

Feb 11, 2018 Inauguration of NYS Senator Brian Patrick Kavanagh

Hon Gale A Brewer, Manhattan Borough President

Good afternoon. I'm Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, and it's my honor and pleasure to say a few things about my colleague, confidante, and very close friend, Senator Brian Kavanagh.

We go back 18 years now. It was 2001, and I'd gotten started late on my first City Council campaign. There were already six candidates in the race. We had no money. A lot of people had already taken sides, and it seemed like a long shot.

Jessica Mates— another close friend and my chief of staff today — and Brian Kavanagh were there with me every day, building the campaign, stuffing 20 story buildings in the summer heat, handing out lit, keeping calm, and out-working out-thinking, and out-strategizing everybody. That, you may remember, was a Mayoral year when another candidate was running, too, a long shot we'd never heard of, a guy named Mike Bloomberg.

Well, we both won, and Brian became my first chief of staff. I'd promised to "hit the ground running," and we did thanks to Brian's smarts and hard work, gift for organizing a staff, setting clear priorities, and managing everything in that calm, confident, steady way that is his trademark.

He even headed up the Fresh Democracy Project, which was a grouping of the large class of incoming Council Members in January 2002. We produced policy ideas for the new Council, but the “we” was really Brian.

And he surprised us, too, with special gifts. Who knew Brian was clairvoyant? I had insisted on “hitting the ground running” by moving into our 250 Broadway offices several days before any of the other 34 newly–elected Council Members. It was a weekend, and the doors to all the offices, the copy room, conference rooms, and bathrooms were on locked keypads. NYPD wasn’t around, and we all turned to Brian: what to do?

He thought for a while, and said: “Let’s try code 03–17. “

Well, it not only opened our office, but all the doors on both Council floors.

“That’s impossible,” I said. “How you could have known that the passcode was 03–17?”

“Well,” said Brian, in that laconic way of his, “you don’t grow up the son of an NYPD Chief without knowing the date no cop can forget. 03–17 is St Patrick’s Day.”

We got an awful lot done together after that. The first protections for Domestic Workers, pushing Tech Issues to the forefront of the City Council for the first time.

Laying the groundwork for my Open Data Law. Negotiating non-evict plans for thousands of residents of expiring Mitchell-Lamas. And writing more legislation better and faster than everybody.

I had learned the ropes as Ruth Messinger's chief of staff for 12 years, and nobody worked harder than she and I. Brian was cut the same way, with just a tremendous work ethic. There were plenty of nights when he slept in the office rather than go home.

And we negotiated extra space for the many interns. Space in the hallway with card tables, space in the offices of other members when they were not using them was also in Brian's portfolio. To this day, former interns remember Brian as the best boss they ever had. He listens and supports.

The qualities he brought to the job back then— total commitment, political and every other kind of intelligence, good values, a knack for getting things done, being funny and unflappable, drafting legislation in smart ways that could win support— those are just a few of the skills you'll have serving your needs now.

And the goals we shared— protecting tenant's rights, worker's rights, creating NORCs, strengthening environmental laws, planning for a sustainable city, creating schools, parks, and protecting open space— with Brian, these are forever.

He is loyal to so many people. When his then Chief of Staff, Nily Rozic, wanted to run for the Assembly, he went to Queens and worked night and day for her. The rest is history; Assembly Member Rozic.

I also want to personally thank the entire Kavanagh family for their warmth and support of me over the years. I love talking to them, listening to their stories and sharing ideas. They are an extraordinary family, supportive of Brian and of his friends and of any crazy idea he may have!

Now as Manhattan Borough President, it is an honor to work on projects with Brian. There is a refrain when there is a large, complicated issue, like a hospital closing or downsizing, or a resiliency project that needs funding – “Brian will know.” And yes, he walks in having read all of the detailed material and is able to counter the mishmash that the authorities are dishing out.

2001, when we got rolling together in the Council, was the big turnover year after term limits were imposed. For the first time in a generation real change and reform became possible. Now former Assemblyman Kavanagh has moved up to the Senate, just when another sea-change may be at hand. His values and his skills will make him a leader there, too, even though the codes of Albany are a lot more mysterious. Brian is someone meant for leadership. He made me a better Council

Member, and he'll make a positive difference in your lives, and in Albany. You're awfully lucky to have him as your Senator, and I look forward to everything he'll accomplish for our State, for his District, and for you.