

THE DEMOCRATIC RURAL CONFERENCE OF NEW YORK STATE

Bulletin #22

May 2014

ANNUAL LETTER TO THE MEMBERSHIP

Thank you for your commitment and hard work. I continue to marvel at the steadfastness of us rural Democrats. That's why we will prevail, hopefully sooner rather than later.

In the past year, we held a retreat in the belief that it is important every so often to consider our goals and the extent to which we are meeting them, with a view towards improving outlooks and moving in new directions. As a result, we agreed to work towards increasing our visibility through Facebook and through systemic sending out of our resolutions to the media via our County Chairs network. We decided to hold a forum on reform of the School Funding Formula and related issues. We also agreed to hold a Lobby Day of Action in Albany where we met with legislators and the Governor's staff on the rural school funding issue, the Gap Elimination Adjustment, and the I-98 Corridor in the North Country. We have already carried out much of this agenda.

We plan to continue our work on education funding by meeting with the Regents and other educational policy makers and advocate until we are assured that all New York's children, including those in our rural school districts, are funded fairly, equally and sufficiently.

We responded to the concerns about proposed closures of psychiatric centers in Elmira, Binghamton and Ogdensburg. Happily, the Governor recognized the validity of our concerns and responded positively and creatively.

We are also pleased to see that the Governor included a feasibility study for I-98 in his budget. We will, of course, follow developments.

Please continue to send us your concerns and issues. They are what drives much of our work.



SAVE THE DATE

2015 DRC CONFERENCE

April 24th and 25th

Holiday Inn

Syracuse NY



441 Electronics Pkwy

Liverpool, NY 13088

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We were happy that we were able to provide our counties with small grants of \$350 each. We spoke at a number of your events and continue to provide mentoring and technical assistance to Chairs.

This year our Conference offered several new sessions; 'Women in Politics' and a Job Fair focusing on careers in political campaigns. These well received workshops were a complement to our other events featuring our elected officials. Thanks to all the participants, hosts and expense underwriters. For those unable to attend, more detailed information is included in this bulletin. We were also very truly honored by Comptroller DiNapoli's decision to announce his candidacy for re-election at our Conference.

I do believe the Conference is a positive accomplishment for all of us as it provides information, networking with other upstate Democrats, connections with elected officials and candidates, and great opportunities for socializing.

We seek your input on next year's agenda. We usually offer campaign training in local election years. What topics would you especially like us to cover? Let us know, and also share any other ideas you have for next year's Conference.

Once the reorganization in the State Committee is clear, we will work with them to address how we can cooperate and work together to advance our electoral agendas. Right now, we are focusing on the 2014 elections. This is a year for GET OUT THE VOTE, if ever there was one. Every county needs a plan to do better in this respect than the usual turnout in off year elections. Identify those who voted in the Presidential years but dropped off in the subsequent ones. Go after them. Start early, introduce yourselves, make home visits, drop literature, mail when you can, telephone, keep them informed all the way to the polls. And don't forget the newly registered. We can do this. We can elect our whole slate and increase our numbers in the Legislature and Congress. Make "Take Back the House and the State Senate" a reality

Your Chair,

Irene Stein

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO.....

Executive Committee Meeting 4/9/14,
General Membership Meeting 4/26/14

An Executive Committee Meeting was held on April 9th via conference call to finalize the Conference plans. The General Membership Meeting was held at the annual Conference in Albany on April 26th where elections for five seats on the DRC Board were held. Elected to a 2 year term were; Mark Alquist, Ted Young, Lorie Longhany, Joe Pickreign and John Hurley. We congratulate the new Board members and thank outgoing members; Joyce Melfi and Jim Testani for their dedication and commitment in serving the DRC.

In Memoriam

It is with great sorrow and fond remembrance that The DRC recognizes the passing of Bill Kirsch (Doris Kirsch's beloved husband), former Chairwoman of Ontario County and DRC member, Judy Baker and Edward Ulfik (Cathy Ulfik's son). We send sincere condolences from our entire membership.

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State Convention in Melville

We emerged from the Convention with an extremely strong and unified ticket -- Governor Cuomo, Kathy Hochul for Lt. Governor, Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, Attorney General Eric Schneiderman. On behalf of the Legislature, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Senate Minority Leader Andrea Stewart Cousins cheered us on, giving inspiring and unifying speeches. Needless to say, those attending from our DRC counties were thrilled with the Governor's choice of Hochul for Lt. Governor. The video nominations from President Clinton, Nancy Pelosi, our U.S. Senators and just plain folks interspersed with speeches gave a good rhythm to the meeting. The climax of the Convention was, of course, the Governor's acceptance speech which left us energized to get out the vote with astounding numbers in November.

We will be doing that under the leadership of newly appointed State Chairman, our former Governor, David Paterson. John Sullivan, one of our DRC founders, was appointed Deputy Upstate Campaign Coordinator. He spoke about the DRC, and Chair Irene Stein did as well. Upstate was also represented by Ithaca Mayor Svante Myrick. As always, his remarks rose to high expectations. The DRC was well represented!

2014 Spring Conference Wrap Up

What a wonderful gathering of inspired, and inspirational, Democrats!

Our convention began with guided tours of the State Capital, followed by breakout sessions focused on Taking Back the State Senate Targeting Winnable Races, with Senator Neil Breslin and campaign staff from State Senators Tkaczyk, Gipson and O'Brien. The second session was Women in 2014 Politics, with Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan and support from Senator Gillibrand and Brette McSweeney, of Eleanor's Legacy Fund. Governor Andrew Cuomo hosted the opening reception, with local edibles and brewed beverages, followed by our traditional dinner with New York's elected Democrats.

After welcomes by DRC Chair Irene Stein, Congressman Paul Tonko, the Albany County Committee, and Lieutenant Governor Bob Duffy, dinner was followed by a video message from Senator Schumer, and upbeat remarks from Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, who announced his candidacy for re-election, Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, and State Senate Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins. We also heard a message from Assembly Leader Morelle. AG Schneiderman later hosted a sweet dessert reception.

The NYSDC hosted the Young Democrats reception, where we heard inspirational remarks from Rodney Capel, and Ithaca Mayor Svante Myrick.

On Saturday, Comptroller DiNapoli treated us to breakfast and good conversation, leading to the DRC General Membership Meeting and Board Elections. Following the uncontested election, the DRC Issues Committee presented a panel discussion on Taking Back the House: DRC Congressional

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Issues. Congressman Paul Tonko (NY20) gave an overview of the coming political season, and then joined candidates Sean Eldridge (NY19), Aaron Woolf (NY21), Martha Robertson (NY23) and Jim O'Donnell (NY27) for a panel discussion of rural issues. Networking by district gave us opportunities for DRC counties to come together to begin the race for November.

Lunch was sponsored by the NYS Pipe Trades Association, well represented by Larry Bulman. Jason Clark organized a very successful Job Fair on Saturday afternoon, where dozens of campaigns, candidates, and people interested in careers in Government and Politics were able to meet and learn about opportunities.

We'll review your Evaluations, and we encourage anyone with suggestions, ideas, or an interest in working to make the 2015 Convention even better, to contact your DRC Board, or the Program Committee directly.

Jane Dodds,

Conference Chair

Program Book

Joyce Melfi, Chairwoman of the Program Book, and her team of Lorie Longhany and Jeanne Crane are happy to report an increase in revenue generated from this year's program book from last year. We are determined to keep growing this revenue stream and encourage each county committee to set a goal of bringing in one ad besides the county committee ads. We will reach out to you early next year.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit / Finance - Cindy Emmer

Cash on hand, as reported at the general membership meeting in April was \$36,303.97. This does not reflect outstanding conference expenditures. **Reminder -- Dues are due for 2014! Checks are payable to the DRC c/o Cindy Emmer, 858 Davis St., Elmira, NY 14901.**

Issues Committee – Judith Hunter

Judith Hunter is the new Chair of the Issues Committee, as Dawn Baker is moving out of state. We thank Dawn for her service on the Issues Committee and her many contributions to the DRC. The Issues Committee held a very successful Congressional issues session during Saturday morning of the Conference. We hosted Albany-area Congressman Paul Tonko (NY-20), Sean Eldridge (candidate for NY-19), Aaron Woolf (candidate for NY-21), Martha Robertson (candidate for NY-23), and James O'Donnell (candidate for NY-27). Congressman Tonko and each candidate delivered brief remarks

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before we moved on to the questions portion of the morning. After soliciting questions from the full membership about federal issues of most concern to rural New York Democrats this winter, the Committee narrowed them down to three main areas: the impact of the new Farm Bill on rural New York, the seeming disappearance of plans for high speed rail in the state, and the need for high speed broadband in every part of New York. All of the candidates and Congressman Tonko had important points to make on the topics, and they seemed to form themselves into a cohesive team as the session progressed. Democrats in rural New York districts have some fantastic candidates this year.

Lobby Day February 23 & 24, 2014

- I-98 - Jane Dodds, Jason Clark and Ted Young met with the Governor's Transportation Policy Representative and had a very productive meeting. It is with great pride, after Governor Cuomo's announcement in his State of the State that the I-98 corridor will move forward with a feasibility study.
- Educational Funding – On Monday (2/23) Irene Stein, Phil Jones and Lorie Longhany met with Senator David Valesky asking that the Senator work with his colleagues to initiate a multi-year effort to revise the school funding formula and eliminate the Gap Elimination Adjustment so funding is more equitable to poor rural districts. On Tuesday (2/24) Mike Schell joined the group and they met with Carl Mills, Special Counsel to Senator Flanagan, Chair of the NY State Senate Education Committee. Following this visit the group met with Assemblywoman Cathy Nolan, Chair of the Education Committee in the Assembly. The final meeting was with Ian Rosenblum, Deputy Secretary for Education and Economic Opportunity from the Governor's Office. While the issue is complex and multi-faceted the DRC team made every effort using examples from DRC counties to make our lawmakers aware of the negative impact current policies have on our rural school districts.

Youth Recruitment and Retainment Committee – Jason Clark

Jason Clark reported that the second annual DRC Youth Event sponsored by the NYSDC was a smashing success. We heard from two young dynamic leaders; State Committee Executive Director, Rodney Capel and the very inspiring Mayor of Ithaca, Svante Myrick. Jason also introduced the first DRC Job Fair on Saturday. This gave people interested in a career in politics an invaluable experience to network directly with campaigns

Communications - Don Ackerman

Don is happy to report that the visibility on Facebook and Twitter during the Conference was brisk. The annual Conference also received coverage from Liz Benjamin host of The State of Politics blog. The website is up and running and provided good links for registration prior to the Conference for registration and event summaries. Please visit our new and approved website at **nysdrc.org** and 'like' our Facebook page under the name; **Democratic Rural Conference of New York State**, if you have not done so already. Be sure and invite your Democratic Committee membership to do the

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same. Link; www.facebook.com/pages/Democratic-Rural-Conference-of-New-York-State/162050418621

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DRC Services

Speakers Bureau

The following DRC members are available as speakers at DRC County Events

Irene Stein, Cindy Emmer, Bill Wood and Phil Jones.

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Mentoring Services

The DRC Executive Committee has many experienced County Chairs. We are available to mentor and provide support to new County Chairs.

PREPARED AND FORMATTED BY: Lorie Longhany

EDITOR: Irene Stein and Doris Kirsch