

SAMIRA BOUAOU/THE EPOCH TIMES



Reshma Saujani, candidate for New York City public advocate, at work with her dog Stanley.

Looking to Write the Code for Politicians

TECH CONTINUED FROM A1

“By doing our part to ensure the candidates are well-informed and are committed to implementing sound policies, we’ll have played a significant role in helping make a better NYC for everyone for a long time to come,” Jessica Lawrence, managing director of the meetup, wrote in the online missive.

People in the tech world have already been making an impact in the race for public advocate, the second highest office in the city.

Campaign finance records show people in the tech community overwhelmingly contributing to candidate Reshma Saujani, accounting for more than 10 percent of the \$759,711 she has raised.

That’s going to command attention, said David Birdsell, dean of the Baruch College School of Public Affairs. “[It] is a powerful argument for paying attention to someone’s issue positions.”

More than 75 people in the industry, many of them executives, have contributed to Saujani’s campaign, some as little as \$25, some the maximum \$4,950.

The donors are interested in producing policies favorable to the tech sector, but personal connections are also a strong factor.

Joanne Wilson is a prominent investor in tech startups and also runs a blog, Gotham Gal. Wilson has contributed \$4,950 each to Christine Quinn, a mayoral candidate; Daniel Squadron, a state senator eyeing a run for public advocate; and Saujani. Wilson said she contributed money because she likes the candidates, and they are interested in issues that are important for the city.

“If you can afford to give money to the candidate of your choice, you should, because that’s the only way they’re going to get elected,” she said.

Her husband Fred Wilson, principal of the investment capital firm Union Square Ventures, has matched his wife’s contributions to the candidates.

Tech’s Growth in New York

Under Mayor Michael Bloomberg, a tech entrepreneur himself, the industry has taken off in the city,

which is now seen as one of the busiest hubs in the nation, second only to Silicon Valley.

While it’s hard to tell if the tech community made the difference in getting Bloomberg elected three times, “there’s an extent that he gets their universe,” said Birdsell.

Bloomberg’s nurturing of the industry, including establishing incubators and co-working spaces to help start-ups grow, has bolstered the city’s economy.

More than 1,000 high-tech startups have cropped up in the city since 2005, according to a report by the Center for an Urban Future.

More tech-friendly education and the fastest broadband system at a low cost.

Further, \$12 billion has been invested in nearly 1,000 New York City startups in the past five years, creating 21,000 jobs, according to the website Entrepreneur, citing a recent survey by the New York Venture Capital Association.

What They Want

So what do people in the burgeoning sector want?

Some have been angling for increased tech-friendly education, including coding classes, both in grade schools and colleges—it’s the most popular idea on the tech meetup’s online portal for policy discussions.

Saujani, running for public advocate, has garnered money from the sector because she has already been working to make the city more tech-friendly with her startup Girls Who Code, which teaches teenage girls computer programming.

Compared to the overall median wage of \$45,000 in New York City, workers in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics get \$88,000 on average, says Saujani. “Right now 9th graders are being

taught Microsoft Word—they should be taught computer science, so they’re put on the path to one of these jobs making \$88,000 a year,” said Saujani in an interview. “So we gotta teach our kids how to code.”

A recent win for the tech industry, helped by Bloomberg, was the opening of a new software engineering, design, and development high school near Union Square, the Academy for Software Engineering.

The second most popular idea on the meetup’s portal is making New York City “the most wired city on Earth” by providing New Yorkers with “access to the fastest broadband networks at the lowest cost.”

Making the idea a reality will “require real leadership from the very top,” said Susan Crawford, professor of law at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, and part of the mayor’s Council on Technology and Innovation.

Right now access to fast broadband is a problem for start-ups, particularly in the outer boroughs, and for the 2.2 million New Yorkers without high-speed Internet access at home.

“That’s a digital divide issue,” said Crawford. “It’s huge.”

Tech’s Influence on Elections

Some candidates are already on board, like Benjamin Kallos, who is running for City Council’s Upper East Side 5th District.

Kallos already advocates for tech-friendly policies. He said the city needs to lessen its dependence on the real estate and finance industries, and focus more on the tech sector. His suggestion, among others, is to provide \$50,000 microseed grants for startups.

So how big of a role will the tech sector have on the 2013 elections?

“Probably the biggest role it’s ever had,” said Dawn Barber, cofounder of the New York Tech Meetup, who has contributed \$250 to Saujani’s campaign. “I don’t know how big. But it used to not be on everyone’s agenda, and now it is on everyone’s agenda. That’s a good thing.”

Additional reporting by Amelia Pang

Public Advocate tech contributions



Overall campaign funds raised so far

Reshma Saujani
\$759,711



Daniel Squadron
\$820,008



Letitia James
\$465,978

\$79,356
75 donors in the tech industry

10.4%
of total donations

Public fund matching

For every **\$1** candidate gets **\$6** of public funds (capped at \$1,050)

55% \$4 million = campaign spending limit for Public Advocate cap on matching funds of the spending limit (\$2.2 million)

Top tech contributors to leading Public Advocate candidates

Saujani

Sophie Stenbeck, president, **The Sea Fund: \$4,950**
Alexis Maybank, founder/chief strategy officer, **Gilt Groupe: \$2,500**
David Tisch, managing partner, **The BoxGroup: \$175**

Squadron

Brad Burnham, managing partner, **Union Square Ventures: \$4,950**
Eugene Zagat, founder, **Google: \$3,000**

James

Gina Argento, principal, **Broadway Stages: \$1,000**

SOURCE: CITY CAMPAIGN FINANCE BOARD
PHOTOS: SAMIRA BOUAOU/THE EPOCH TIMES
INVESTMENT COUNCIL, NYC GOV.

NYC IN BRIEF

NYPD Releases Stop-and-Frisk Data

For the first time the NYPD has publicly released a report detailing where and why stop, question, and frisks happened during 2011. In total, 685,724 stops were made in New York City. A quarter of all stops were for suspected weapons possession.

Gov. Cuomo Angling for Home Buyouts

Homes in areas deemed dangerous after Hurricane Sandy could be bought by the government, with the lots being turned into wetlands as a buffer zone against future storms, according to a New York Times report. Aides to the governor presented the plan in Washington late last week. The plan proposes spending up to \$400 million in disaster relief aid on the buyouts.

Bus Strike Continues

School bus drivers remain on strike and the city continues to

say it will not negotiate. Proposed changes to the contract relating to seniority benefits, and the ability of drivers to keep their pay and benefits when new companies take over old contracts, have angered the bus driver’s union and its members. Public Advocate Bill de Blasio unveiled a letter Tuesday signed by 500 parents, urging the mayor to return to the negotiating table.

Columbus Avenue Bike Lane Extension Approved

Community Board 7 approved extensions Tuesday for the Columbus Avenue bike lane, which currently runs from 96th to 77th streets. It will now go north to 110th and south to 70th, with further examination of extending it further south after construction ends in the area. The lane is expected to be completed by the end of 2013.

New Small Business Lobbying Group Forms

A new group, a nonprofit arm of the

Five Borough Chamber Alliance, will advocate for small business issues, including opposing any legislation supporting paid sick leave, according to Crain’s New York. Small businesses have primarily been represented by the Partnership for New York City, which includes many large businesses.

Styrofoam Ban Possible

A Styrofoam ban for all food-service providers, including for takeout food and drinks, is under consideration by the city’s Sanitation Department. Ron Gonen, deputy commissioner for recycling and sustainability, said he will propose the ban in legislation, according to DNAinfo.

Gun Buyback in Brooklyn

Councilwoman Letitia James and Kings County District Attorney Charles Hynes held a gun buyback event in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, last weekend. The program netted 113 weapons, including revolvers, shotguns, and assault weapons, according to a release.

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