DRC Summer Board Meeting
Saturday July 25, 2026
Lincklaen House, Cazenovia

Board Members Present:

Maggie Bartley	Ron McDougall	Michael Plitt
Dia Carabajal	Liz Moran	Roger Saltman
Summer Downing	Caitlin Ogden	Bill Thickstun
John Hurley	Betsy Passer	Mike Zagrobelny
Jamal Malik		

Board Members Absent: Bill Hughes, Max Della Pia, Ram Lalukota, Cindy Appleton, Mark Streb, Tom Schimmerling

DRC Members and Guests Present: Chis Rossi, Jane Dodds, Corey Mosher, Tim Murray, Renate Ferro, Joan Davis, Jim Bobreski

Welcome and Call to Order

DRC Chair Bill Thickstun called the meeting to order at 10 am and welcomed DRC members and guests to Madison County. He thanked Roger Saltman for arranging the summer in-person meeting. Participants introduced themselves. A quorum of the DRC Board was declared present.

Approval of Minutes

Summer Downing moved approval of the 5/2/2026 post-conference DRC Board meeting; motion was seconded by Jamal Malik and carried. Bill Thickstun noted that approval of the minutes of the general membership meeting also held on 5/2/2026 will be considered when a quorum of DRC members is present.

Treasurer's Report

John Hurley presented the Treasurer's report as of July 15, 2026. A motion to accept the Treasurer's report was offered by Ron McDougall, seconded by Mike Zagrobelney; the motion carried.

Key Bank Operating Account

Starting Balance April 30, 2026				**$61,980.97**
Deposits				
	Neon Payout	05/01 - 07/15	$0.00	
	Walk-in Deposit	05/01 - 07/15	$8,138.73	*$8,138.73*
Disbursements				
	Neon - 3 month	May, June, July	$494.64	$494.64
	Conference		$31,336.72	*$31,336.72*
Balance July 15, 2026				**$38,288.35**

Key Bank PAC Account

Starting Balance April 30, 2026				**$474.11**
Deposits		Jeffries	$2,500.00	*$2,500.00*
Disbursements:			0	$0.00
Balance July 15, 2026				**$2,974.11**

John Hurley presented a detailed accounting of the costs associated with the 2026 conference in Saratoga Springs.

Item	Quantity	Unit Cost	Sub-Total	Combined Tax	Service Charge	Total
Food and Beverage						
DRC Board Work Lunch	16	$34.00	$544.00	$46.46	$119.68	$710.14
Room Rental	1	$750.00	$750.00	$64.05	$165.00	$979.05
Friday Dinner	247	$44.00	$10,868.00	$928.13	$2,390.96	$14,187.09
Saturday Lunch	200	$38.00	$7,600.00	$649.04	$1,672.00	$9,921.04
Bartenders	2	$150.00	$300.00	$21.00	$0.00	$321.00
Sub-Total			$20,062.00	$1,708.68	$4,347.64	$26,118.32
Technology						
Powered Speaker	8	$150.00	$1,200.00	$0.00	$0.00	$1,200.00
Wire Podium Microphone	8	$70.00	$560.00	$0.00	$0.00	$560.00
Wireless Microphone	1	$170.00	$170.00	$0.00	$0.00	$170.00
Audio Mixer	8	$70.00	$560.00	$0.00	$0.00	$560.00
Labor (rate per day: $900.00)	1	$900.00	$900.00	$0.00	$0.00	$900.00
Service Charge	1				$547.80	$547.80
Sales Tax	1			$275.65		$275.65
Sub-Total			$3,390.00	$275.65	$547.80	$4,213.45
TOTAL			**$23,452.00**	**$1,984.33**	**$4,895.44**	**$30,331.77**

Discussion turned to allocation of the proceeds to DRC member counties. John recommended keeping the disbursement at $450 per county, totaling $21,000. This allocation provides a slightly higher reserve in the DRC operating account; holding back some reserve was considered appropriate as conference planning begins 2 years in advance, and the switch to all even-year elections may reduce candidate advertising revenue in off-years. Ron McDougall made a motion to set the 2026 DRC allocation to member counties in good standing (i.e., paid the $90 annual membership fee) at $450. The motion was seconded by Summer Downing and carried. A recommendation was made to ask regional Vice Chairs to help track receipt of annual dues and update contact information for county treasurers.

2027 Conference Planning

Registration and Refund Policies

Continuing a discussion that began during our May 2 meeting, the Board reviewed the need for a consistent policy on registration deadlines and refunds. Roger Saltman suggested a tiered price structure to incentivize early registration and enable the conference planners to meet hotel deadlines for meal counts. The "late/limited" option added in 2026 at the last minute was helpful to those interested in sessions and networking, such as legislative staff members, but willing to forgo meals and receptions.

The following policy elements emerged (costs for 2027 conference were used as an example):

- Standard registration fee ($150/$90) is valid until March 22, which corresponds to the hotel reservation block deadline.
- Registration fee increases to $165/$100 after the deadline.
- Registration information sets the deadline for cancellations and refunds as April 13th and states that refunds will be issued by check after the conference.
- All decisions regarding comped registrations will be made by the DRC Chair.

A motion to adopt these conference registration policies was offered by Mike Zagrobelny and seconded by Roger Saltman. The motion was carried.

A motion to authorize the DRC to execute the contract with the Syracuse Marriot for the 2027 conference was offered by Summer Downing, seconded by Mike Zagrobelny. The motion was carried.

Ideas for Sessions

Board members and guests brainstormed ideas for sessions. Suggestions included:

- VAN session (Melissa Wyner state committee)- intro and advanced
- Training for County and Campaign treasurers
- Training for County chairs
- Engaging with younger voters
- Strategies for communication (consider inviting providers to demo their products)

    - Direct mail/postal permits
    - Email platforms
    - Socal media
- Mental health first aid, volunteer burnout
- Collaborations with political science students/staff from local colleges
- Continue/expand outreach to Young Dems
- Adirondack Park rules for campaigns
- Candidate support organizations
    - Unions
    - Eleanor's Legacy
    - NYSFDW (Denise Murphy McGraw)
    - Run for Something
    - Senator Skoufis PAC
    - Mark Poloncarz PAC

Mike Zagrebelny, Caitlin Ogden, and Jamal Malik volunteered to serve on a Program Committee to plan our 2027 conference.

Lunch Recess: Meeting paused at 11:55 am, reconvened at 12:40 pm

Reports

Chair

Bill Thickstun circulated a draft letter to Governor Hochul urging her to veto the judicial redistricting legislation that passed the NYS legislature at the end of the session. Most of the DRC representatives voted in favor, despite our lobbying efforts; this was a disappointing and frustrating outcome. Bill asked for and received approval to send the letter to Governor Hochul on behalf of the DRC.

Bill Thickstun reported that a Handbook for Chairs is in process. The subcommittee includes the Chair, Jamal Malik, Max della Pia, Joan Davis, and Maggie Bartley. A draft will be circulated for review and comment.

Political Issues Committee

Mike Zagrobelny circulated a summary of how DRC priorities fared in the 2026 legislative session (Attachment 1). The committee's designated top priority, reforming the petition process, has not advanced. The Assembly sponsor, Bill Magnarelli, lost his primary and will not return to Albany. The ensuing discussion indicated a range of opinions: the value of deep canvassing during petitioning vs. the logistics and risks of circulating petitions in rural areas during winter weather. One suggested approach was to focus our lobbying efforts on reforming the judicial delegate nominating process (since the signature requirements are onerous). Mike briefly reviewed progress on other priorities. Increased support for EMS, designated as an essential service, needs to be a high priority. Refining the priority list for advocacy days in the next legislative session will continue into the fall.

Summary of Enacted NYS Budget Impacts on Rural Communities

Corey Mosher, Executive Director of the NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resource, distributed copies of the June 2026 report on how the adopted NY budget affects rural communities- June 2026 Budget Analysis. A focus continues to be protecting our rural areas from the Trump administration's harmful policies on tariffs, immigration, and health care. Corey reviewed the major elements[1] and successes of the enacted budget and offered to discuss the findings in detail with DRC members.

Communications Committee

Liz Moran and Dia Carabajal are collaborating on producing DRC Bulletin #44 and asked for feedback on the target audience and effectiveness of producing a bulletin in its original newsletter format.

The content summarizes work that has been done (advocacy days, annual conference, changes to Board membership) and includes some photos. Consensus emerged to consider using the revamped DRC website to convey the information in a more interactive and engaging format. Suggestions included requesting examples of best practices, posting opinion surveys, highlighting local issues, etc. Previous issues are archived on our website.

Program Book

Bill Thickstun reported briefly on behalf of Karen Ash. He emphasized the outstanding work of the Committee- Karen Ash, Cindy Appleton, and Suzanne Coogan. They oversold the book, regrouped to add four pages on short notice, and raised a record amount of revenue. Bill also recognized and thanked Stephen DeVay, Monroe County Chair, for funding the printing.

Upcoming Meetings

Date and location of the September NYS Democratic Committee meeting has not yet been announced (likely downstate).

A Zoom meeting of the Program Committee will be scheduled (*tentative date Sunday 8/16, 7 pm*)

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was offered by Ron McDougall at 2:25 pm and seconded by Caitlin Ogden; the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted, Liz Moran- DRC Secretary

[1] https://www.nysenate.gov/sites/default/files/admin/structure/media/manage/filefile/a/2025-06/lcrr-enacted-budget-summary-fy-2026.pdf