

DRC Board Meeting

Sunday October 19, 2025

Via Zoom

Board Members Present

Cindy Appleton	Ram Lalukota	Michael Plitt
Maggie Bartley	Jamal Malik	Roger Saltman
Dia Carabajal	Ron McDougall	Bill Thickstun
Summer Downing	Liz Moran	Ted Young
Bill Hughes	Betsy Passer	Michael Zagrobelny
John Hurley		

Board Members Absent

Max Della Pia	Sam Hodge	Tom Schimmerling
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Other DRC Members and Guests Present

Deb Spratt	Jane Dodds	Will Rivera
Bekki Bryant	Judith Hunter	Lynne Boucher
Hal McCabe	Karen Ash	Paul Phister
Martha Delaney	Maggie Peterson	Phil Jones

Welcome and Call to Order

DRC Chair Bill Thickstun called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm and declared that a quorum of the DRC Board was present along with several DRC members and guests.

Meeting Summary

Approval of minutes

Secretary Liz Moran asked for comments and corrections to the minutes of the brief DRC Board meeting of September 21st convened to discuss a contribution to the campaign of Assembly Candidate Michael Cashman (AD 115). Hearing none, she moved for approval. The motion was seconded by Betsy Passer and approved unanimously.

The minutes of the August 2nd DRC Board meeting held in Cazenovia were reviewed. Summer Downing noted a correction to the time of adjournment in the draft minutes. Secretary Moran moved that the minutes be approved as amended to correct the time of adjournment. The motion was seconded by Ram Lalukota and approved unanimously.

Treasurers Report

Treasurer John Hurley reviewed the treasurer's report as of October 15th. He noted that the disbursement of funds to the Cashman campaign, approved on September 21, would be transmitted upon his return to New York. Jane Dodds will forward the final contract with the Saratoga Hilton for the 2026 DRC conference; John will issue a check for the retainer to the hotel. Roger Saltman moved to approve the Treasurer's report; the motion was seconded by Bill Hughes and approved unanimously. In addition, Bill Thickstun attended a fundraiser in Brooklyn on October 6th hosted by Lydia Green, which raised around \$1400. Proceeds pending through Act Blue are not yet reflected in report.

Report from the Chair

Bill Thickstun reported on DRC Board organization as well as his interactions with a range of outside organizations and supporters.

- October 6th Brooklyn fundraiser hosted by Lydia Green provided a great opportunity for conversations with downstate Democrats. The event raised about \$1400 and we are grateful to Lydia for organizing and the introductions.
- Mike Monescalchi is taking on Election Buddy. Phil Jones is willing to continue to support remotely as needed.
- Bill met in mid-August with Preston Elliot, Governor Hochul's campaign manager. Her campaign verbally committed to sponsor the opening reception at our 2026 conference.
- The technical committee has met and reached consensus that continuing with Neon remains our best option for managing communications and conference registrations. Rick Gell agrees with the analysis.
- Bill needs someone tech-savvy to manage the DRC Facebook page. Judith Hunter commented that this requires time- screening the news, verifying links, and framing comments and summaries to reflect our DRC constituency. Another task is to review the (hundreds of) photographs from the 2026 conference and identify images to use on the web site and social media. Will Rivera (Otsego County) volunteered to help.
- Bill congratulated Judith Hunter on being recognized for her contributions at Comptroller Tom DiNapoli's annual State Fair breakfast.
- An event planned in Tompkins County was cancelled following the Charlie Kirk murder.
- The Antonio Delgado for Governor campaign is reaching out to County Chairs and others to discuss ideas to change the NYS Democratic Committee into a more inclusive and responsive organization. Recommendations that emerged from the

DRC summit in December 2022 are incorporated into the campaign's proposed changes to the Committee's structure.

- Bill has been in contact with newly elected County Chairs
 - Deb Spratt- Livingston County
 - Christine Weisenburger – Oswego County
 - Barbara Persico- Montgomery County
 - Kip Cassavaw- Franklin County
 - Stephen Vegilante- Sullivan County
- Even year election bill passed. Brief discussion of exceptions and implications to synchronizing terms.
- Next general DRC membership meeting: November at the NYS Democratic Meeting
 - Date and location TBD
 - If quorum is present, plan to vote on revisions to DRC Bylaws
 - Audit Committee (Ted Young, Mich Ford, Barbara Turpin) hope to meet in person – state committee meeting may be an opportunity.
- There will be a NYS nominating convention in early 2026 – date and location TBD
- Bill encouraged all to vote Yes on Proposition One- it looks like a win/win for environmental protection of the Adirondack Park and expanding sports-related tourism and economic development in Essex County.
- Marcia Westling Johnson (Chautauqua County Chair) will be circulating a state committee resolution to support the Governor in countering gerrymandering efforts in red states. Bill urged support of the resolution.
- Mike Zagrobelny and Martha Devaney (Saratoga Chair) have discussed organizing a competition between colleges for voter registration efforts next year.
- A straw poll committee meeting was tentatively scheduled for November 16 at 7pm over Zoom.

Discussion: Issues for Advocacy Days

A draft summary of potential issues to discuss with NYS elected officials was circulated in advance of the meeting. Target date for DRC representatives to be in Albany is last week in January, subject to legislative calendar and timing/location of the NYS convention. Goal is to have directed asks for votes on legislation. Will have a short list supported by a one-page handout.

There was general agreement to continue to press for election law reform to designation process to eliminate requirement to pass petitions in the winter. Bill Thickstun noted that many of our other priorities (funding to maintain water & sewer, expanded broadband and cell coverage, rural EMS) can be grouped under the category of infrastructure.

There is broad concern about locating data centers in rural areas. Issues include power requirements, environmental impacts, and lack of community benefits or input.

A discussion of renewable energy touched on alternatives such as agrivoltaics to help preserve productivity of agricultural lands while generating power. Mike Zagrobelney and others outlined some challenges of managing large-scale wind, hydroelectric, and solar projects. Roger Saltman discussed the potential for using methane from dairy manure for energy production.

Brief discussion of New York For All; the bill was introduced late in the session and aims to prohibit state and local governments' collusion with ICE through 527 agreements. Did not pass the Legislature and it's uncertain if the Governor would sign it.

Action item: A draft of the leave-behind piece will be circulated in advance of Advocacy Days.

Conference Update

Jane Dodds and her team continue to prepare for the 2026 DRC Conference, scheduled for May 1-2 in Saratoga. The Congressional breakout sessions will be Friday afternoon, May 1. Several DRC congressional districts are likely to have Democratic primaries in June 2026.

Saratoga Young Democrats hosting an after-party on Friday.

Plan to is to circulate registration links and agenda early (target January).

Next Meeting

DRC Board meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 11th at 7 pm via ZOOM

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was offered by Ted Young at 8:05 pm and seconded by Ram Lalukota. Motion passed unanimously.

Minutes prepared by Liz Moran, Secretary