

# At Wagner College, Pataki hailed as presidential hopeful

Former GOP governor addresses symposium at Grymes Hill school

By **KIAWANA RICH**  
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

GRYMES HILL — Policy wonks and curious citizens alike went to Wagner College's symposium "An Evening with Gov. George Pataki" ... and a nascent presidential campaign broke out.

"Two thousand sixteen will be the last shot at correcting a dangerous, dangerous path this country has been going down from a fiscal, political and economic standpoint," Richard Grasso said near the end of Monday night's program. The former head of the New York State Stock Exchange said, "The right man [for the job] is in front us of right now!" The 150 attending in the Main Hall theater applauded.

"Pataki 2016!" shouted Leticia Remauro, the Commu-

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nity Board 1 chairwoman, who was community liaison when Pataki governed the Empire State.

Pataki, who served as governor from 1995 to 2006 — and who subsequently made noises about seeking the GOP presidential nomination — laid out his views of what has gone wrong in the country economically, socially and politically — without pointing any fingers.

He started out mentioning how both sets of his grandparents traveled to this country to make a better life for their children and grandchildren. He said he recalled riding the Staten Island Ferry in 1994 while campaigning for governor to speak at an event here; seeing the Statue of Liberty reminded him of the choices and sacrifices his grandparents — the same sacrifices many others made

— that afforded him even the opportunity to run for governor.

"America is not about winning or losing but about having the opportunity to try," he said. As governor, he also recalled how everyone on the Island, across the city, state and country, pulled together during 9/11: Everyone "stood together shoulder to shoulder and as Americans and worked together to build a better future."

But he said in 2014, things have changed dramatically. He said when asking people now if the country's future and their children's futures will be better than their own, for the first time Americans are saying no.

"How can that be?" he said "This is still the greatest country in the world."

The problem, said Pataki, is that many of candidates being elected — regardless of party — tend not to represent the broad needs of the party's constituents. Instead, they tend to be the party's, "most partisan, most ideological and self-interested"



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Former Gov. George Pataki speaks at Wagner College's Main Hall.

candidates. The needs of the public are shut out. That, he said, is why Congress currently has only an 8 to 10 percent approval rating.

In his discussion, peppered with much applause from the crowd who agreed with several points Pataki made, he said many problems stem from issues such as income and job inequality, the

breakdown of the family, lack of good education, better use of the country's resources and the need to develop higher-skilled workers in the 21st century.

He said he is, "concerned about the weakness of the middle class," and noted he'd like to see more colleges and businesses form partnerships to elevate employees' skills.

His suggestions for solutions included strengthening the family unit and not penalizing marriage with increased taxes. In a similar vein, he recommended not penalizing corporations with heavy taxes, forcing them to move their businesses, jobs and tax bases abroad.

The evening included a question-and-answer session.