to do tonight" and "Albany's boring" when it just couldn't be further from the truth.

Q: Why invest in Albany?

A: I invested in Albany because I know Albany. In business you should always do what you know. Before opening a coffee shop I made a point of getting a job at a coffee shop in order to learn more than just my home-kitchen knowledge of specialty coffee. Albany has a lot of things going for it in terms of business: A young, educated and progressive population. A reasonable public transportation system (although I'd love to see it grow). And a stable employment rate.

What are your answers to what I asked Anton? Send us your comments to info@knickledger.com. • KL

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Sports > NFL

New York Giants face uphill battle to reach post-season

BY JASON PENNER - ALBANY
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After following all four pre-season games, watching ESPN and following other NFL football teams and how they have done this pre-season, I feel that the Giants have an uphill battle to reach the playoffs and yes I will say it, The Super Bowl.

The Giants are 2-2 this pre-season and although it is just the pre-season, we can still analyze their performance. After following them, I don't like what I see and it pains me to say it because I have nothing but respect and love for my NY Giants, but I am also a logical person and my feelings are telling me that making the playoffs is going to be tough this year.

The Giants' strength this year has to be their ability to run the ball. As much as I love Eli Manning, Hakeem Nicks and Mario Manningham, we need to have a dominate run game to win games. We have a stronger Thunder and a faster Lightning in Brandon Jacobs and Ahmad Bradshaw and that was one of our keys to the success of the 2008 Super Bowl Champion Team. A solid run game also takes a lot of pressure off of the passing game, making Eli more comfortable as a passer. Bradshaw and Jacobs, in my opinion, are the best one-two punch in the NFL and with the change from speed to power, defenses will break down and that's when the aerial assault will begin and with our young and dynamic WR squad of Hakeem Nicks, Mario Manningham, Dominik Hixon and Victor Cruz, the Giants have the key ingredients to make a run into the playoffs.

Our defense can be one of the best in the league when they are healthy. Our D-Line is solid and strong even with Osi Umenyiora out. Jason Paul Pierre has shown us that he can be as dynamic and explosive off the ball as Osi, plus he is younger and healthier. The linebacker crew led by former Atlanta Falcon, Michael Boley needs to pick it up and help put pressure on the opposing QB. Our secondary is going to be the biggest concerns for the Giants. With both Thomas and 1st round pick Prince Amukamara out, unproven but very talented players in Aaron Ross and Michael Coe needs to step up their game to take pressure off of their teammate across the field from them, Mr. Corey Webster.

I do believe that we have the pieces to put this puzzle together; however some of the pieces are injured and have to remain missing from completing the picture. Key injuries to DL Osi Umenyiora (knee), CB Terrel Thomas (ACL- out for season), CB Prince Amukamara (foot) will force the Giants to put pressure on rookies and unproven players, but I do believe that Tom Coughlin and GM Jerry Reese put together a solid team by drafting young players that have a lot of heart and are very tough. The Giants will have a bumpy start and being a fan, I do believe we can make it to the playoffs but only if we have balance on offense and we do not become one dimensional. If Tom Coughlin abandons the run game making opposing defenses drop back and cover all our receivers, that is when Eli will start making bad decisions and throw interceptions.

I am excited for a 2011 football season and it should be a very interesting year. I hope that the lack of practices due to the lockout does not seriously hurt anyone, because as fans we do not realize that this is a dangerous sport and people have been seriously hurt playing it. •KL

Opinion > Capital District Perspective

How to Politicize A Natural Disaster

BY SEAN COLLINS - ALBANY
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The Catskills are inundated with water. Two dams in the Adirondacks have failed. The Poestenkill Dam in Troy is "compromised." Schenectady's historic Stockade neighborhood experienced historic flooding.

Downtown Troy experienced flooding. After Irene and the devastation she caused, one would have expected the usual outpouring of support and charity that generally follows these kinds of disasters.

Apparently not; instead, it seems our elected officials are using this as a catalyst to score political points. And don't confuse this as me saying this is not the time to be critical of our politicians and that we should give them a free pass. We should not have to be so worried about whether dams and locks may or may not hold.

We've known, for instance, the Gilboa Dam was an at-risk dam that was in vital need of repairs and upgrades and we put it off. Irene provides a valuable lesson to our elected officials that it's time to take the declining condition of our state's infrastructure seriously and it's one that citizens should continue to belabor as they begin cleaning up.

And Mike Hein, Ulster County Executive, is right to use the crisis to criticize the short-sightedness of Governor Cuomo's top agenda item this past legislative session, the property tax cap. As he eloquently puts it when urging the state to fill the gap for storm recovery costs not paid for by the federal government: "Add to this disaster a two percent tax cap without relief from ongoing unfunded and underfunded mandates, there is no way our towns and villages can afford the crippling costs associated with the disaster recovery. Ulster County has towns with damages well into the millions, and some with tax bases of less than 300 residents, the ability of a town to shoulder that cost is a financial impossibility." That's a completely valid point of criticism to make against the Governor, who never really considered any alternatives to the tax cap even though many, amongst them the circuit breaker, were presented to him. He wanted an easy legislative victory and now he has to reap the unseen consequences. The ability to levy taxes is an important function that he hindered and he has now put small municipalities in a serious bind.

Those are the only serious lessons and "political points" that one can really draw from Hurricane Irene. I don't want to call them political points, simply because I don't feel they are. They are legitimate criticisms that just so happen to be directed towards Cuomo's (and his predecessors) inaction on the declining state of our infrastructure and his signature legislative victory. These points differ hugely, than say, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor's approach, who is trying to use Irene recovery efforts as a way to cut the budget even further.

"Yes, there's a federal role; yes, we're going to find the money. We're just going to make sure that there are savings elsewhere," Representative Eric Cantor, the No. 2 Republican in the House of Representatives, told Fox News, according to the Daily News.

This is the same man who championed cuts to hurricane monitoring, something that actually saves taxpayer dollars in the long run by providing more accurate and robust data that enables elected officials to better prepare for hurricanes. This is also the same man who has had no qualms with seeking out federal aid when hurricanes wreaked havoc in his district and it was received with no offsets. And unfortunately, it's gaining traction amongst Republican members of the New York Congressional Delegation, with both Representatives Tom Reed (NY-29) and Nan Hayworth (NY-19) seemingly siding with Cantor.

Fortunately, and in some cases, surprisingly, not all Republicans seem to be following this logic. State Senator Greg Ball said Hayworth should "spend a little bit more time in the district and see the pain." (To Hayworth's credit, it seems she has backed off her original remarks.) New Jersey Governor Chris Christie also broke with Eric Cantor, saying "Our people are suffering now, and they need support now."

Maybe I'm alone in this, but I don't see the need for any offsets, especially if the target for those offsets is in non-defense discretionary spending where little savings can actually be made. If anything, we should restore funding to hurricane monitoring and Federal Emergency Management Agency. I'm not entirely sure what the solution is, but I know what it isn't: tying disaster relief to budget cuts. That's just a formula for prolonging recovery efforts. We're supposed to have learned from the mistakes of Hurricane Katrina; we aren't supposed to relive them in a completely self-imposed manner. • KL

Lifestyle > The Hollywood Review

The Debt

BY CRITIC AT LARGE - GUILDERLAND
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A love triangle, A lie, and A Nazi war criminal - these are the things that make up "The Debt", the latest suspense thriller to hit the theaters. In 1997 a book has been written about the mission of 3 young Mossad agents who were sent to East Germany in 1965 to extract "The Surgeon of Birkenau".

As Rachel Singer (Helen Mirren) reads a passage from her daughter's book we are transported to 1965 where we see the younger Rachel (Jessica Chastain) guarding the Doctor. As events unfold between 1965 and 1997 it becomes clear that all is not as was believed and a wrong must be made right.

A remake of the 2007 Israeli film "Ha-Hov", "The Debt" delivers a spy movie for the adult audience. This film is a must see for anyone tired of the comic book/action hero/horror flick offerings of this summer.

Note that "The Debt" shows graphic holocaust photos acquired from the Holocaust Museum which may be disturbing to some individuals. This is not a kids movie. **Rated PG-13 • KL**

