

THE DEMOCRATIC RURAL CONFERENCE OF NEW YORK STATE

Bulletin #39

April 2022

Message from the DRC Chair

Dear Friends of the DRC:

Registration for this year's DRC: **Democrats Deliver!** is now open. Join us at the Crowne Plaza Desmond in Albany on April 29 and 30 for our first in-person gathering since 2019. It has been too long since we've seen each other, and we have lost time to make up! We'll hear from our elected officials and candidates, elect DRC Board members, and network with each other. 2022's elections are vital to our future as New Yorkers. We need to do all we can to prepare.

You can register [here](#). You can also [register to stay at the Desmond](#) at our reduced rate of \$130. But hurry! The discounted rate is only available through April 14.

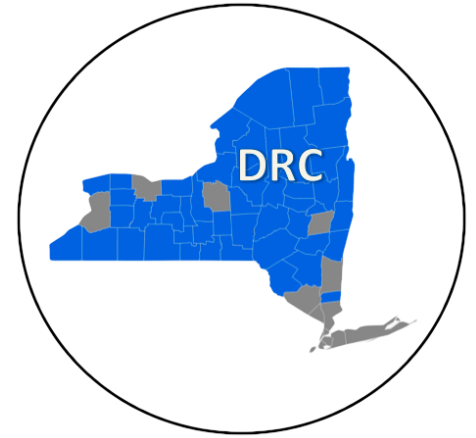
Here is the [tentative agenda](#).

Statewide candidate responses to the DRC survey and information about the Board election are available at our web site, www.nysdrc.org.

Looking forward to seeing you all at the end of April!

Sincerely,

Judith Hunter
Chair, Democratic Rural Conference of NY State
(585) 615-2986



www.nysdrc.org

Visit and join our Facebook page at

Democratic Rural Conference of New York State

ZOOM CONFERENCING PLATFORM AVAILABLE

The DRC has a license to use the Zoom conferencing platform which we can also make available to member counties for their own meetings, subject to scheduling constraints. For information, please contact Judith Hunter at (585) 615-2986 or judith.hunter@gmail.com.

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WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO?

The DRC Board has met frequently via Zoom over the past year. Attendance by the wider membership has continued to be much higher than in the days of in-person meetings. Last summer we conducted regional Zoom meet and greet sessions with our state legislators. Of the 15 Assembly and 7 seven Senate Democrats who represent parts of DRC counties, most were able to attend. All agreed that these meetings were helpful in developing working relationships and sharing ideas on how we and our representatives can collaborate better.

We conducted a successful electronic Board election last August, with many thanks to Phil Jones for his work to get this system in place. Judith Hunter, Tim Perfetti, John Hurley, Frank Puglisi and Darlene Baker were all reelected to their positions as Officers of the DRC. Susan Ottenweller, Maggie Bartley, William Hughes, Michael Plitt and Dan Farfaglia were elected to Director Positions. Susan had to step off the board later in the year and was replaced by Thomas Schimmerling in a special November election.

A small working group met weekly through the late fall to organize an early February Straw Poll on statewide candidates, before the state convention. When Tish James withdrew from the Governor's race, all the other candidates for Attorney General withdrew as well, so we decided to defer the straw poll to the April conference. We interviewed Kathy Hochul, Jumaane Williams and Tom Suozzi over Zoom in late January and used the opportunity to draw their attention to the issues of rural counties. Candidates for all statewide offices filled out our questionnaire; their responses are available for you to read at nysdrc.org.

Board member and Essex County Chair Maggie Bartley has spearheaded an effort to change 'councilman' to 'council member' in all instances where it appears in New York State Law. Under the sponsorship of Carrie Woerner, a bill passed the Assembly 140 to 2 and now awaits action in the Senate. As a result of our lobbying efforts, S7389, sponsored by Senator Samra Brouk, is now co-sponsored by Neil Breslin, Pete Harckham, Michelle Hinchey, and John Mannion. We need to keep pressure on the Senate to enact this sensible measure for gender neutrality.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Treasurer's Report – Frank Puglisi

2022 dues of \$90.00 per county (which covers County Chairs and State Committee members) and \$10.00 for Associate members (any registered Democrat living in NY State) can be sent payable to the DRC,

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c/o Frank Puglisi
7627 S. Grove Rd.
Franklinville, NY 14737

Conference Committee – Jane Dodds

The Conference Committee, suffering from two years of "on again, off again" whiplash, was happy to welcome 2022 by formalizing plans for our 2022 Annual Conference, April 29-30 at the Desmond. We look forward to our first LIVE meeting since 2019! We're excited to announce 100% participation from our statewide leadership team! Governor Kathy Hochul, Lt. Governor Brian Benjamin, Attorney General Tish James, Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, and Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand will all participate.

Join us to learn how we can solidify Democratic leadership in the NY Legislature. We'll be holding a Straw Poll for contested statewide races, and networking sessions for our NEW Congressional Districts. Board Elections will be held for 6 Directors and 4 Regional Vice-Chairs. Voting will be done electronically via your cellphone, so watch your email for details. Candidates, please announce your interest in running to assure your place on the ballot.

Political Committee – Tim Perfetti

This year's DRC Lobby Day (our third) was held 01/28/2022 via Zoom. The sessions were well attended both by Assembly and Senate members who represent DRC counties, and by our board and membership. We chose 3 topics for that day: the legalization of adult use cannabis, election reform, and the political maps and redistricting.

Board Member William Hughes helped to write some of the cannabis legislation and led our discussion on that subject. Now that the law is passed, we want to make sure that the legislature follows through on the social equity piece of the legislation.

DRC Chair Judith Hunter helped lead the Election Reform discussion. We all agree that reforms in our election process are needed, but we need to be cautious of unintended consequences. We discussed our concern that turning Boards of Election over to the civil service would result in Republican control of the boards in many of our counties. The elected officials were very open to our comments. Assemblywoman Kelles of the 125th mentioned that she and I had worked on some of those concerns already, and that they were in the bill she would present in her chamber.

Our third issue concerned redistricting. Just prior to our meetings, the independent commission had announced its failure to produce bipartisan maps, which sent the process to the legislature.

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Nominating Committee – Phil Jones

The Nominating Committee has been busy over the last few months running elections and planning for upcoming elections. A vacant position on the Board was filled in the fall. We were initially planning to run a Straw Poll in late January, but it's now been moved to the April DRC Conference at the Desmond in Albany. For the first time, we will run both the Straw poll and the Board elections using a virtual software program called "Election Buddy". Eligible Voters will receive their ballots via e-mail or by text. It will be critical that we have accurate email addresses and/or accurate cell phone numbers. DRC County Chairs and State Committee members will be able to vote whether they attend the Conference or not. Proxies will not be available since people will be voting on-line. For the first time in DRC history, Associate Members who attend the conference, pay their dues (\$10) and are a member of their DRC County Committee will be able to vote in the STRAW POLL **ONLY**. There will be a test run of this voting process prior to the Conference.

As of April 9, 2022, we have 3 candidates running for 2 of the 4 Regional Vice-Chair positions and we have 6 candidates for the 6 open Director positions on the DRC Board. All current candidates are incumbents. The only position that does not have a candidate is Regional Vice Chair—Catskill/Hudson region. We would welcome other candidates for these positions. However, you must be either a DRC County Chair or a DRC County State Committee member to run for the board.

A complete list of current board members with email addresses appears at the end of this bulletin.

By-Laws Committee – Darlene Baker

In July 2021, the membership voted on a bylaws change, which passed overwhelmingly, to move Fulton County to the North Region. This vote allowed us to test the Election Buddy software for weighted voting.

In August, in conjunction with the Board election, the members also approved a bylaws change to assess dues for voting members by county rather than by person. This dues structure is more in keeping with our system of weighted voting in which each county gets 10 votes, distributed among the county chair and the county's state committee members. It should also simplify accounting for both counties and the DRC when voting members turn over mid-year. In November the Board set the county dues amount at \$90.00, which is revenue neutral compared to the old system. Associate member dues remain at \$10 per person. These changes were effective January 1, 2022.

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Communications and Outreach – Bill Thickstun

DRC voting members (county chairs and state committee members), nominating committee members, honorary members, and associate members should have received this bulletin by email. If you did not—if you're seeing it for the first time on the DRC web site, or if someone forwarded it to you—please check your spam filter first, then contact me (315-527-1291, wthickstun@gmail.com).

I'd like to appeal to the wider membership for assistance in producing this bulletin. Another person with some skill in writing, editing, and MS-Word formatting would be extremely helpful. The DRC would be able to get bulletins out more frequently if we had more than one person working on them.

Issues Committee – Keith Batman

The Issues Committee met several times over the past year to discuss our focus, direction, and how to move forward. To avoid duplication with the groups working on lobbying and other political concerns, we clarified that the Committee charge is an educational one, that our goal is to identify, research and present, in whatever form appropriate, information on issues of concern to the larger DRC membership.

We identified climate and renewable energy issues as an initial focus. We are positioned to move forward discussions with executive staff on issues relating to the Office of Renewable Energy Siting and process for permitting large scale energy (25MW and larger) projects.

We need members, so anyone interested in working to define, collect and organize information on issues of concern to rural New York should reach out to Judith Hunter.

Messaging Working Group – Susan Ottenweller

The group met on 12/9/21 and raised these points:

- Despite the approval of Biden's Infrastructure bill, most Americans don't know what it provides, how it will help their communities, when it will be rolled out and what process will be used to determine how it will be spent.
- Media has concentrated on the prolonged congressional fight to get it approved.
- Republicans have used it to arouse fears of adding to inflation and national debt.
- Democrats must be bolder about who we are and what we're accomplishing.
- The infighting between Democratic progressives and moderates gets more media coverage than any policy initiative.
- The rural "message" is unique, not necessarily the same as the downstate message.

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- Most of the ballot propositions failed in November because we believed regular Dem voters would turn out, and they didn't.

Suggestions for action:

- Get this message to Gov Hochul.
- Develop a rural newsletter.
- Every County needs a Democratic headquarters.
- For every project funded with Infrastructure dollars, hold a ground-breaking and get media to attend.
- Messages on billboards and fences.
- At every opportunity make the point that most Republicans voted against the bill and against the interests of their constituents (Elise Stefanik, Claudia Tenney).
- Create a template for each congressional district that can be used repeatedly to point out everything they've voted against.
- Deep canvassing year-round. Ask people what their concerns are and how they want Albany to address them. Get this info to candidates.

Training and Campaigns Working Group – Tim Perfetti

This committee went dormant because the state committee turned out to be working on a similar project. I felt it might be better to let them lead on this, but their effort has turned out to be less productive than I had hoped. After the convention I will reconstitute this group, so be on the lookout for something in your emails at that time.

DRC Board Services

Officers and members of the DRC Board of Directors would be happy to speak about the DRC at your county events. Please contact Judith Hunter if you are looking for a DRC speaker.

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

CONTACT INFORMATION

Judith Hunter (Livingston), Chair
Tim Perfetti (Cortland), Vice Chair, Political Committee
John Hurley (Ontario), Secretary
Frank Puglisi (Cattaraugus), Treasurer, Finance Committee
Darlene Baker (Oswego), Parliamentarian, Bylaws Committee
Ron McDougal (St Lawrence), North Regional Vice Chair

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Max Della Pia (Tioga), Central Regional Vice Chair

Mike Monescalchi (Rensselaer) , Catskill/Hudson Regional Vice Chair

Cindy Appleton, West Regional Vice Chair

Ted Young (Seneca), Board Member

Jeanne Crane (Orleans), Board Member, Program Book

Daniel Sniezek (Tioga), Board Member

Bill Thickstun (Oneida), Board Member, Communications and Outreach

Keith Batman (Cayuga), Board Member, Issues Committee

Margaret Bartley (Essex), Board Member

Dan Farfaglia (Oswego), Board Member

Michael Plitt (Genesee), Board Member

Thomas Schimmerling (Delaware), Board Member

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