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APRIL 19, 2012 / NEWS / BENSONHURST

### BROOKLYN POLITICS

# Lachman lashes out against redistricting and the "Three Men in a Room"

By Will Bredderman

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Former state Sen. Seymour Lachman gives us the 411 on redistricting, and how this will affect the fight for disgraced state Sen. Carl Kruger's seat.

*Dr. Seymour Lachman is a political rebel. He represented Bensonhurst and Coney Island in the state Senate from 1996 to 2004, then retired from politics to write the damning expose "Three Men in a Room," where he claimed that the state legislature is completely ineffective and Albany is run by three people: the Governor, Assembly Speaker, and state Senate Majority Leader.*

*For those reasons, we figured he would be the perfect person to sound off on Albany's current redistricting process, which increased Bay Ridge Republican state Sen. Marty Golden's power base, created a "Super Jewish" state Senate district in Borough Park and Midwood, and eliminated disgraced state Sen. Carl Kruger's district — making the race to replace him an exercise in futility.*

**Courier Life:** The legislature just finished drawing up new Assembly and state Senate district maps based on the 2010 census, but critics say the lines were drawn to make sure that those in power can stay in power. Does redistricting actually affect the ordinary citizen?

**Seymour Lachman:** Absolutely. My home used to be one block into state Sen. Diane Savino's district, who replaced me as state senator, and now I discover I am in state Sen. Marty Golden's district by a couple of blocks. The lines were drawn so the Senate, which is currently run by Republicans, could strengthen Golden's position. When redistricting becomes a political mechanism, it no longer expresses the will of the people and we don't have a democratic system where everyone's vote counts. What we have is a system like the ones you would find in countries that are not democracies.

**CL:** And you believe that the "three men in the room" were responsible for all this?

**SL:** Yes. Shelly Silver (D-Manhattan) did the same thing in the Assembly. When the three men in the room — Silver, Gov. Cuomo, and Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos (R-Nassau County) — met to vote on the budget, they agreed not to touch the other chamber's redistricting decisions, regardless of how outrageous and ridiculous they are.

**CL:** A good chunk of Kruger's district will be absorbed into the "Super Jewish District," which conservative Jewish groups favor but Councilman David Greenfield (D-Borough Park) opposed, calling it a "ghetto district." Why do you think this was done?

**SL:** It's obviously an attempt to bring voters who are more conducive to voting Republican — Russian Jews and Orthodox Jews — with voters of other ethnic groups, Irish-Americans and Italian-Americans, that also have conservative leanings. The new district will support a growing minority in Brooklyn that Senate leaders feel were disenfranchised when Borough Park was broken up into five different districts 10 years ago. I represented all of Borough Park for five years, then the neighborhood was redistricted and broken apart. I had a piece of it and Marty Golden had a piece of it and so on. The GOP-run Senate obviously feels they would have more power in one district than they have broken up into five districts.

**CL:** You worked with Kruger in Albany. What did you think when he pleaded guilty to taking nearly \$1 million in bribes?

**SL:** Unfortunately, I was not taken aback by it. It's always terrible to see a colleague get indicted, but it shows that our local and state government has many flaws. I had a colleague in my office some time ago and he was looking over a picture I had of all 62 state senators I served with. My friend was pointing at each person in the photo, asking, "What is he doing now?" And I realized that 12 of the 62 people I served with were either in prison, had been in prison, or died in prison. That's a terribly high percentage for any institution, and that doesn't include all the Assemblymembers and state officials who have gone to jail.

**CL:** So how can the system be changed?

**SL:** There will eventually have to be an independent commission to deal with these problems. Then we will have a democratic system. But we're just beginning to fight. Until these changes are made, we have to protest and we have to demonstrate, and repeat the old movie line "We're not going to take it any more."

— Will Bredderman

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