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Assembly Minority Leader Brian Kolb

Brian Kolb was first elected to represent New York State's 129th Assembly District when a special election was held in February 2000 and was overwhelmingly re-elected in 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008. On April 6, 2009, he was unanimously elected Minority Leader by his colleagues. Assemblyman Kolb?s district includes Cayuga, Cortland, Onondaga, Ontario, and Seneca Counties.

Brian?s legislative priorities include reducing taxes, improving the quality of education, fostering job creation, providing sound health care and reforming state government. He is dedicated to ensuring that residents and businesses throughout the district receive effective, responsive constituent service and timely assistance with state government inquiries. Brian?s principal goal is to be easily accessible and approachable to the people he represents. In a short time, he has gained a reputation for hard work, producing results and being very active in his district with a down-to-earth, straight-talking approach.

Assemblyman Kolb possesses a wealth of valuable private sector experience acquired as a

business consultant, entrepreneur and chief operating officer of a variety of small and large technology based businesses. He is the former president of Refractron Technologies and a co-founder of the North American Filter Corporation.

Brian has demonstrated a strong commitment to education throughout both his personal life and his professional career. He currently serves as an Adjunct Professor of Adult and Graduate Education at Roberts Wesleyan College, where his students have twice selected him Outstanding Faculty Member. He is a former Chairman of the Finger Lakes Community College Foundation and is a former member of the Honeoye Central School Board and the Finger Lakes Community College Board of Trustees. Brian earned high honors while completing his Master of Science and Bachelor of Science Degrees at Roberts Wesleyan College.

Community involvement and public service have been hallmarks of Assemblyman Kolb?s background. He is currently a member of the Canandaigua Rotary Club, the Honeoye Chapter of the Sons of the American Legion, Ontario Charities Classic Board of Directors, member of the Ontario ARC Advisory Board, Honorary Board Member of Finger Lakes HealthQuest Foundation, a member of Merrill Hose Fire Company in Canandaigua, a member of the New York Farm Bureau, and is a Notary Public. Brian previously served as Supervisor for the Town of Richmond, Chairman of Leadership Rochester?s Board of Directors, and as a member of the Ontario County Revolving Loan Fund Committee, the Ontario County Board of Supervisors and the New York State Public Authorities Control Board.

Mr. Kolb is a member of the National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL), the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), the Heartland Institute?s Board of Legislative Advisors, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the League of Women Voters, the National Rifle Association (NRA), the Shooters? Committee On Political Education (SCOPE), Safari Club International, the American Irish Legislators Society and the Knights of Columbus.

Brian lives in Canandaigua with his wife Lauren and has three grown children, sons Britton and Clayton, daughter Kylie, and one grandson, Everett.

Gerald Benjamin

Gerald Benjamin joined the faculty at SUNY New Paltz in 1968 as an Assistant Professor of Political Science. He achieved the University's highest rank in 2002 when he was appointed Distinguished Professor by the SUNY Board of Trustees. He has served as Chair of the Department of Political Science, Presiding Officer of the faculty and (for twelve years beginning in 1996) Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Today, Benjamin is Associate Vice President for Regional Engagement and Director of the Center for Research, Regional Education and Outreach (CRREO) at SUNY New Paltz. CRREO is the principal locus of the college's efforts to raise its level of engagement within communities, governments, not-for-profits and businesses across the Hudson Valley. It seeks to conduct

research on regional topics; encourage faculty to build regionally-based service activity into their scholarship and teaching; create and direct institutes and programs to meet regional needs; and offer conferences and programs on matters of regional interest.

Benjamin was director of the Center for the New York State and Local Government Studies at SUNY's Rockefeller Institute of Government in Albany (1993-1995). Later he was appointed by Governor Mario Cuomo as Research Director of the Temporary State Commission on Constitutional Revision. He also was Principal Research Advisor to the New York City Charter Revision Commission that brought about extensive structural changes in that city's government.

Between 2004 and 2006 Benjamin chaired the Ulster County Charter Commission. The work of this commission resulted in approval at the polls of the county's first charter, which goes into effect in January of 2009. In 2007, Benjamin was appointed by Governor Spitzer to the State Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness that this past April proposed wide-reaching reforms in local government in New York State.

Between 1981 and 1993 Gerald Benjamin was an elected member of the Ulster County legislature. He served in legislative leadership as both Majority Leader (1985-91) and Chairman (1991-93). Ulster County during this time had no elected executive; the legislative chairman was therefore the County's Chief Elected Officer. Ulster County during Dr. Benjamin's tenure had a budget of $165 million and more than 1300 employees.

Benjamin earned a B.A. with distinction from St. Lawrence University. His Masters (1967) and Doctoral (1970) degrees in Political Science are from Columbia University.

Bill Samuels

Bill Samuels, an innovative political thinker and social activist, has a lifetime of experience as a CEO, and high tech entrepreneur. Currently, Bill is managing Director of Carlyle Capital Group, the Executive Chairman of Resonant Software, a software technology company in San Francisco and the Hills Treatment Center in Los Angeles, a facility dedicated to helping people overcome addiction.

Raised in Canandaigua, Bill?s family and political roots are deeply anchored in upstate New York. His father ran for Governor with Mario Cuomo as his Lieutenant Governor in 1974. Upon graduating MIT and Harvard Law School, Bill made the decision to engage in socially responsible businesses, turning down a job on Wall Street to start an education company dedicated to training entry level workers who lacked the skills to get and keep a job.

Bill was one of 15 national plaintiffs in 1968 that sued the Democratic National Committee to open the Presidential Primary process. This lawsuit played a role in how the national presidential primaries have been run since 1972.

In 1969 he helped start a public interest organization, Council on Economic Priorities, which made public companies? policies on the environment, women & minority achievement, South

African and tobacco concerns, labor safety and all corporate disclosure of outside financial donations and investments.

Bill was active in the movement against the Vietnam War playing a lead role in raising money to finance the 1971 Vietnam Veterans Against the War March on Washington.

After the 2000 Census, he helped finance the lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of New York?s notoriously gerrymandered redistricting plan.

In the 2004 Presidential campaign, many Democrats were outraged by the huge influx of ?independent? money into campaigns with the ?swiftboating? against John Kerry. Bill produced a documentary to set the record straight, ?Going Upriver: The Long War of John Kerry.?

As a result of the vast fortunes sunk into empty television advertising by national political campaigns Bill saw both party identification and voting plunge. In an effort to stem the tide and reinvigorate the Democratic party Bill founded the Blue Tiger Democrats in 2004 as an innovative grassroots research organization in Michigan and New York that studied how to use civic engagement to reconnect the Democratic Party to its communities between election cycles.

In June of 2006 Blue Tiger Democrats published an illustrated history of party politics with a focus on campaign finance, particularly how the anti-war and civil rights activism that opened the political party systems to the voters had the unintended consequences of empowering money.

In the 2008 elections, Bill served as Finance Chairman for the New York Democratic Senate Campaign Committee, leading to Democrats gaining control of the State Senate for the first time in decades. In this role, Bill saw up close the corrosive influence of special interest money on elections. He resigned when the new Democratic majority made Pedro Espada Majority Leader.

Recognizing the kind of fundamental structural change that is needed, Bill launched a multi-year campaign to achieve change around ?Five Pillars of Reform? including a focus on New York?s campaign finance rules: highlighting the need for small donor empowerment, lowering contribution limits including the closure of loopholes that have otherwise rendered them useless, and improving enforcement, so that our State Legislature can regain the integrity, functionality and common sense the voters are demanding.

He formed the New Roosevelt Initiative and built from scratch a field organization totally devoted to Albany reform. An office was opened in the Bronx and New Roosevelts executed a targeted field operation that ousted disgraced Democratic State Senator Pedro Espada.

Bill joined the 99% as a leading voice, fighting the repeal of the millionaires tax , while calling for a total overhaul of New York?s existing tax structure in favor of one that is both progressive yet supports the infrastructure and culture that business needs to thrive and grow local jobs.

In 2012, Common Cause recognized Bill honoring him with the Democracy in Action Award for outstanding commitment to government accountability.

Bill remains focused on making New York the leading progressive state so that it can once again

serve as a national example. He is a leading advocate for passing matching campaign finance law that empowers small downers, reversing the anti-pension atmosphere that is stripping the dignity from workers in their retirement years, and defeating the flawed Cuomo-Skelos-Silver constitutional amendment on redistricting that robs voters of the power to oust their own legislators.

Bill is one of 10 children ? eight sisters and one brother ? and is married to Marie Samuels and has a 16 year daughter, Kitty.

Benjamin J. Kallos, Esq., *Executive Director*

Benjamin Kallos, is our Executive Director who has used his skill sets in law, politics, public policy and technology to help improve our laws. His distinguished service includes serving Former Public Advocate Mark Green, Assembly Member Jonathan L. Bing, and the Open Government Foundation. He was recently recognized by the New York Observer for creating several civic websites including VoterSearch.org for voter education, OpenLegislation.org for legislative advocacy and transparency, and NYCPoliticalCalendar.com a crowd sourced political calendar.

Mr. Kallos joined the New Roosevelt with the belief that the through the study of our State Constitution we can make it more effective so that the New York State can once again be a national leader.

Michael Byrd, *Policy Advocate*

Holding a B.A. in political science and history and a masters in international development from the University of St. Andrews, Michael's research focuses primarily on pension reform and other labor-related issues. Prior to joining New Roosevelt, Michael served as Deputy Campaign Director for a New York City Council campaign, as a legislative intern in the U.S. House of Representatives, and as a graduate research assistant, conducting fieldwork in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the subject of post-war youth unemployment.

Joshua Simons, *Research Assistant to Professor Gerald Benjamin*

Joshua Simons holds a Bachelor?s Degree in Political Science, magna cum laude (2008), from SUNY New Paltz, where he received the department?s Outstanding Senior award. He is the co-author of CRREO?s 2nd Discussion Brief, *A Collaborative, Regional Approach to Jailing in the Hudson Valley*. His most recent work includes directing the development of the New Paltz Online Interactive Mapping Application to display information on historic properties, managing the database for the Ulster County Intergovernmental Collaboration study. He has also taken the lead on the New York State funded feasibility study on the potential for collaboration amongst the county jails in the Hudson Valley.

Jay Strell, Sunshine Sachs, *Communications*

Prior to joining Sunshine, Sachs and Associates, Jay Strell has worked for more than a decade in Democratic and progressive politics. In 2004, he was the Communications Director and New York office director for Rock the Vote. During the Clinton Administration he worked as a press secretary at the State Department and at the United Nations for US UN Ambassadors Bill Richardson and Richard Holbrooke.

Founded in 1992, Sunshine, Sachs & Associates is a New York and Los Angeles based public relations consulting firm that has established a broad-based clientele which includes prominent entertainment organizations, celebrity personalities, celebrity chefs, restaurants, public figures, corporations, political personalities, labor unions and health care institutions. Sunshine, Sachs offers expertise in overall public relations campaign management, theatrical and festival film campaigns, crisis communications, issue management, public affairs, corporate image programs, event promotions, and media/communications skill training.

Andrew Frank, *Former Research Assistant, New Roosevelt*

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