

THE DEMOCRATIC RURAL CONFERENCE OF NEW YORK STATE

Bulletin #40

January 2023

Message from the DRC Chair

Dear Friends of the DRC:

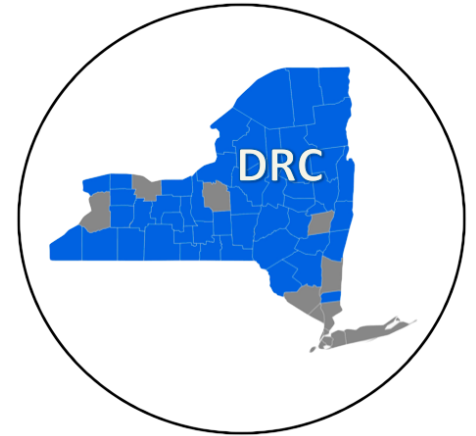
The Democratic Rural Conference has been busy on all fronts since our meeting last spring. We were very pleased to be able to allocate more money back to member counties than ever. We also revamped the way we make contributions from our federal PAC to congressional candidates, allowing us to concentrate our resources based on how rural each congressional district is. We also managed to qualify the DRC to be able to run political advertisements on Facebook. In keeping with our push to make membership as valuable as we can to county committees, the Board has voted to let them advertise on Facebook through the DRC.

But there is no denying that election results in November were disappointing in much of the DRC. That prompted us to convene a County Chairs' Summit on December 3 in Saratoga, so we could arrive at a unified set of recommendations to make to the State Committee for structural changes that we believe will improve Democratic performance in New York's rural counties. (You can read a fuller description of this proposal elsewhere in this bulletin.) While making changes in the structure of the State Party is a long and involved process, it was encouraging to see that the NYSDC report on the midterms (sent to us all on January 2nd) did include some specific suggestions for change that seem to dovetail with many of the DRC Chairs' suggestions from Saratoga. We will keep pushing for the changes we need.

The next few months will be even more active, as we have our Advocacy Days in Albany January 29 - February 1. Then, it will be all conference planning all the time! Please mark your calendars and plan to join us at the Saratoga Hilton April 14 and 15 to hear from our elected officials, network with other rural Democrats, and attend trainings and programs. Please watch your inboxes for more information as we get closer to the date. We'll also be asking for your help selling ads in our counties for the conference program book.

As always, please don't hesitate to reach out to me with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
Judith Hunter, Chair
Democratic Rural Conference of NY State
judith.hunter@gmail.com, (585) 615-2986



www.nysdrc.org

Visit and join our Facebook page at

**Democratic Rural Conference of
New York State**

ZOOM CONFERRING 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.

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WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO?

The first annual DRC conference since 2019 was held in April 2022 at the Desmond Crowne Plaza in Albany. We had 211 attendees, including Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Governor Kathy Hochul, Attorney General Tish James, Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, and NYS Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins. We conducted a straw poll for Governor and Lieutenant Governor and a board election using electronic voting, so that members not in attendance were able to participate for the first time. Also for the first time, we provided 'office hours' for government agencies to speak with attendees about specific issues in their counties. We offer special thanks to our conference coordinator, Jane Dodds, for heroic work during the pandemic years in negotiating with venues as we struggled with on again, off again conferences. We also thank Jeanne Crane for putting the program book together, and to all the others who worked to make the conference a success.

As a result of the successful conference, we were able to allocate \$575 per county to the 45 DRC counties who had paid their dues. This grant represented a 43.75% increase over the 2019 allocation of \$400 per county. After the second redistricting, we allocated money in our Federal PAC to congressional campaigns in DRC counties based on 1/47 of the total per county, with congressional districts receiving shares proportioned to the number of DRC counties they contain.

Maggie Bartley (Essex County) led a successful lobbying effort to change the language in election law so that candidates in small towns will now run for their town boards as Council Members rather than as Councilmen.

Rick Gell (Putnam) presented in July on the Democratic Civic Network software, a tool for integrating database, email, and web sites to connect us better and bring more younger folks into the party. While the need Rick identifies is unquestioned, most county committees don't currently seem to have the bandwidth to implement new systems.

The DRC held a summit of county chairs in Saratoga on December 3 to respond to Governor Hochul's announced intention of strengthening the state Democratic party. From the 47 DRC counties, 34 county chairs attended and 7 more sent representatives. Mike Schell, the founding DRC chair, facilitated the discussion. We heard an analysis of the November election results. A group headed by Liz Moran (Madison) had researched state committees in other states, discovering that Michigan, for example, appears to have multiple paid positions in finance, social media, technology, communications, voter protection, and more. The Greater Hudson Valley Chairs and various others brought proposals to the table. While the group did not agree on every point, we found broad consensus on ways to improve the party's performance in the DRC region. In the week

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following, Judith Hunter put together a package of proposals and sent it to the Governor and State Party Chair Jay Jacobs. The main points are:

- We suggest the State Party increase its footprint by creating a messaging arm, adding a Finance Director, conducting trainings for candidates and County Chairs, and making technical assistance and legal advice easily accessible to county committees.
- More communication infrastructure and collaborative planning at the State Committee level would be helpful.
- We urge that the State Party hire and support staff dedicated to rebuilding our party in upstate New York.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Treasurer's Report – Frank Puglisi

REPORT IS AS OF 11/18/2022

STATE ACCOUNT-

BALANCE AS OF SEPTEMBER 21, 2022, \$12,420.85

12,420.85

- 150.11 – NEON MONTHLY CHARGE (OCTOBER)

12,270.74

+ 28.80 – ASSOCIATE DUES

12,299.54

- 150.11 – NEON MONTHLY CHARGE (NOVEMBER)

12,149.43

- 900.00 – FACEBOOK ADS

11,249.43 (BANK BALANCE AS OF NOVEMBER 18, 2022)

**** PLEASE NOTE THAT WE WILL BE GETTING OUR \$6,000 DEPOSIT BACK THE SYRACUSE HOTEL WHICH WILL BE ADDED TO THE BALANCE ****

FEDERAL PAC –

BANK BALANCE AS OF SEPTEMBER 21, 2022, \$56.00

NO TRANSACTIONS

\$56.00 (BANK BALANCE AS OF NOVEMBER 18, 2022)

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Conference Committee – Jane Dodds

The 2023 DRC Conference will be held at the Saratoga Hilton on April 14 and 15. As is our usual practice in odd election years, the agenda will focus on training for local candidates, treasurers, committee members and prospective canvassers. Registration will open in February. If you want to reserve a room at the DRC block rate, you can already do that at

<https://book.passkey.com/go/DemocraticRuralConference2023>

Political Committee – Tim Perfetti

This year's Advocacy Days in Albany will be Monday January 30 through Wednesday February 1. We have a full schedule of meetings with state legislators from DRC counties, starting Monday morning at 10am. Contact me (timothyperfetti@gmail.com, 607-591-3910) or Judith Hunter (judith.hunter@gmail.com, 585-615-2986) if you're interested in joining us.

Issues this year will include:

Election Reform--we support minimum staffing standards for Boards of Election in small counties and continuing education for staff, but not mandated public hearings, arbitrary minimum standards, or civil service commissioners, which would effectively turn election administration over to Republicans in about 40 counties.

Adult Use Cannabis—social justice on implementation rules and distribution of revenue.

Rural Broadband—many residents in our counties still don't have high-speed access.

The Political Committee also has a County Chair training manual in the works.

Nominating Committee – Phil Jones

We just finished a successful electronic election for a board vacancy that was created by redistricting. The board selected Kimberly Davis of Clinton County from a field of five to fill the seat. Congratulations to Kimberly, and many thanks to all the candidates who stepped forward.

This position comes up again, along with five other director positions and all the DRC officers, for a vote of the general membership at the April DRC Conference in Saratoga. The Nominating Committee will be issuing in early February the process we will use to run the election. We hope voting members of the DRC (State Committee members and County Chairs) will seriously consider running for these positions.

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Communications and Outreach – Bill Thickstun

Our major fall project was updating the new assembly districts and the voting membership in our NEON database. Over a third of state committee members in DRC counties are new or are representing different assembly districts. Many thanks to Karen Ash (Allegany) and Michael Plitt (Genesee) for their help with this project, and to our regional vice chairs Cindy Appleton (West), Liz Moran (Central), Ron McDougall (North) and Michael Monescalchi (Catskill/Hudson) for helping to track down email addresses.

Unfortunately, we will have to do this project again in 18 months when the assembly districts will change once more. Meanwhile, anything you can do to keep us current with changes in county chairs, state committee members and their email addresses will be extremely helpful.

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).

Issues Committee – Keith Batman

The Issues Committee continues to research issues surrounding the push for increased renewable energy production in the rural counties, especially regarding siting. However, we need more involvement and seek volunteers to continue this work and take on new topics.

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

Judith.hunter@gmail.com
timothyperfetti@gmail.com
jfhurley@rochester.rr.com
fvp9900@yahoo.com
dbaker1017@aol.com
ronaldpmcdougall@gmail.com

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Liz Moran, Central Regional Vice Chair

lmoran@ecologicllc.com

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

mike@bluestatestrategies.com

Cindy Appleton, West Regional Vice Chair

cindy_appleton@hotmail.com

Ted Young (Seneca), Board Member

tyoung28@rochester.rr.com

Jeanne Crane (Orleans), Board Member, Program Book

jeannecrane39@gmail.com

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

wthickstun@gmail.com

Keith Batman (Cayuga), Board Member, Issues Committee

batman.keith@gmail.com

Margaret Bartley (Essex), Board Member

msbartley@me.com

William Hughes (Columbia), Board Member

wchjrn@yahoo.com

Dan Farfaglia (Oswego), Board Member

dfarfaglia48@gmail.com

Michael Plitt (Genesee), Board Member

michael.plitt@gmail.com

Thomas Schimmerling (Delaware), Board Member

nytrialman@aol.com

Kimberly Davis (Clinton), Board Member

plattsburghrunner@gmail.com

EDITOR: Bill Thickstun