



JOE RAND WANTS BILL WEBER'S SENATE SEAT – PART 1

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I'm Here with Joe Rand, Mayor of Nyack, who's now trying to, up his ante to the state senate. Give me a little background on yourself first, & then we'll go into some of the stuff you did in Nyack & then we'll go to some of the topics.



"I grew up in Rockland County. I was born in Brooklyn, but my family moved to Piermont when I was maybe a year or two old. I grew up in Congers for most of my teenage years until my family moved to West Nyack.

I went to D Wing, went to Saint Paul's Elementary, eventually went to Saint Joe's Regional for high school, then went on to Georgetown University, Georgetown Law School, finished up that, decided I wanted to be a law professor, so I spent a couple of years as a clerk for a judge, that was a great job. I worked at a big law firm for a year or two, then I got a fellowship at Stanford Law School in hopes of pursuing a legal academic career, & then from there I did a fellowship & I earned a master's at Stanford & then worked at Brooklyn Law School & Fordham Law School."

He decided it wasn't the right thing for him. He loved teaching. What he didn't love was writing articles that no one was ever going to read. He said he wasn't good at the legal academia side. Meanwhile, his brothers had joined their mother's real estate company that she founded in the early 80s, which was the number one company at the time in Rockland County. It had grown to that & they were doing a good job growing it. They built into about a \$10 million revenue business & they wanted him to join them because he had a teaching background & a legal background, & they needed him to kind of fill those gaps.

"I was the lawyer for the company & the trainer for the company. I did that for about 25 years & moved out here. I lived in the city for most of that time, moved back here in 2009 to Nyack. I've lived there for now 17 years in Nyack, worked for the company, & had a wonderful time. We built it up from a \$10 million company to a \$100 million revenue company, very successful business, one of the most successful businesses in the history of Rockland County of any kind. There are not a lot of \$100 million dollar businesses operating out of Rockland, in its history, & then about right after COVID I'd had enough.

After we got through the COVID period, I was done & so I decided to sell my interest, most of my interest."

<https://youtu.be/cEN8vHxQAZA>

There's a lot of topics that need to be discussed. I've seen times where there was a lot of stuff that the intensity of the topics today is really unmatched in American history. Except for maybe during the Civil War, the 60s.

Maybe. The 60s was pretty tumultuous time. We are in a unique time in history, I believe, with the clash of cultures, clash of, of ideologies that's going on right now.

The divisions, even in the 60s, weren't as bad as they are today.

"Well, neither of us lived through it. We were both born in the 60s, so we don't remember it that well, but I'll take it for, I'll stipulate to your point.

One thing that people in every community these days have having a problem is infrastructure. Route 303 & 304, Senator Weber just got a \$25 million improvement grant to do those roads.

"Just to clarify & not to be nitpicky about it. The grant was proposed by a Democratic legislator, passed by the Democratic legislature, & then signed by the governor. So as much as I like Bill Weber, he is a great guy. I like him, but he did not get that \$25 million for Route 304. I know he stood in front of the check or behind the check that they handed out, & he was there for the ground opening, but when you're a Republican senator in Albany, you don't get 25 million to bring back with the supermajorities, & it's a Democratic governor, you don't have a lot of the the same way that if I was a state senator in Nashville, Tennessee, I would not in the Tennessee legislature be able to dictate a lot of spending decisions. I just want to be nitpicky about that, but your point's well taken about infrastructure. So, let's talk about infrastructure.

Let's talk about infrastructure. In Nyack you've had problems with the water mains breaking every time you turn around. How have you dealt with that & then how would you deal with the infrastructure now for the entirety of the district, which is most of the Rockland County?

<https://youtu.be/N3XblfVm6P0>

Rand continued, "Now we do have Democratic legislators in the assembly who have been able to get money back & we do have the state does confer highway funds & sidewalk funds & things like that as a general matter if you get it based on population or based on need,

so we get our share of that, but we do need somebody in Albany who's going to reach out with both hands & try to find opportunities. I mean, the thing I've been good at. One of the things I've been good at as mayor of Nyack has been getting money for my village. I'm going on my 3rd year as mayor. In those two plus years, I have gotten about \$6 million of grants for the village, including \$4.5 million for the New York Forward Downtown Revitalization grant, which has just been announced."

What it's going to do? He says they are going to have a restaurant on the marina. They did improvements to nonprofits like the Angel of Nyack & Elmwood Theater, Hopper House & Nyack Center, they're going to put in all new old time street lamps to make the downtown more charming. There's just an enormous amount of good that came out of that.

"That was because we were smart enough to write a grant that got approved & because the people that made the decision, the board that made the decision, all knew me because I've been involved in economic development in the Hudson Valley for 20 years. I've been on boards. I've been at meetings. They all know who I am & they knew if they gave a grant to Nyack, we would not waste it. We would invest it smartly, which is what we've done. So it's about bringing money back to the district in Nyack in the village, & when I'm a senator, the idea will be I am good at, I'm entrepreneurial & I'm innovative & I'm shameless about going & trying to get knocking on doors & going & getting help to get money back to this district, & I'll be able to do that both because I'll be a Democrat in a Democratic controlled Senate, but also because my, my basic nature is go out & be entrepreneurial & go out & grab money with both hands, which is what I've done as mayor.

What do you see as the biggest infrastructure problem that I mean, keep in mind something, Rockland County was never designed to be a year-round community back in the 50s. It was supposed to be just like the Hamptons. Summer homes, people come up, they stay for the summer back & forth, back & forth, & they close up & you have maybe 100,000 people in the county.

We're probably at close to 400,000 now, & the roads & the infrastructure that's there are not designed, were not designed to handle this much capacity. What do you think is the biggest infrastructure problem we need to deal with.

"You mentioned the roads & the quality of the roads. I drive down Route 9W almost every day & it's a state road, so that's the Department of Transportation from the state & it's a disaster. So a lot of it is about trying to get money from the state to try to repair these roads, but I'll make the, I'll put the larger, larger problem in perspective. The real problem we have. It is not just that we don't have enough money to do the repairs that we need to do. We do need a comprehensive review of traffic patterns that tells us where do we need to put more capabilities, where do we need to put more capacity.

"I went to a meeting at Orangetown Town Hall that was for the purpose of explaining the fact that the Department of State is going to spend almost \$6 million on a roundabout on Route 9W up in the Palisades area by Sneden's Landing & the fact is. They shouldn't be spending that money. Nobody in the area wants it. The town doesn't want it. Supervisor Kenny doesn't want it. Nobody wants it except that a couple of people that were able to somehow manage to get a \$6 million grant 5 or 6 years ago, & now the DOT has the money & they want to spend it, & they're going to spend it on this roundabout that's going to be extremely for buses, very complicated for all the bicyclists that come down Route 9W on weekends. It's not going to help anybody. Nobody wants it & they're going to spend that money. I'm going to go up & I'm going to try to talk to my friends in Albany, even though I'm not in office about trying to take that money & put it to better use. If it's not targeted, that it can only be. Take that money & put it to better use. If it's not targeted, that it can only be spent on that roundabout. If it can only be spent on the roundabout, save the money. But if, if we can use the money for something else, we have lots of needs just on Route 9W that could be fixed. We need a more comprehensive plan about where the needs are & that's a Rockland County thing."

<https://youtu.be/CA1EsjZTbx0>

In order to help people get around Nyack, what they're doing in Nyack is, they got a county grant to buy a six-person electric shuttle that's called the Hoppy, named after Edward Hopper, that's going to hop around Nyack taking people on demand from place to place within the Village of Nyack. The idea is that people might in the morning go on the app or the website & tap or send a text message, or however we're going to do it to get a call to the hoppy shuttle to pick them up & take them to the train station, or they might use it when they park

down at the marina to take them uptown to go eat or maybe they'll be at hotel & they'll call to pick it up & take them down to the downtown. But the commuting option would be really good.

"It's a pilot project that I think would be really valuable for other towns & villages in Rockland County because the idea. You've got these TOR buses, but to get to the TOR bus stop, it might be too long a walk, nowhere to park, so you need someone to give you a ride there. Well, if you have, like they have in Pearl River, or they had in Congers, or they had in Airmont, if they had like a six-person electric shuttle that was on demand, which is not that expensive, it's \$50,000. It's not \$800,000 like the big buses. You could buy 15 of them for that price. That you would take people around & be able to solve that last mile problem they have with public transportation, which is how do you get people to the, to the regional center bus to get them to get where they need to go."

Part of the problem with the TOR buses that someone I know was complaining about the cleanliness. There was garbage all over the place & stuff. We had a couple of stories up on it & caught some flak for it from certain people in the county government they were upset about, I guess us drawing attention to it, yeah, but one, there was one editorial that came in & right after the editorial came in, all of a sudden all the garbage was cleaned up.

"I don't know how that happened, but I have sympathy as a, as a village municipal leader. I have sympathy for whoever it was at the county that might not have been aware of the condition of the buses, & then when they found out. Good for them that they then fixed it up. Sometimes that's what happens. Sometimes you just don't know. I mean, unless you're riding the buses regularly until the press, or until some people that ride the bus reach out & it doesn't have to be the press. It could be somebody reaching out & calling up the DOT & say this bus is, here's some pictures of this bus. It's a disaster. But people don't do that. That's the biggest problem. They generally on social media & they don't bring it up to the people that need to."

Yeah, but when the press gets involved sometimes, that can help.

No, question, no question, but you certainly did a public service by doing that. I'm just saying that as the mayor of Nyack, sometimes people will post a problem on Facebook & tag me. I don't see it, because I get lots of tags, I get lots of mentions on my Facebook, & if I don't see it, they feel like I blew them off, & I always tell people just email me if you have a problem. I go through my email about once or twice a day, so I could be late in getting back to emails, but, but I will always reply. I'll always respond.