

No Room in Garden Inn

BY WILLIAM KLINE
CO-EDITOR IN CHIEF

Until late Wednesday afternoon on the day of the 13th District Congressional debate, Tom Weiss, a write-in candidate for the seat, waited for a call on his cell phone.

Weiss, a registered Democrat, awaited an invitation that would inform him to join the four major party candidates for a 7:30 pm start at the Staten Island Hilton. A few rings interrupted once or twice, but none of them signaled that the Staten Island Advance made last minute change in their official rules, which excluded candidates who weren't on the ballot.

"I was excluded from that debate because I am not on the ballot," said Weiss. "My rebuttal is that they set up criteria specifically to exclude someone like that. The issue is not who you are for or against in this election. The issue is: Is it appropriate to exclude one candidate?"

Officially, the Staten Island Advance had invited the four candidates that were on the ballot.



Photo by Brian Gonzalez

Write-in candidate, Tom Weiss (left).

"The decision was made to limit the discussion with candidates who gained a place on the ballot," wrote Advance editor in chief, Brian Laline, in an e-mail, "unlike most debates where 'minor party' candidates are not even included."

As a self-proclaimed grass-roots candidate, Weiss found a challenge in attracting media attention. He has actively promoted himself on his news blog, UpFront News. Supporters, like Roman Shusterman, have campaigned in places like the ferry terminal in order to galvanize support.

The Staten Island Advance posted an announcement on its political blog on September 16th, which highlighted his unsuccessful run against Senator Hillary Clinton. WSIA has also granted an inter-

view to the candidate.

The day following the Advance sponsored debate, Weiss did join his some of his opponents in the Candidate's Forum, which took place at the Olivet Presbyterian Church.

"Tom won the debate," said Shusterman.

As a main tenet of his campaign, Weiss calls for a halt of the violence in Tibet and went so far to say: "It's a genocide." A published poet, and at one time homeless, Weiss hopes to fight what he calls the gentrification of the North Shore, particularly Stapleton, and the decrease in the availability of affordable housing.

"Tenant's rights should be a national issue," he said. "Affordable housing is a problem any place."

Although he hasn't hired a military advisor, Weiss calls for a quick and immediate withdrawal of the troops from Iraq, but acknowledged a need to capture Osama Bin Laden and stem terrorism.

"When people get desperate," he said, "that's when terrorism becomes a viable option."

Weiss describes his base as: "people who feel themselves underrepresented by their politicians." He guides much of his decision making process on one overriding principle.

"My underlying principle," Weiss said, "is that human rights is the bottom line."