

Race To Represent 2018 Assembly District 72
Republican Candidate Interview: Ronny Goodman

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Moderator: Elinor Tatum

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Speaker 1: Manhattan Neighborhood Network in partnership with the New York Amsterdam News and the League of Women Voters of New York State presents Race to Represent, and MNN election initiative.

Elinor Tatum: Hello, I'm Elinor Tatum. New Yorker's will be voting in the general election on Tuesday, November 6th. They will cast their ballots for offices including governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, controller, state legislature and state assembly. Today we bring you an interview with one of the candidates running for New York State Assembly in District 72. The winner will take office in January 2019. The New York State Assembly works alongside the State Senate and the governor to create laws and establish a state budget. The 72nd District represents approximately 130,000 residents. It covers parts of the Bronx and northern Manhattan including Inwood and Washington Heights.

Elinor Tatum: Joining us now is the Republican candidate, Ronny Goodman. Welcome. What three words would you use to describe yourself and how will those words make you a better candidate on election day?

Ronny Goodman: First let me thank you for providing me this opportunity to come on your show. The three words I would use is pragmatic, human and effective.

Elinor Tatum: And how do those make you a better choice on election day?

Ronny Goodman: I think because I have a vision for the 72nd Assembly District. Let me just preface that by saying I'm a different type of Republican than many people are used to. I'm pragmatic in the sense that I come out of the school of Robert F. Kennedy, and that is that while some men see things and say "Why?" I too, like Kennedy, dream of things that never were and say, "Why not?"

Ronny Goodman: Let me give you an example of that.

Elinor Tatum: But he was a Democrat.

Ronny Goodman: He was a Democrat. When it comes to being effective, it's not whether you're a Democrat, Republican or any other name. The bottom line in every community,

they want results. They want results. In a legislative body, remember, you have to make some friends and influence people to vote your way. It's a give and take. It's not a superman thing, where I, as a single individual, be it Assembly, Senate or Congress, can go in there as a single individual and get things done. It's cooperation. That means working with everyone.

Ronny Goodman: Right now we're at a time in government where every day it's like a soap opera, almost never ending. As a result, nothing is getting done. In the 72nd Assembly District what I look at is the underemployment and lack of employment.

Elinor Tatum: You liken yourself to Kennedy. Have you ever held public office.

Ronny Goodman: No. No. Not at all.

Elinor Tatum: As a public official, you would be part of building the \$168 billion New York State budget. What issue in your district do you think needs to get more funding?

Ronny Goodman: I think job creation is the major issue where I am at. Washington Heights, Marble Hill, Inwood. Underemployment, not just for younger adults, but those persons that have families, that are in their 40s and their 50s. Meaningful employment, because in many instances when people are underemployed, then that means they have to get a second job or a part-time job. That's less time that they're spending with their families. That's less time to be a mother, less time to be a dad.

Elinor Tatum: What experience do you have with managing budgets this large?

Ronny Goodman: I have no experience in managing the budget. I'm a quick learner, and as part of the process, because again it is a legislative body that is done by the majority. I think there's my will to learn. I have done, when I worked some years ago for two Bronx Borough Presidents. At that time when they had the ... and this goes back years. When they had the Board of Estimate of understanding the expense budget versus the capital budget.

Elinor Tatum: If you were elected, what committees would you like to join.

Ronny Goodman: I don't want to answer that off the top of my head. Certainly one of the committees I want to join is the economic development committee. That would be one. I would have to really give some thought to that. Not just give an answer off the top of my head.

Elinor Tatum: What kind of campaigning have you done around the district.

Ronny Goodman: I've done really what you'd call retail politics, talking to people one-to-one. First and foremost because people have a concern because I am a Republican, that

kind of sets people off. I ask people to vote their interests. It's not about whether you have an R or a D. It's being effective.

Elinor Tatum: What are you hearing from your possible constituents as to what their concerns are and how would you address those concerns?

Ronny Goodman: Their concerns have been ... well, there is a drug problem, drug selling on the street. And the high rents. Particular in the Inwood area now, the thing that just occurred, the rezoning. They feel that their rents will be going up. Developers will come in. Rents will be going up to the extent that they won't be able to afford to live there. It's an older population. While many are still working. They're an older population where they're not that far away from retirement.

Elinor Tatum: Where do you stand on that rezoning plan?

Ronny Goodman: I think that it turned out to be a sham. Once again. I would say I'm not for it, and I'll leave it right there.

Elinor Tatum: What parts are a sham of the zoning plan?

Ronny Goodman: Again, like before, there was a crisis in our area where ... and I don't want to cast aspersions. It's not for the betterment of the entire community. The term "community benefit." It never reaches the community. Much like the Yankee Stadium project. The community benefits agreement. Who's the community? Often times it's not reflective of the entire community. It's just a few people, and the community overall.

Elinor Tatum: Community benefits agreements are just individual agreements with buildings that are usually being built. That has very little to do with the entire rezoning plan. What about the rezoning plan itself is a sham?

Ronny Goodman: The rezoning plan itself, I think can lead to overcrowding, one. Number two, the rezoning plan also in the Inwood area, which has presently stable housing. So it's not that there's a shortage of housing there. I'm not convinced that it really benefits the area.

Elinor Tatum: What would you do increase affordable housing in Inwood?

Ronny Goodman: I think one of the things that needs to be done is the closing of loopholes that may be in the current rent laws. To really look at that. I think the other thing, for new housing that ... there has been new housing that has gone up in that area. Sometime ago the 80/20 program would have been appropriate to help offset some of the rents and the commercial tax payers could help that to a small degree. The storefronts that [inaudible 00:08:56]. You had a McDonalds that went out. You had stores that pop up, and they're there 60 days, maybe six months maximum. There is a turnover, and that is that buy and large, some of those stores, the types of stores that there are, they're taking barbershops.

There's a barbershop, in some instances, two on block so it's an oversaturation. Nail salons, an oversaturation.

Ronny Goodman: No, they're not going to be around that long. I think that one of the things that can be done to perhaps assist that effort is getting and inviting stores in that are really going to be ... example, if you take 207th Street or Dykman for that matter, well Dykman you have the restaurants. But 207th Street, you don't really have an anchor store that's really a draw there. A higher quality that will attract people to come in to spend money.

Elinor Tatum: What do you mean by a higher quality?

Ronny Goodman: Goods.

Elinor Tatum: Such as? Give me an example.

Ronny Goodman: If you're talking about clothing. Let's say you're talking about clothing, fashion. No, many people who reside in that area do not shop there for the goods that they have. They still continue to go downtown or other areas in Manhattan.

Elinor Tatum: You had mentioned the preferential loopholes and closing that loophole. How would you go about getting that loophole closed?

Ronny Goodman: Again, I'm not trying to do it off the top of my head. I think we have to look for good solid answers. Because maybe part of the problem may be is that we conceive these ideas without thinking them out fully. I want to follow the process and actually think it out fully as to how we do it where it's effective. We understand, and let me clarify that. I'm not saying landlords do not have a right to make money. If I own the building and if the market will bear it, yes, I want to make money. I think everyone has that right. That's why they're in business. But let's look at it in a compassionate manner, where they can make money, but it's also affordable for the tenants.

Ronny Goodman: As I pointed out a little earlier, many of the tenants in the Inwood area, again, it's not what some would call an affluent area, but certainly stable. As you go east of Broadway, there is some variances in the income level as opposed to west of Broadway. East of Broadway you have the Section 8 vouchers or you have those residents who the employment that they have, those wages are not that high for them, so it makes it difficult for them.

Elinor Tatum: In New York City, 93% of the marijuana possession arrests in the first three months of this year involved black and Hispanic people. What is your possession on the legalization of marijuana and its impact on the judicial system?

Ronny Goodman: Marijuana sells because there's a demand for it. Plain and simple. What I look at is, as it's now going to become legal, I think that kind of sends a wrong message. I'm not talking about marijuana for medicinal purposes, but where it's just for

recreational, I think sends the wrong message. In terms of the legalization, I haven't really made up my mind on that. I think it's a detriment overall because it's the sanctioning of people getting high. That's really what it is. One could make the argument, "Well, people drink alcohol." I just think that the effects of marijuana, particularly for younger people, sends the wrong message.

Elinor Tatum: How would you plan on supporting the needs of the growing number of senior citizens in the district?

Ronny Goodman: Well, you have the programs like SCRIE and that perhaps need to be, well not so much more available to them, but to make them aware of those options. The problem though with that is that with many senior citizens, their grown kids live with them to help supplement the parents' income. In order for them qualify their income would have to be pretty low. I think it's something that I need to consider along with other legislators. It's not an easy question to answer.

Elinor Tatum: There's lots of other needs for seniors besides housing.

Ronny Goodman: Medical care is a major one as they've gotten older. While Medicare covers approximately 80% of the cost, they have to look toward or be able to be qualified to get Medicaid. In some instances, they don't qualify for Medicaid so they're stuck with a deductible that they can't afford readily.

Elinor Tatum: What are some of the bills that you would want to sponsor if elected?

Ronny Goodman: My major bill would be the creation of an opportunity zone in northern Manhattan. That's not done at a state level. That would have to be done in combination with the federal.

Elinor Tatum: So that has nothing to do with you as a legislator. My last question, would you caucus with the Democrats?

Ronny Goodman: I will caucus with Republicans. I am a common sense Republican. I will work with anyone to bring the bacon home to the 72nd. Yes I will. There's too much alienation as it is.

Elinor Tatum: Thank you very much.

Ronny Goodman: Thank you very much.

Elinor Tatum: Thank you for watching. Please remember to vote. The general election is Tuesday, November 6th. For more information on voting, locating your poll site and all the candidates, you can visit our website, RaceToRepresent.com or the League of Women Voters website, LWVNY.org. Thanks for watching Race to Represent on Manhattan Neighborhood Network.