



DRC Board Meeting Minutes

Saturday August 2, 2025

Owera Vineyard, Cazenovia NY

Board Members Present

Maggie Bartley	Ram Lalukota	Michael Plitt
Dia Carabajal	Jamal Malik	Roger Saltman
Max Della Pia	Ron McDougall	Tom Schimmerling
Summer Downing	Liz Moran	Bill Thickstun
John Hurley	Betsy Passer	Ted Young
		Mike Zagrobelny

Board Members Absent

Cindy Appleton, Sam Hodge, Bill Hughes

Guests Present

Gordon Boyd, Joan Davis, Jane Dodds, Kelli Samson, Joe Samson

Welcome and Call to Order

DRC Chair Bill Thickstun called the meeting to order at 10:00 am and reported that a quorum was present. Attendees introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the previous DRC Board meeting held in Albany on April 26, 2025 (post annual conference) were reviewed. Ron McDougall moved for approval, second by Max Della Pia, carried.

Update: Plans for 2026 Conference

Jane Dodds had circulated the proposal from the Saratoga Hilton (a union hotel) in advance of the Board meeting. Dates are May 1 and 2. Discussion focused on the number of rooms reserved in the block- balance the need to accommodate attendees with the financial risk to DRC if we hold more than are booked. Agreed to send out ‘save the date’ eblasts early and emphasize the short deadline to reserve rooms.

A motion to accept the proposal from Saratoga Hilton and authorize Jane Dodds to negotiate on behalf of the DRC was offered by Maggie Bartley, second by Ted Young, carried.

Treasurers Report

Treasurer John Hurley reported balances as of July 28, 2025, for the two DRC accounts held at Key Bank: the Operating Account (\$34,498.56), and the PAC Account (\$474.11). **Attachment 1**

John noted that the PAC account remains administratively suspended- due to missed quarterly filing deadlines while the previous treasurer was ill. The suspension will be lifted once DRC is compliant for 6 to 8 quarters. John anticipates that it may be until the fourth quarter 2025 before the administrative suspension flag is lifted. In the meantime, the DRC can continue to use the account.

Cost of the annual conference was discussed. John provided a spreadsheet breakdown of the costs (**Attachment 2**) demonstrating that food and beverages plus technology are the major expenses. Service charges and taxes are substantial.

A motion to accept the Treasurers Report as submitted was made by Summer Downing, seconded by Ron McDougall. Motion carried.

John circulated a proposal for allocating the proceeds of the annual conference among the DRC counties (**Attachment 3**). The conference and the program book represent the major annual fundraiser. The generous donation of \$10,000 from NYSUT in 2025 was noted– thanks to Mike Zagrobelny for outreach to organized labor ahead of our 2025 conference. The Treasurer’s allocation proposal sets aside \$8,000 of the NYSUT donation in a reserve fund for use to be defined later. Board members’ comments included a handbook for County Chairs, scholarships, and training among the potential uses of the reserve fund.

The proposed allocation to DRC counties who have paid their annual dues (\$90) is \$450, an increase from last year (\$425). A brief discussion followed on whether it would be more efficient to subtract the annual dues from the allocation rather than track down Treasurers from each DRC County Committee. Consensus emerged that member counties’ understanding that DRC membership is a valuable investment outweighed the administrative headaches.

A motion to accept the recommendation of Treasurer John Hurley and set the 2026 annual allocation to DRC Counties at \$450 was moved by Ron McDougall and seconded by Ram Lalukota. Motion carried.

John requested that Regional Vice Chairs share up-to-date contact information for county committee treasurers; this will help streamline dues collection and allocation disbursements.

Report from the Chair

Chairman Bill Thickstun provided updates on several topics. The new DRC web site is up www.nysdrc.org. Bill acknowledged the valuable tech support from Ed Reed (Livingston County) and the web hosting provided through the State Committee.

2026 Conference

- Connor Rohan, chair of the NYS Rural Young Democrats, reached out. The organization wants to sponsor the after party reception at our 2026 Conference.
- Congressional breakout sessions will be scheduled
- Straw Poll will be held
 - Need an ad-hoc committee to work on logistics. Tagged: Jane Dodds, Ron McDougall, Max Della Pia, and Ted Young. Bill will ask Cindy Appleton and Mike Monescalchi to join.
 - Associate members can vote if they come in person and are members of their county committee. Use that rule again?
 - The straw poll will use the Election Buddy software. Mike Monescalchi has agreed to chair the nominating committee and to learn the software.

NYS Legislature Updates

- Special election in Brooklyn- SD22, Democrat Sam Sutton won the seat by a 2-1 margin in a district that Trump won by 55%.
- Billy Jones (AD115- Essex, Clinton and Franklin Counties) is stepping down, committees screening candidates for special election on 11/4/2025
- Status of the DRC legislative priorities for this session
 - Election reform – still in committee
 - Wine in Grocery Stores (DRC opposed) still in committee
 - Dedicated funding for water & wastewater infrastructure, allocated- 500M, not an ongoing budget line as requested
 - Bottle Bill- still in committee
 - Improved rural broadband/cell service- no movement
 - Rural EMS- modest 25M allocation

Report on State Committee Meeting (SCM)

No DRC quorum was present for the spring meeting held in Nassau County

Five resolutions were passed (resolutions 2-4 were introduced by the Progressive Caucus and modified by Chairman Jay Jacobs)

1. Number and geographical distribution of signatures needed to advance resolutions (24 signatures, from members within more than half of the Judicial Districts)
2. Shareable directory
3. New deal for education
4. NYS economic Bill of Rights
5. Resolution of support to President Joe Biden as he undergoes treatment for cancer

Other News and Comments

- Proposed changes to JD boundaries (reference A8883/ S8418) – would make it even harder to elect Democratic judges across the rural counties. Bill carves out urban counties (Onondaga, Monroe and Erie) from JDs 5,7, and 8, changes boundary lines, and creates 2 new districts. Passed Senate and House, awaiting action by Governor.
- Downstate legislators introduced bills in Senate and Assembly to limit size of dairy farms.
- The Rural Freedom Network prepared a list of rural hospitals at risk of closing due to the Big Barbaric Bill (circulated at meeting).
- Issue raised by Lynn Boecher (NY21), should DRC amend bylaws re endorsement?
 - Could increase DRC influence
 - Problem in 2026, both Governor (Delgado vs Hochul) and Comptroller are up. Overwhelming support for DiNapoli, support for Governor is likely to be divided.
 - NYC mayoral race- resolution to endorse is moot because the next State Committee meeting will be after the election.
- Suggestion from Chautauqua County chair (Marcia Westlake Johnson) – pressure county legislatures/Boards of Supervisors to go on record opposing federal administrative policies.
- Tech committee- needs to know the goals for DRC
 - Primary goal- elect Dems
 - Conference
 - Lobby days
 - Support county committees- training

DRC Archives

Discussed the proposal from Mike Schell to designate SUNY Albany as the official DRC archivist. A resolution to authorize Chairman Thickstun to sign a Memorandum of Agreement with SUNY was moved by John Hurley and seconded by Ted Young. Motion carried.

Bylaws Revisions

Roger Saltman led a discussion of proposed revisions to the DRC bylaws- on behalf of the ad-hoc committee including Roger, Dia Carabajal, and Jamal Malik. Proposed modifications were

circulated for Board member review in advance of the meeting. Summer Downing and other Board members provided insightful comments. Key comments included:

- Add duties/role of Parliamentarian
- Memorialize criteria for preference of DRC expenditures (e.g., annual conference). First: using union establishments in DRC counties; Second: using union establishments in non-DRC counties; Third: using non-union establishments in DRC counties.
- Maximum population for counties considered rural is currently 250,000. Several DRC counties are projected to surpass the limit in 2030 census- agreed to keep this issue on radar.
- Clarify that there is no provision for proxy voting, since voting is electronic

Following discussion, Roger summarized the salient changes and offered a motion to recommend the (amended) proposed revisions to our bylaws for consideration by the full DRC membership. The motion was seconded by Jamal Malik and carried.

Discussion continued regarding the positive and negative aspects of the DRC policy of non-endorsement. Consensus emerged to continue to explore options; Bill agreed to consider creating an ad hoc subcommittee to discuss. **Next DRC Board Meeting will be Sunday, October 19th at 7 pm via Zoom**

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was offered by Ted Young at 1:54 pm and seconded by Max Della Pia. Carried.

Minutes prepared by Liz Moran, DRC Secretary

ATTACHMENT 1

Democratic Rural Conference

Treasurer Report

Submitted to the DRC Board of Directors August 2, 2025

Key Bank Operating Account

Starting Balance May 16, 2025					\$32,742.43
Deposits					\$2,076.03
					\$34,818.46
Disbursements					
	Neon				\$319.90
Balance at July 28, 2025					\$34,498.56

Key Bank PAC Account

Starting Balance at May 16, 2025					\$474.11
Deposits					\$0.00
Disbursements:					\$0.00
Balance at July 28, 2025					\$474.11

Respectfully submitted,

John F. Hurley
DRC Treasurer

Attachment 2

Democratic Rural Conference

2025 Conference Summary

Prepared by John F. Hurley, Treasurer

Item	Quantity	Cost / each	Sub-Total	Combined Tax	Service Charge	Total
Food and Beverage						
DRC Board Work Lunch	15	\$35.00	\$525.00	\$51.66	\$120.75	\$697.41
Small Group Fee	1	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$9.84	\$23.00	\$132.84
Friday Dinner	190	\$47.00	\$8,930.00	\$878.71	\$2,053.90	\$11,862.61
Friday Dinner Set-up	1	\$160.00	\$160.00	\$12.80	\$0.00	\$172.80
Saturday Lunch	150	\$30.00	\$4,500.00	\$442.80	\$1,035.00	\$5,977.80
Room Rental	1	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$295.20	\$690.00	\$3,985.20
Strike Labor	1	\$120.00	\$120.00	\$9.60	\$0.00	\$129.60
Sub-Total			\$17,335.00	\$1,700.61	\$3,922.65	\$22,958.26
Technology						
Basic LCD Projector Pkg	2	\$625.00	\$1,250.00	\$123.00	\$287.50	\$1,660.50
Powered Speaker	6	\$150.00	\$900.00	\$88.56	\$207.00	\$1,195.56
Wire Podium Microphone	6	\$130.00	\$780.00	\$76.74	\$179.40	\$1,036.14
Wired Table Top Microphone	1	\$65.00	\$65.00	\$6.40	\$14.95	\$86.35
Meeting Room Operator	1	\$360.00	\$360.00	\$28.80	\$0.00	\$388.80
Riser	1	\$300.00	\$300.00	\$24.00	\$0.00	\$324.00
Sub-Total			\$3,655.00	\$347.50	\$688.85	\$4,691.35
TOTAL			\$20,990.00	\$2,048.11	\$4,611.50	\$27,649.61

Attachment 3

**Democratic Rural Conference
2025 County Allocation Proposal**

Prepared by John F. Hurley, Treasurer

Operating Account Cash Balance at 07/28/2025 \$34,498.56

Projected Expenses 08/01/2025 through 03/31/2026

Zoom Annual Fee	\$160.00	
Neon (6 months @ \$160 / month)	\$960.00	
3 in-person Board Mtg (\$400 each)	\$1,200.00	
2026 Conference start-up reserve	\$3,000.00	
NYSUT reserve for use TBD**	\$8,000.00	\$13,320.00

Available for Allocation to 47 counties \$21,178.56

Individual County Allocation: \$450.00

** Details to be offered at August 2, 2025 Board Meeting.