

UNITING FOR VOICE AND VICTORY

THE FOUNDING OF THE DRC- 1995-1998

An Archival History

By Mike Schell and Steve Jones



Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of its Founding

2d draft archives (Abridged) printed 12/4/17

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DRC FACT SHEET

1998

DRC STATS

Counties eligible for membership:

41 counties with populations of under 150,000.

Voters enrolled in DRC counties:

1.5 million

Land mass in DRC counties:

80% of state

Vote received from DRC counties:

1992 Clinton 33.7% (carried 10 DRC counties)

1994 Cuomo 23% (carried 0 DRC counties)

1996 Clinton 45.7% (carried 31 DRC counties)

Founded:

1995 in reaction to 1994 statewide losses. Small county chairs felt unity would help get attention and power for their often overlooked counties.

DRC Eligible Counties:

Allegany; Cattaraugus; Cayuga; Chautauqua; Chemung; Chenango; Clinton; Columbia; Cortland; Delaware; Essex; Franklin; Fulton; Genesee; Greene; Hamilton; Herkimer; Jefferson; Lewis; Livingston; Madison; Montgomery; Ontario; Orleans; Oswego; Otsego; Putnam; St. Lawrence; Schenectady; Schoharie; Schuyler; Seneca; Steuben; Sullivan; Tioga; Tompkins; Warren; Washington; Wayne; Wyoming; and Yates

DRC STRAW POLL

Important Test of Support:

First major test of 1998 campaign. DRC delegates represent counties with critical swing votes lost in the 1994 campaign.

Voting restricted to leaders:

Unlike other straw polls, only County Chairs and State Committee members can vote, representing up to 1.5 million voters.

Secret ballots:

Will allow members to support candidates who will appeal to swing voters in rural counties. Delegates can vote without publicly committing.

No Proxy voting:

DRC members or alternates must be present in person. Purpose in prohibiting proxy voting is to bring far-flung DRC membership together to bond and to personally meet candidates.

FOREWORD 2016

By Mike Schell

As we approached the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Democratic Rural Conference of New York State, Steve Jones and I reflected back on the early days when the DRC was a vague concept, a rough ball of clay waiting to be molded. Steve and I were much younger when he, a Democratic County chair from central New York, and I, a long time state committee member from the North Country, began to talk with friends in the party about creating a caucus within the state committee. We were joined by other upstate Democratic leaders who became members of the founding “steering committee” in 1995, or members of the DRC’s charter board of directors in 1996, all of whom we refer to as the DRC’s “Founders”. I would become the DRC’s first chair, Steve its first secretary.

Now, after all these years, the DRC has become a respected and permanent part of the state’s political structure and a model for Democrats in other states. Steve and I agreed that the time had come to preserve the DRC’s heritage by gathering and preserving its historic archives from those early days. We planned to put those records into context by providing a written narrative. With advancing age and greater distance from those early days, the history of those founding events are becoming foggy. We needed to gather the records and refresh our memories in order to preserve them before we, and they, disappeared.

Perhaps just as important, we wanted to commemorate and to share with others a wonderful time in our political lives when we made great friends, had many laughs, and, we hope, made substantial and positive contributions to the course of New York State politics.

Fortunately, Steve is an obsessive and meticulous chronicler and record keeper as the DRC’s long time Secretary. Thanks to his efforts and foresight, we have minutes of early meetings (detailed and almost verbatim), plans, drafts, memos, press releases, correspondence, and news articles.

The SUNY Albany Department of Archives provides a repository for historic documents, including those from political entities. Head Archivist Brian Keough has expressed not only a willingness to accept and curate our documents, but an enthusiasm for preserving our history. The Archives will give the DRC a permanent historic home that can be accessed by historians and members of the public for generations to come.

So, Steve and I commenced gathering and organizing the archives. We already had a narrative because Steve, for the 15th anniversary of the DRC, had published a wonderful history of the first few years; we used that as the core of the story that would give context to the accompanying documents.

I thought that providing some additional personal insights and recollections on the various early DRC events might be of interest. Therefore, I have interjected those reflections and memories, and I have invited other Founders to do likewise. I’m hoping that these personal stories will

interest some of those who review the archival history long in the future—perhaps a doctoral candidate, a history hobbyist, or just Steve’s grandchildren or mine.

Most of all, we hope that the “Founders” of the DRC, who worked so hard in the beginning and who became lifelong friends, will find that our reminiscences will spark a memory or a smile.

Hence, the format of this Archival History. It is told by both of us, sometimes in tandem, sometimes individually, as we relate our own memories. We have invited other “Founders” to share their own stories and memories for inclusion in this book and in the archive collection at SUNY.

Our story takes us from early conversations in the 1980s through the 1998 straw poll convention in Ithaca that gained national attention and put the DRC on the map. We invite others to take up the story and provide another volume, with archives and a narrative, covering 1998 to the present.



DRC Chair Mike Schell, Lt. Gov. candidate Clyde Rabideau, DRC Secretary Steve Jones at candidate interview session, 1998.

THE RURAL CAUCUS STEERING COMMITTEE 1995-1996

The Steering Committee was formed to create what would become the Democratic Rural Conference. The members worked for ten months, travelling across upstate to meet with Democratic leaders. They then put together the organizational structure, drafted by-laws, recruited executive committee members, and planned the organizational meeting. Their work was adopted at a meeting of small- county chairs and state committee members on September 17, 1996, in Binghamton, and the DRC was born.

Original Attendees at initial organizing meeting December 18, 1995, Syracuse:

CHAIR- MIKE SCHELL Jefferson

VICE CHAIR- CAROL TIBBITS Orleans

SECRETARY- STEVE JONES Madison

TREASURER JOHN FITZGIBBONS Oswego

JOHN SULLIVAN Oswego, Executive Chair of NYSDC

MARTY MACK Cortland

BOB KERSCH Wyoming

Joined in 1996:

IRENE STEIN Tompkins

CINDY EMMER Chemung

RUTH YOUNG Schuyler

BOB BOWMAN St. Lawrence

CHARLES MERRELL Lewis

KATE LACEY Cayuga

STU BRODY Essex



DRC BUTTON COLLECTION- Courtesy Don Ackerman

CHAPTER ONE: THE IDEA OF A SMALL- COUNTY CAUCUS 1982-1994

Mike: The concept of the DRC had been bouncing around in my mind since I was first elected to the New York State Democratic Committee in 1980. I am sure the idea had occurred to others, but during the 80's and early 90's the party establishment was hostile to the concept.

It was apparent that Democratic leaders **not from large cities** or the populous suburban counties were essentially **left out of the action**. When the state committee convened, all decisions had already been made by the executive committee, which included almost no rural representatives. When the state party selected delegates for the presidential convention in 1992, a woman from Brooklyn was chosen to represent the north country!

Steve: And a Buffalo Democrat was forced upon us to represent Central New York!

This injustice gave rise to the resolution that Mike and I put forth at the State Committee demanding that future delegate selection plans require that delegates and alternates be residents of the district they represented. Sure enough, the 1996 plan included such a provision. Later plans also required representation from rural counties, although the state leadership refused to put in geographic quotas and goals.

At the 1994 state convention in Buffalo (the one that nominated Mario Cuomo for an unsuccessful reelection), out of dozens of speakers scheduled to address the convention, only 2 were from any of the 40 smaller counties—Mayors **Shawn Hogan** of Hornell and **Marty Mack** of Cortland, and Mack was scratched from the agenda at the last minute. We were frustrated, but what could be done? Most of the small county chairs felt helpless.

Mike: We noted that the Reform Caucus seemed to be effective in attracting attention for its particular agenda and notice from statewide candidates. The Reform Caucus, a relatively small group of progressive reformers and state committee members mostly from New York City, made endorsements and brought resolutions to the floor of state committee meetings. Why wouldn't the same idea work for a coalition of rural leaders?

Carey, Cuomo Cool to the Idea:

I first floated the idea with party leaders and operatives working with Governor Carey in the early 80s, then with Governor Mario Cuomo's folks in the late 80s and early 90s. Not surprisingly, these people showed no interest in having to contend with yet another caucus. But I talked to a few of my friends on the NYSDC, especially Steve Jones (Madison County), Marty Mack (Cortland County), and **John Fitzgibbons** (Oswego), and they liked the idea and offered to help.

With the unexpected defeat of Mario Cuomo in 1994, I again took the idea to Steve, John Fitzgibbons, and Marty. Mario's defeat was due in part to the terrible returns from the rural counties, where large numbers of Democrats had deserted him. **He carried only one upstate county, and none of the 40 small counties.** He received only 23% of the vote in what would later become the DRC counties.

In April, 1995, Speaker Shelly Silver, who essentially inherited control of the governor-less party, replaced Cuomo's hand-picked State Chair, Al Gordon, with his own hand-picked leadership: a **downstate/upstate co-chairmanship of Judith Hope (state chair, Suffolk County) and John Sullivan ("executive chair", Oswego County).** Shelly, like downstate leaders before him, was initially opposed to any type of upstate caucus.

Steve, Marty, John, and I brought our idea of a “small county leaders caucus” to John Sullivan, and he was immediately supportive. Having John Sullivan, state executive chairman, on board allowed us to operate within the ambit of the state party, reducing the perception that we were a rump group or operating outside the party.

The Oswego Conference:

Sullivan arranged to have the NYSDC conduct part of its September 1995 regular fall meeting in Oswego. Two things happened there that gave me confidence. First, on a boat ride for delegates, two, NYSDC members (Ginny Kintz of Schoharie and Bob Kersch of Wyoming) in general conversation with me raised the idea of an upstate caucus. It was totally unprompted.

The other event was a brainstorming session for rural leaders that was organized by John Sullivan to discuss rural issues. The idea of a caucus did not come up, but the tenor of the speeches, including one by Wyoming County Chair **Carol Tibbits** made it clear we were on the right track. All expressed frustration borne of a long history of being ignored and powerless. Future DRC chair **Kim Muller** (Otsego) was also a participant. It was from this group that we organized a meeting in December of interested small county Democratic leaders to meet and perhaps to organize.

Steve Jones picks up the story from there.

DEC 11 1995

LAW OFFICE

MALONEY, SCHELL & EISENHAUER, P.C.

316 SHERMAN STREET

WATERTOWN, NEW YORK 13601-3690

MICHAEL W. SCHELL
ROSCOE A. EISENHAUER, JR.
ROBERT J. MALONEY - RETIRED

782-0004
AREA CODE 315
FAX 788-5949
AREA CODE 315

December 7, 1995

Steven Jones
Eaton, Box 130
Morrisville, New York 13408

RE: Rural Steering Committee

Dear Steve:

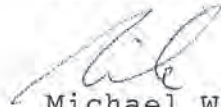
I am writing to you and a handful of other Democratic leaders from rural areas to invite you to a meeting in Syracuse. The meeting will be on December 18th at 12:00 at the Quality Inn on Buckley Road. Plan on meeting me in the Quality Inn dining room for a dutch treat lunch to discuss the formation of a "rural Democratic Caucus" in the New York State Democratic committee, and to set up a steering committee to get things started.

Please call Bob Miller, Executive Secretary of the Jefferson County Democratic Committee at 788-4590 to let us know if you will be able to attend.

Executive State Chair John Sullivan has accepted our invitation to join us and we look forward to hearing from him on how we can be helpful to our State party and each other.

I look forward to hearing from you and seeing you on December 18th.

Sincerely,



Michael W. Schell

MWS:llh
Enclosure

cc: John Sullivan
Bob Miller

12/12/95
I called to confirm

UPDATED 12/15/95

LIST OF INVITEES
RURAL STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
DECEMBER 18, 1995

John Vona will attend
200 S. Decatur Street
Watkins Glen, New York 14891

* Robert Kersch will attend
4344 Dolph Road
Gainesville, New York 14066

* Marty Mack will attend
PO Box 332
Cortland, New York 13045

Kim Muller ?
6 Normal Avenue
Oneonta, New York 13820

* Carol Tibbits will attend
243 Oak Orchard Estate
Albion, New York 14411

Charles Merrell will try to attend
PO Box 151
Lowville, New York 13367

Stuart Brody ?
Box 122
Essex, New York 12736

* Steven Jones will attend
Eaton, Box 130
Morrisville, New York 13408

* John Fitzgibbons ?
PO Box 288
Oswego, New York 13126

Marty Torrey
Elliott Road
New Concorde, New York 12060

unable to attend - out of town
very interested and wants to be
included with future meetings
518-392-7795 (home no.)

Barbra VanKuren
158 Kings Road
Coxsackie, New York 12051

?

Jim Wood
25 Second Street
Delhi, New York 13753

?

John Sullivan

Mike Schell

Dorothy Betts

SMALL COUNTY RURAL COALITION PROPOSAL

NEED

- Democratic rural leaders and voters feel alienated and disconnected. They feel left out of the mainstream and are therefore less motivated to assist the party.
- Support for Democrats in rural areas is dropping dramatically - and it has cost elections. Had these 40 smallest counties voted in the same proportion as the registration, as they have in the past (30-40%), we would have retained the governorship.

MEMBERSHIP

County Chairs and State Committee members (each rural county has two) from the forty counties with populations of under 150,000

These counties represent approximately 200,000 Democratic voters in the 1994 gubernatorial election or about 8% of the total votes cast for governor on the Democratic line (hence, 8% of the vote in the state committee).

PURPOSE OF THE COALITION

- Provide support and assistance to the Democratic Party and its leadership by carrying the Democratic message to the small towns and villages in the state.
- Share information and resources - ie: campaign techniques, fund raising methods in Republican counties.
- Develop and recruit potential candidates for multi-county districts (ie: Congress, State Senate, Assembly).
- Provide a ready forum for state Democratic leaders to reach the leadership and voters of the small counties.
- Develop understanding of issues of concern to voters in small counties and convey that information to Democratic leaders and candidates.

MEANS OF ACCOMPLISHING OUR GOALS

- Organize - a steering committee has been meeting to organize the coalition.
- Conduct 4 Regional rural county meetings including all 40 small county chairs.
- Hold organizing meeting to adopt rules, elect leaders.
- Meet regularly in the future in conjunction with State Committee meetings

LEADERSHIP

Temporary Chairman: Jefferson County Chair, Mike Schell; Temporary Vice Chairman: Orleans County Chair, Carol Tibbits; Temporary Secretary: Madison County State Committeeman, Steve Jones; Temporary Treasurer: Oswego County State Committeeman, John Fitzgibbons. Permanent officers are to be elected at the organizing meeting. We also plan to elect four directors.

- Mike Schell 1995

CHAPTER TWO:

THE STEERING COMMITTEE ERA— 1995-1996 “UNITE FOR VOICE AND VICTORY”

Steve: In a letter dated December 7, 1995, Mike Schell asked the group to meet him in Syracuse on December 18 to “get things started”. Present were Mike Schell, Carol Tibbits, Bob Kersch, Marty Mack, John Fitzgibbons, Steve Jones and John Sullivan. Mike was selected chair of the group which we **began calling the Rural Caucus Steering Committee**. I was appointed Temporary Secretary and was asked to prepare a press release of the meeting and draft by-laws. Carol Tibbits agreed to serve as Vice Chair.

The Steering Committee met again on January 26, 1996, in Syracuse, and we were joined by John Sullivan’s wife Charlotte and Kate Lacey from Cayuga County. Marching forth as the “Democratic Rural Coalition,” we drew on **Charlotte’s convention planning** experience to help us arrange -our first DRC convention to be held in March, 1996, in Cortland.

We Go on the Road to Meet County Chairs:

Mike: Unfortunately, the March convention didn’t happen. I was called in to meet with **Speaker Silver, who viewed our caucus as a rump group that would divide the party upstate and down**. Judith Hope also had concerns. With George Pataki now in the Governor’s Mansion and the Democrats deeply in debt, Shelly and Judith didn’t need any more problems, and they viewed an upstate caucus as a problem. I tried to reassure them that our proposed caucus would strive to unite and strengthen the party, not divide it. They were dubious. Executive Chair John Sullivan advocated for us and did what he could,

but he was having his own problems with a somewhat contentious relationship with Judith—a predictable result of the attempt to have a co-chairmanship of the state party rather than having one person in charge.

We (Steve, Carol, Marty, John Sullivan, John Fitzgibbons and I) agreed to not buck the Speaker and to postpone the first DRC Conference. We would take a more measured approach. Instead of having a full convention right off the bat, we decided to **take the early spring of 1996 to build support for such a caucus** -- a ground-up approach. We would travel around upstate, meeting with county leaders and discussing whether a rural county leader caucus would be helpful to them and to the party as a whole. Perhaps the Speaker thought that by stalling us, our energy would wane and our passion fade. But while we wanted to avoid conflict with the establishment, we were also not about to be deterred. On a February 21st conference call, **the Steering Committee agreed to proceed with meetings in four upstate locations** to assess interest and, frankly, to sell the concept.

Steve and Mike:

So during a cold and snowy March of 1996, our merry little band hit the icy roads to deliver our message of rural power and statewide unity.

That is how we ended up in **Cliff Hay's** basement in **Cobleskill** on the morning of March 23, 1996. It was the first of four regional upstate meetings of local Democratic leaders. It was a great place to start our Odyssey. Cliff had been Schoharie county chair back in the Harriman era, and his basement was a political museum. **The chairs attending were Barbara Van Kuren (Greene), Al Hayes (Fulton), Linda Gaydushek (Schoharie), Jim Wood (Delaware), and Mike Glavin (Rensselaer VC). NYSDC members -Denise King (Columbia) and Bob Secovnie** joined the group. John Sullivan and Mike ran the meeting. It was productive. Many of the ideas that became part of the DRC were raised at this meeting, as were some objections to the

concept. One objection (I think from Denise King, a future DRC chair) was that the word “caucus” seemed confrontational; we later settled on “conference”.

Meanwhile, we continued to face some opposition and **attempts to scuttle our efforts**. The Speaker and the State Chair remained skeptical of our motives. Existing caucuses didn’t want competition. Some said a rural caucus would divide upstate Democrats from downstate. Memos to that effect were leaked to the press. We were undaunted and went on with our regional meetings, encouraged by responses from local leaders.

The other regional meetings were:

- **Batavia Best Western on March 29:** hosted by Orleans chair Carol Tibbits. Unfortunately we can’t find the sign-in sheet or minutes from that meeting, but it was heavily attended by western NY leaders. The Best Western had an accordion band in the bar, and we all ended up dancing to the accordion music and partying—a foreshadowing of the important **DRC tradition of dancing and partying together**: “To be successful in politics, you must have fun in politics”.
- **Cortland on March 30:** hosted by Marty’s wife, NYSDC member Lee Scott Mack, chaired by Steve, and attended by leaders from Seneca, Chemung, Tompkins (**future DRC chair Irene Stein**), Oswego, Schuyler, Cayuga, Cortland, and Madison.

Steve:

At Saranac Lake We Decide to Move Ahead

- The regional meeting at Saranac Lake on April 27 was preceded by a Steering Committee meeting where we met with State Chair Judith Hope who was accompanied by her husband Tom Twomey.

New steering committee members attending were **Cindy Emmer (Chemung), Ruth Young (Schuyler), Stu Brody (Essex), Bob Bowman (St.Lawrence) , and Charles Merrell (Lewis)**. Not long after this meeting, **Irene Stein (Tompkins)** volunteered to join the **Steering Committee**. The addition of those steering committee members greatly strengthened our efforts, both in our infancy and in later years. Cindy Emmer was a great organizer and would serve for years as DRC Treasurer; Ruth Young became an important conscience of the DRC on many issues for many years. Irene and Stu would both serve as DRC chairs in later years.

At the Saranac meeting, John, Mike and I reported to state party chair Judith Hope on the results of the regional meetings and our plans to move forward. Judith was warming to the idea at this point. A tall thin political operative from the Clinton presidential reelection campaign also popped in, according to my rough notes, but we didn't focus on him much until he was elected Mayor of New York City 15 years later. (Yes, **Bill DeBlasio**).

Stu Brody agreed to draft a mission statement. Steve Jones reported on the proposed by-laws, but alas we still had no name. Having considered and discarded "The Back 40", "People with Pitchforks," and the titles "Caucus" and "Coalition," we began to call ourselves the DRC but had not yet settled on what the "C" stood for. Judith Hope and her husband Tom Twomey briefed us on the new State Committee website and asked us to send them information for our own page on the web. (Tom would become a great asset to the state committee and the DRC, especially in bringing us into the internet era.)

The North Country regional meeting that followed that night in Saranac Lake was attended by representatives of Franklin, Clinton, Warren, Lewis, Essex, St. Lawrence, and Jefferson counties. That evening, Judith Hope and John Sullivan hosted a welcome reception.



July 23, 1996 photo taken by Charlotte Sullivan of the DRC Steering Committee meeting

Bottom Row: Irene Stein, Ruth Young, Chair Mike Schell, Cindy Emmer and Bob Kersch;

Back Row: Kellaura Jones, Secretary Steve Jones, John Sullivan, Vice Chair Carol Tibbits

Not Pictured: John Fitzgibbons, Marty Mack, Bob Bowman, Charles Merrell, Stu Brody

ELMIRA LOCAL/TV Star-Gazette, Thursday, February 29, 1996 7A

Upstate Democrats start organization for small communities

By APRIL HUNT
Star-Gazette

Democrats in several upstate New York counties — including the Southern Tier — are starting a grassroots organization to address concerns of smaller communities.

The Democratic Rural Coalition will bring a stronger Democratic presence to traditional Republican strongholds, said John T. Sullivan Jr., executive chair of the state Democratic Party.

"In these counties in particular, many of the Democratic chairs and activists have felt that somehow the party was not paying attention to them and hadn't been acting on their opinions," Sullivan said.

Representatives of Schuyler, Steuben and Yates counties — part of the coalition's western region — will meet March 29 in Batavia to identify needs and issues.

Chemung and Tioga counties — part of the coalition's central region — have not set a date to meet. But a meeting is expected in April or May, said Marty Mack, the

central region coordinator and chairman of the Cortland County Democratic Party.

"In small counties, resources are limited, and we each do things differently," Mack said. "We want to talk to each other to better promote statewide interests of the Democratic Party, and in particular some rural issues."

The state Democratic party will tell county chairs about the coalition and how residents can get involved.

All regional meetings will be held before the state Democratic Convention May 31 in New York City, Sullivan said. There, coalition members should have a list of rural concerns that can be brought to the attention of all members.

■ **To get involved:** Call your county Democratic chair for details: Chemung County — Keith Osborne (607/734-6330); Steuben County — Shawn Hogan (607/324-7421); Schuyler County — John Vona (607/535-9706); Tioga County — Gloria Whitmore (607/862-3222).

Democrats: Waiting for November

Continued from Page 1A

For some, it's a nice break.

"We're merely interested observers," said Jim McGann, chairman of the Elmira Democratic Committee and Democratic election commissioner on the Chemung County Board of Elections. "It's always nice to observe consternation in the other camp."

Others, such as Keith Osborne, express concern that there is a lull before Clinton campaign events heat up.

Osborne, chairman of the Chemung County Democratic Party, said that during this same period in the 1992 campaign, the local groups had a flood of people anxious to get involved.

Now, voters are sitting back, waiting to be told what to do, he said.

"A group of us from the five counties (in the Southern Tier) are talking about start-

ing some voter rallies and registration drives to get some enthusiasm," Osborn said.

"Knowing who the nominee is leaves us with a lot of time on our hands we're not normally used to, and we want to get something started."

Patterson said the president has the advantage of incumbency and can afford to sit back and watch his opponents battle each other.

"Starting in April, not much will be happening," he said. "Most of this won't come back up unless something dramatic happens between then and the convention" in August.

■ **What's next:** Hare will hold a house party March 7 from 7 to 9 p.m. at his Elmira home. The co-host will be Rose Ciccone of Watkins Glen. The cost is \$25 a person. For details on how to get involved, call Hare at 607/733-7659.

New Rural Association

A "Democratic Rural Association" of the New York State Democratic Committee is being formed as a result of a meeting of several upstate Democratic leaders concerned about issues which affect New York's smaller counties.

Mike Schell, a long time State Committee member and recently elected County chairman of the Jefferson County Democratic Committee, organized recent meetings and is serving as Chair of the Steering Committee.

Also in attendance were:

Carol Tibbets:

Orleans County Chair

Bob Kersch:

Wyoming County Chair

Marty Mack:

Cortland County Chair

John Fitzgibbons:

State Committeeman and former

Oswego County Chair

Kate Lacy:

State Committeewoman and

Cayuga County Chair

Steve Jones:

State Committeeman and former

Madison County Chair

Executive Chairman of the New York State Democratic Committee, John Sullivan of Oswego was also present at one of the meetings to update those in attendance on recent events in Democratic politics and to hear their concerns.

Chairman Schell announced that the principal purpose of the group was to speak, on the New York State Democratic Committee and New York State politics as a whole, for the 40 counties in New York State with population under 150,000. He also stated that the group recognized the great diversity of our state and will present a strong voice for rural interests.

The Association expects to hold an organizational conference on March 22-23 at the Holiday Inn in Cortland with an effort to draw delegates from rural areas throughout the state. County chairs and State Committee members within rural counties (less than 150,000 population) will be invited to attend the conference. In the meantime the steering committee of the Association will consist of those who attended the organizational meetings.

Anyone interested in further information about the Democratic Rural Association should contact Mike Schell at (315) 782-0004.

B-1

March 31, 1996

Democrats Hope To Boost Their Numbers in Upstate, Rural Areas

▶ From Page B-1

Issues such as mass transit and support for social programs are important for upstate rural Democrats too, Mr. Schell said. But those Democrats have different issues they need to hear the party platform deal with.

The rural conference, which holds an organizing meeting June 4, will provide a way to tie the concerns of urban and rural Democrats together, Mr. Schell said. Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, D-Manhatten, is very supportive of the idea, he said.

At the same time, the conference will provide a way for the party to help rural Democrats fight and win elections in which they're almost always the underdog, surrounded by a sea of Republicans, he said.

"I think what's happened," Mr. Sullivan said, "is for whatever reason, the people in these counties have felt their participation was not rewarded, that their involvement was not recognized, that what they had to say was not listened to."

"The objective is to reverse that, to reach out and try to reinvolve the Democratic activists in largely Republican areas," he said.

The conference will give rural Democrats a forum to exchange ideas and experiences, craft strategy and make recommendations to the state party, said Mr. Sullivan, a former Oswego mayor.

"The Democratic Party's appeal should not be, and must not be, limited to the urban areas," Mr. Sullivan said.

The core of the effort is the need to rebuild the party's grass-roots organization, Mr. Sullivan said.

For 20 years, the state party was basically an adjunct to the govern-



WATERTOWN DAILY TIMES

Michael W. Schell

nor's office, he said. The party needs to get back to its roots, Mr. Sullivan said.

And bringing the urban and rural wings of the party back together shouldn't be too tough, Mr. Sullivan said.

"Everybody wants the same things. Whether they're speaking with a Latino accent or a rap kind of sound or whether they're speaking with an upstate broad 'A,' they all want the same thing," he said.

And the Republicans are making it much easier to bring the closet Democrats out, Mr. Sullivan said.

"It was pretty slim pickings out there at first, but now it's an easier row to hoe," he said.

"Our friends on the other side of the aisle have been of great assistance to us in this agenda by simply going too far, too fast," Mr. Sullivan said.

Democrats Push For Upstaters Party Forms Rural Conference

By Eric Durr
Times Albany Correspondent

ALBANY — Upstate Democrats disappeared in 1994 and Jefferson County Democratic Party Chairman Michael Schell is out to get them back.

Mr. Schell, a Watertown attorney, is Steering Committee chairman of the new Democratic Rural Conference.

Voting returns from the 1994 gubernatorial election show that upstate Democrats didn't vote for Mario M. Cuomo in the expected numbers, said State Democratic Party Executive Chairman John T. Sullivan.

The Democratic Rural Conference's goal is to pull those missing Democrats back to the polls and back to the party's candidate, Mr. Sullivan said, and Mr. Schell is point man in the effort.

"We've given him the mission to basically organize the conference," Mr. Sullivan said. "Mike is an excellent organizer. He's a very capable man."

In Jefferson County, for exam-

ple, registered Democrats are about 35 percent of voters but only 28 percent pulled a lever for Mr. Cuomo, Mr. Schell said. In St. Lawrence County, only 10,609 Democrats out of a registration of 33,000 voted for Mr. Cuomo, he said.

In Oswego County, 7,400 people voted for Mr. Cuomo, Mr. Sullivan said.

"Ordinarily you can put Mickey Mouse on the Democratic line in Oswego County and you're going to get the baseline Democratic vote of 10,000 votes in Oswego County," Mr. Sullivan said.

Mr. Cuomo carried New York City, Mr. Schell said. If upstate Democrats had voted for him, Mr. Cuomo, not George E. Pataki, would be governor, he said.

Part of the reason may have been an unwillingness to keep Mr. Cuomo around after 12 years, Mr. Schell said. But another reason is that rural Democratic voters have different concerns than urban voters more readily associated with the party, he said.

See Democrats — Page B-7

NOTICE OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC RURAL CONFERENCE

TO: All County Chairs and State Committee members in the New York Counties with population under 150,000.

FROM: Democratic Rural Conference Steering Committee.

The Democratic Rural Conference is an organization of County Chairs and State Committee Members dedicated to representing the interests of Democratic leaders in New York's smaller counties.

Our Steering Committee has been meeting for nearly a year, and the Organizational Meeting of our entire conference will be held in conjunction with the State Committee meeting to be held in Binghamton on Tuesday, September 17, 1996.

There will be a wine and cheese reception on Monday night at 7:00 p.m. at the Binghamton Regency Hotel, Binghamton, New York for all those interested in learning more about the conference. Judith Hope and John Sullivan plan to join us, along with Nadine Hack who is the Director of the State Committee Outreach Program.

Accommodations are available at the Binghamton Regency Hotel for \$59.00 per night for a double room if you call the hotel at 800-723-7676 by September 10th and make your reservations mentioning the Democratic State Committee rate.

At 9:00 a.m. on September 17th Nadine Hack will hold a training session on how to deal with rural media.

At 10:00 a.m. on September 17th we will hold our Organizational Meeting where we will adopt by-laws and elect officers. Every County Chair and State Committee member from the smaller counties in New York (population less than 150,000) is invited to become a member of the conference by paying the \$10.00 annual dues at the September 17th Organizational Meeting. Upon payment of the dues, you will be a member of the conference and will be entitled to vote at the Organizational Meeting. After the Organizational Meeting we will hold discussion groups on issues of concern to rural New York Democrats and then have a luncheon meeting at 12:00 noon to be addressed by a keynote speaker. The luncheon will end in plenty of time for members to attend other meetings of their choice before the 3:00 p.m. State Committee meeting.

A copy of the proposed By-laws of the Democratic Rural Conference is enclosed and will be voted upon at the Organizational Meeting. Also enclosed is a proposed Mission Statement for the conference.

The Steering Committee has appointed a nominating committee which has nominated the following slate of officers:

Chair	Mike Schell of Jefferson County
Vice-Chair	Carol Tibbits of Orleans County
Secretary	Steven Jones of Madison County
Treasurer	John Fitzgibbons of Oswego County
Parliamentarian	Marty Mack of Cortland County

There will also be four Directors elected at the Organizational Meeting. Those interested in being considered by the nominating committee may submit their names to Irene Stein of 207 Ithaca Road, Ithaca, New York 14850, the Chair of the Nominating Committee. Nominations will also be accepted from the body.

We invite you to join us in promoting the interest of rural New Yorkers in Democratic politics throughout New York and we look forward to seeing you on September 16th and 17th.

CHAPTER THREE: THE BIRTH OF THE DRC 1996

Steve: The preliminaries were done. The Speaker eventually became accepting of the idea of a coalition of small counties, and Judith became a great advocate for us. I think they came to see that such a group could have value if it were formed with the right goals. More importantly, the Steering Committee now had the support of the vast majority of rural county chairs. Our travel had paid off.

It was time for the official birth of our new organization.

The Steering Committee agreed with Judith's suggestion that our formal organizational meeting with all rural leaders be held in September 1996 in conjunction with the state committee meeting in Binghamton. The Steering Committee would review the concept, come up with by-laws and a mission statement and put together an organizational meeting.

Drafting the By-Laws

Mike: Steve labored over the by-laws, frequently running things by the Steering Committee, negotiating differing viewpoints and getting input from Henry Berger, a well regarded voting rights attorney. Steve came up with a great document that is substantially unchanged today and has served the organization for 20 years through 5 different chairmanships.

Steve's by-laws made sure the DRC would be truly representative of the 1.4 million registered Democrats in the smaller counties.

The DRC, per Steve's proposed by-laws, would represent the state's smallest 40 counties- those with **fewer than 150,000 in population** (that would soon expand to 41 counties as Schenectady's population declined to below the 150,000, bringing **Don Ackerman** on board. Years later the DRC expanded to 47 counties by increasing the

population limit to 250,000- a move that was somewhat controversial at the time).

Voting **membership** in the DRC would be **reserved to county chairs and state committee members** from the member counties - in other words, people who were selected by the local Democrats to represent them. Each member got one vote for each position held (later updated to conform to new state committee rules). Proxy voting was very limited. We needed operating money to start, but to keep it affordable, dues would be limited to \$10 per member. (To this day the dues remain at \$10, with much of the operating money coming from convention sponsorships.)

Steve Jones, the drafter of our bylaws, and from Madison County, earned the nickname “James Madison of the DRC”.

Steve: In turn, I proclaimed Mike, the Jefferson County Chair, as the “Thomas Jefferson” of the DRC!

Mike Schell produced the first edition of the DRC’s newsletter, ‘The North Forty’ on July 12, 1996 and it was mailed to every county chair in the state, and most upstate members of the state committee.

The Steering Committee Plans Its Own Demise

On July 23, 1996 the Steering Committee held a planning meeting in Syracuse, with Irene Stein now attending along with Steve Jones’s daughter Kelly. The Steering Committee gave its approval with minor revisions to Steve’s draft by laws, and assignments were made for the various events that we would hold at our conference in conjunction with NYSDC meeting in September.

That meeting is memorialized by a photo that appeared in the next edition of the New York State Democratic Committee convention journal with an ad from the DRC. Mike, looking at a map of NY, declared “if dirt was power, we would have it!” Our first meeting of the membership would be held at the State Committee meeting in September. With help from the State Committee, notices of the meeting were mailed to all the County Chairs and State Committee members from the 40 smaller counties.

Mike: The Steering Committee had done its work. It was time to turn things over to the membership to elect its own leadership.

We checked into the Binghamton Regency on September 16, 1996, as members of the state committee. We would leave the next day as official members of the Democratic Rural Conference.

The evening of September 16, 1996, we held our first statewide social event , a “Mix with the Hicks” dinner.

The next morning, we had the small county leaders (chairs and state committee members) meet to officially create the DRC, and adopt the by-laws drafted by Steve Jones.

As we filed into the crowded hotel conference room,we were filled with anticipation. Our moment had arrived!

The meeting began at 10:25am with speeches by Carol Tibbits, John Sullivan, Marty Mack, and Judith Hope

The DRC Comes to Life

Steve: At 11:50 AM on September 17, 1996, the Democratic Rural Conference of New York State was born at the Regency Hotel in Binghamton, with the official adoption of the by laws. There had been spirited debate about the proposed by laws.

There were 44 founding members from 27 counties.

The meeting was adjourned and reconvened in the ball room for the DRC luncheon, where Lewis County Chair Charlie Merrell took the gavel. Charlie had been appointed by the Steering Committee to recruit and recommend candidates for the executive committee. (Charlie would be elected to the Supreme Court in 2011). In adopting the by-laws, so many people wanted to be on the Board of Directors, that the number was changed from 4 to 10; even then, Cliff Hay stepped aside so the 10 remaining candidates could be elected unanimously saying “the need for unity in the DRC is more important than any one person’s desire for office”.

Those elected as the Charter Members of the Board of Directors were:

Chair – Mike Schell – Jefferson County
Vice Chair- Carol Tibbits – Orleans County
Secretary – Steve Jones – Madison County
Treasurer- John Fitzgibbons- Oswego County
Parliamentarian- Marty Mack- Cortland County
Directors: Stu Brody (Essex), Cindy Emmer (Chemung), Bob Kersch (Wyoming)
Kim Muller (Otsego), Almina Baker (Hamilton), Irene Stein (Tompkins),
Ruth Young (Schuyler), Bill O’Dell (Cattaraugus)
Denise King (Columbia) and Dick Abbott (Chenango).

Mike Schell announced that our goal was “to carry our counties for the Democratic candidates and to have fun doing it”. He said that we would be “visible, vocal, loyal to our cause, loyal to each other and loyal to our party”.

Mike: After 16 years of trying to promote the idea, I saw the Democratic Rural Conference of New York become a reality.

In my inaugural speech at lunch that day, I set forth a three prong strategy for the board to work on : Issues (identify and advocate); Political Activities (develop strategies to win); and Empowerment (provide a voice for our member counties). This led to our **motto:** “**Unite for Voice and Victory**”.

President Bill Clinton’s New York campaign coordinator Bill DiBlasio spoke at the luncheon and praised our efforts: “The rural conference is pulling the party together...”

Both Judith Hope and Speaker Silver were now convinced of our sincerity and value to the party:

Judith: “The DRC is a great gift to the Democratic Party of New York.”

Speaker Silver: “The NY Democratic Party is rejuvenated and united, in part because of your efforts.”

In the 1996 elections, DRC counties did themselves proud: Bill Clinton carried 31 DRC counties (compared to 10 in ’92, and the zero DRC counties carried by Cuomo in ’94).

State Dems Eye Voters Upstate

■ The 1992 governor's race convinced the leaders that calling the area a loss just isn't safe anymore.

By ROBERT GAVIN
Washington Bureau

Mario Cuomo only saw a need to visit Cortland County once in his 12 years as governor.

He arrived on the morning of May 23, 1990, argued with local leaders about the proposed site of a nuclear waste dump and left for Albany that evening, never to return.

His treatment of Cortland was, in many ways, typical of how the Democratic Party establishment viewed upstate New York. Democrats won statewide office by plugging big pluralities in New York City; upstate was just an afterthought — if it received any thought at all.

Come 1994, Cortland County gave Cuomo just 28 percent of its vote. He did worse elsewhere, receiving some 220,000 fewer votes in rural counties than he had in previous elections, according to party officials.

It proved to be the margin of his defeat. The 1994 debacle in upstate New York was very much on the minds of state Democrats as they met in Chicago last week to nominate President Clinton to a second term. Even as they prepared for the fall campaign, the New Yorkers' attention was clearly focused on 1998 and correcting the mistakes of the previous gubernatorial election.

Party leaders seemed barely able to draw a breath without reminding the New York City-dominated delegation of the importance of upstate. Those considering gubernatorial runs, including Rep. Charles Schumer, D-Brooklyn, and state Comptroller H. Carl McCall, also of New York City, made it a point to stress their shared interests with those who live north of the Bronx.

"We were not as sensitive to upstate concerns as we should have been," conceded Judith Hope, co-chair of the state Democratic Party. "That is the lesson of 1994."

State Democrats have moved to apply that lesson, dividing the party leadership into co-chairs held by Hope, a downstate, and John T. Sullivan, Jr. of Oswego.

(See NORTH, Page B-2)

in Syracuse who have never been to the State Fair.

The fair received a \$150,000

Washington D.C.

feel slighted.

'North 40' Is Attempt to Unify Upstate Party

(NORTH, from Page B-3)
Later this month, they inaugurate the Democratic Rural Conference, an organization of 120 party officials from the 40 New York counties with fewer than 150,000 people.

State party leaders have dubbed the group the "North 40." Steve Jones of Madison County, one of the conference organizers, calls it "People with Pitchforks."

"We weren't seen on the radar screen," said Michael Schell of Westtown, who is expected to be elected conference chair when the group meets in Binghamton Sept. 16. "But now we are trying to dispel the myth that Democrats are a downstate party."

Easier said than done. Republicans responded.

"Upstate is generally conservative, with a small 'c,' and New York Democrats still promote a liberal message that is not well-received," said Scott Armstrong, executive director of the Onondaga County Republican Party. "The party is still dominated by downstate and frankly, the message is too liberal to fly here."

Democrats, however, say the

state party, like the national party, is moving toward the center. Schumer, for example, is a tough-on-crime politician. McCall belongs to the Democratic Leadership Council, the moderate-to-conservative group that propelled Clinton into national politics.

Democrats also say they are focusing on issues that unite them: health care, environmental protection, education and a commitment to using government to create opportunity.

"Two years ago, the opposition succeeded in dividing upstate Democrats from downstate Democrats," said state Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver of Manhattan. "It is imperative we heal whatever rift there is among us because the Republicans will attack us again and again."

Central New York Democrats say they have no illusions about why party leaders have rediscovered upstate: they need the votes. New York City, which once represented about 40 percent of the statewide vote, has lost population to the suburbs and the rural areas just beyond them. Its share of the vote has shrunk to about 28 percent.

In 1994, low turnout further diluted the city's clout and amplified the upstate disaster.

Democratic gubernatorial candidates historically win 35 to 45 percent in rural counties, according to party officials. In 1994, that portion dropped below 25 percent in many counties, and to 17 percent in Oswego County.

"They discovered upstate Democrats the morning after," said Steven Paquette, chair of the Onondaga County Democratic Party.

Cuomo's defeat, combined with the party's loss of Congress, underscored the fragility of the Democratic coalition and the importance of each component, said Martin Mack, a former Cortland mayor challenging Rep. James Walsh, R-Onondaga, and one of the organizers of the rural conference.

"Central New York was viewed as unnecessary because (state party leaders) had a majority without worrying about Central New York," Mack said. "They realize now they have to accept the fact that Central New York has Democrats."

"In the next (statewide) election

Jacqueline Arnold contributed to this story.

William Cunningham, who managed Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan's winning campaign in 1994, said the upstate election results should not be interpreted as a repudiation of the party, but of Cuomo.

A number of Democrats bucked the Republican trend and ran well upstate, including Moynihan, McCall, Rep. Maurice Hinchey, D-Saugerties, and Rep. Louise Slaughter, D-Fairport.

Still, Cunningham said, Democratic candidates cannot expect to swing through upstate in October 1998 and come away with a strong showing in November.

"You have to invest time in upstate," said Cunningham, of Albany. "You have to get to know the communities and build a network of local people who tell their friends, 'I know the guy.'"

"It's like rain drops. No single rain drop is going to hurt you or help you. But a lot of rain drops can cause a flood."

Democratic Rural Conference

2

Democratic leaders from the forty smallest counties in New York State will convene in conjunction with the New York State Democratic Committee meeting on September 19th in Albany. The meeting will result in the official formation of the Democratic Rural Conference of the New York State Democratic Committee, a culmination of a year's work by State party leaders to bring a stronger Democratic presence to traditional Republican strongholds in rural upstate counties.

A steering committee of County Chairs and State Committee members has been working on the formation of the group since September 1995. Steering Committee Chairman Mike Schell and State Executive Chair John Sullivan have held several regional meetings culminating in a meeting in Saranac Lake with North Country Democratic Chairs and State Committee members on April 27th. Judith Hope, State Chair, and John Sullivan, Executive Chair, met with

representatives of seven North Country counties to discuss rural issues and political problems.

"We are pleased that both Judith Hope and John Sullivan were able to take time out of their busy schedules to visit the North Country, and we are encouraged by their efforts to reach out to local and rural Democrats in an attempt to rebuild the party from the grassroots," said Schell. "Their approach is working," he added.

The Saranac Lake meeting was the fourth and final in a series of regional meetings which were held in Batavia, Cortland, Cobleskill and Saranac Lake to meet with Chairs and State Committee members from western, central and northern New York.

The September 19th Albany conference will provide State Committee members and Chairs from all forty counties with an opportunity to compare notes, elect officers, and establish a formal organization for the conference.

THE NEW YORK DEMOCRAT Summer '96

A publication by, for and of, the



The North Forty

Unofficial publication of the Democratic Rural Conference of New York State
Serving Democratic leaders in New York State's forty smallest counties

Dem Leaders in Small Counties Unite for Voice and Victory

BINGHAMTON

It was described as an "important moment for the future of the Democratic Party in New York State" as the Democratic Rural Conference was officially voted into existence by County Chairs and State Committee Members on September 17 in Binghamton. Small county leaders bonded together for two days of politicking, learning, and socializing and set the groundwork for changing New York's political landscape.

The conference is an association of Democratic leaders in the 40 counties in New York State with populations under 150,000. County chairs and State Committee members are eligible for membership.

Orleans County Chair **Carol Tibbits** opened the official session by calling upon small county leaders to address "our shared frustrations and goals" by "uniting our voices." State Chair **Judith Hope** and State Executive Chair **John Sullivan**, New York City Public Advocate **Mark Green**, and Congressional candidate **Marty Mack** all spoke to the rural representatives and provided inspiring messages of support for the formation of the DRC.

Following debate over rules drafted by **Steve Jones** (Madison County) and adoption of amendments, the Democratic Rural Conference was officially born at 11:50 am with a unanimous vote, followed by the election of officers.

The first **Rural Democratic Luncheon** followed the official meeting, with addresses from Speaker **Sheldon Silver**, and other party leaders.

A rural reception and dinner was held the night before the organizational meeting, giving Democrats from all parts of the state an opportunity to get to know each other on a social basis and compare notes.

"There was a sense of accomplishment, a feeling of community. Those of us in the small counties fighting for the Democratic party have a right to be more optimistic than we have been in a long time," said Lewis County Chair **Charles Merrell** as he left Binghamton.

Copies of the organizing meeting minutes and the by-laws are available from DRC Secretary **Steve Jones**. Just send him a postpaid return envelope.

"This should have been done a long time ago." **Art Lefevre**, Clinton County Democratic Chair



Editorial

NEITHER HOSTILE NOR DOCILE

"Memo: Rural Democrats 'Hostile'" That's what the headline read in one newspaper carrying a widely circulated AP story about the formation of the DRC. The story was prompted by the recent leaking of a secret memo written last spring to Speaker Silver. The memo had been written by a party official attending one of the regional meetings held by rural Democrats to gauge support for the concept of a rural Democratic organization.

The memo merely reflected legitimate early concerns raised by some Democratic leaders, upstate and down, that such an organization could lead to division in the party. In fact, the regional meetings revealed that many Democrats in the small counties already felt disconnected and alienated from the rest of the party, and that those feelings may have been reflected in the disastrous 1994 election results.

Organizers of the DRC and statewide party officials such as Sheldon Silver, Judith Hope, and John Sullivan, however, saw the opportunity to unify the party by helping small county leaders to help themselves and each other by organizing. After almost a year of planning and organizing, the Binghamton organizational meeting erased the concerns of all but the most pessimistic or divisive elements of the party. Participants report that **the result has been unity, not division, friendship and optimism, not hostility.** Next comes victory in all parts of the state.

HOT RACES INVOLVE DRC COUNTIES

Judith Hope's recent newsletter identifies the following Congressional races in DRC counties races as hotly contested:

Marty Mack (DRC Parliamentarian and former Cortland County Chair) in Central New York.

Tom Fricano (Western New York)

Fran Pordum (Western New York)

Maurice Hinchey (Southern Tier/Hudson)

THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT US!

Here's what some political leaders are saying about the formation of the Democratic Rural Conference:

Judith Hope: "The Democratic Rural Conference is a great gift to the Democratic Party of New York" [9/17/96]

Carl McCall: "Collectively these counties will have a voice and be listened to" [Watertown Times 9/25/96]

Sheldon Silver: "The New York Democratic Party is rejuvenated and united, in part because of your efforts" [10/7/96]

Mark Green: "Solidarity is strength, one plus one does equal more than two"

Bill DiBlasio: "The rural conference is pulling the party together, just as the labor movement is again pulling together with our party."

John Sullivan: "The objective is to reach out and try to involve the Democratic activists in Republican areas."

MEMBER PROFILE

Cliff Hay - Proud DRC Member

by: Steven Jones

Clifford Hay of Schoharie County is a founding member of the DRC. He was nominated for the DRC Board of Directors, but he removed his name from consideration so the remaining Directors could be elected without opposition. After the DRC convention, Cliff said that "the need for unity in the DRC is more important than any one person's desire for office". Cliff pledged to continue to work with the DRC, as he has during its formative stages, and he hopes to be elected as a Director of the DRC in the future.

Cliff served as Chairman of Schoharie County Democratic Committee for 20 years until he retired in 1994. He also has served as State Committeeman for over 30 years, and has missed only six meetings in all those years. In September 1996 he agreed to serve again as County Chairman.

Cliff is a self-employed businessman and he has been involved with Democratic politics "all my life". "I'm proud to be a Democrat", says Cliff. We're proud to have you with us Cliff.

A LOOK AT THE '94 RURAL TURNOUT

by: John Fitzgibbons (Oswego)

November 5th, Election Day '96, is a defining day for candidates, political parties, public issues, and certainly organizations like the Democratic Rural Conference of New York State. In an effort to define our membership, I have established some statistics on the 40 counties that comprise the DRC. These statistics are based upon the voting performances of the last two elections.

Some interesting facts appeared - **Franklin County** had an amazing 77.2% voter turnout in 1994, and **Hamilton County** currently has 88% of its population registered to vote. Also to be noted is **Chemung County** who delivered Clinton/Gore 40% more votes than the registered amount of Democrats in the county. Keep up the hard work -- it really does pay off!

Tompkins County should be recognized for its great record of delivering Democratic votes to Democratic candidates. In the 1992 and 1994 elections Democratic candidates received, at the very least, the full percentage of our party's registered voters. Tompkins County leaders are setting a prototype for GOTV - nice job.

As you can see, by analyzing the statistical output from the '92 and '94 elections, several rural counties established some pretty meritorious figures. Let's continue to assess our results. It is from this process that we may establish reasonable targets for the individual counties, and for our organization as a whole. I look forward to the '96 results!

ON TARGET '96

DRC CHALLENGED TO IMPROVE

The Rural Conference has compiled data from the 1992 and 1994 elections to determine trends for the upcoming '96 election. We all will agree that the 1994 election was a low point for many. However, after analyzing this data several people believe that a 10-15% improvement from our 1992 Clinton/Gore results will show that we have rebounded and that we are on the move for 1998.

Your county can hit the mark by using your tried and true GOTV methods. Inside information has it that with the large growth of "blank" registered voters, a strong effort to get these voters to the polls will pay off. The "blank" or independent voter has been indicating support for our President so do not exclude them!

Get out our voters, Democrat or "blanks" and let's start the change for 1998!

The DRC will give special recognition to Counties that show the greatest improvement.

THIS IS YOUR NEWSLETTER

What would you like to read about in this newsletter? This is one way Dem leaders in small counties can communicate about things that concern them. Send your ideas, articles, news items, events, by fax to 315-788-5949. We hope to publish quarterly.

DRC BOARD TO MEET, PLOT THREE PRONG ATTACK

The newly elected **Board of Directors** of the Democratic Rural Conference will hold its first meeting on **Saturday, November 23**, in Syracuse to consider a 3 prong attack to achieve the party's long term goals: to build the party in small rural counties; to recapture the Democratic base lost in those counties in '94; and to build upon that base for future Democratic victories in all parts of the state.

"Just like a North Country pitchfork, our efforts to take back and build on our rural base will have 3 prongs with which to prod the voters: issues; political help; and empowerment" said Chair Mike Schell.

Conference members will be asked to serve on subcommittees that will establish the three pronged attack:

Issues: identify policy issues and concerns in our counties, help educate statewide candidates on rural concerns, and rural candidates on statewide Democratic positions.

Political activities: assist rural leaders in campaign techniques, fundraising.

Empowerment: provide a voice on a state level for Dem leaders in small counties.

All county chairs and state committee members from the 40 DRC counties are welcome to attend the DRC Board meetings. Contact DRC Secretary Steve Jones for details.

OFFICERS, BOARD, ELECTED TO LEAD RURAL DEMS

Officers and members of the DRC Board of Directors were elected at the conference's organizational meeting to two year terms:

- Chair, Michael W. Schell, Jefferson Co.
- Vice Chair, Carol Tibbits, Orleans Co.
- Treasurer, John Fitzgibbons, Oswego Co.
- Secretary, Steven Jones, Madison Co.
- Parliamentarian, Marty Mack, Cortland Co.
- Dick Abbott, Chenango Co., director
- Almina Baker, Hamilton Co., director
- Stu Brody, Essex Co., director
- Cindy Emmer, Chemung Co., director
- Robert Kersch, Wyoming Co., director
- Denise King, Columbia Co., director
- Kim Muller, Otsego Co., director
- William O'Dell, Cattaraugus Co., director
- Irene Stein, Tompkins Co., director
- Ruth Young, Schuyler Co., director

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

by: Mike Schell (from Rural Democratic Luncheon Address, Binghamton, 9/17/96)

The 1994 disastrous election returns coming in from the small counties sounded an alarm: something needed to be done to help small county Democratic leaders if our party wanted to recapture the state. Hence, we've joined together, leaders of those small counties, to rebuild in our little counties and to help each other doing it. Sounds great, but where are we going from here?

First, **let's have some fun.** I mean it. Politics should be fun, and often being a Democratic leader in a Republican county isn't fun. And when we meet in New York, many of you feel out of place and disconnected. Most of you don't even know each other, much less our city cousins. In Binghamton, we had a little wine, dinner, and got to know each other. We're going to get together more often with each other, and with Democratic leaders from all over the state.

We're going to **help our state leaders and candidates bring their message to our voters** in the towns, villages, and countryside. But we will also bring the concerns of our voters to our leaders and statewide candidates.

Recognizing that campaigning in Bliss or Bath is different from campaigning in Buffalo or Brooklyn, we will **share**

ideas and resources in battling as underdogs.

We can win elections -- for our local candidates and our statewide candidates. Together we can be a force in New York State.

This can be the beginning of unprecedented success for our party, with Democratic success in all reaches of this state --success in places we've barely tasted success before.

We can do it if we work together -- and we can have some fun doing it!

HOW TO JOIN

County Chairs and State Committee members in counties of less than 150,000 are eligible for membership. A fee of \$10 is requested to offset expenses. Complete the form and send it in with \$10 to Steve Jones at the address below.

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NO. _____
FAX NO. _____
COUNTY: _____
COUNTY CHAIR - YES ___ NO ___
STATE COMMITTEE - YES ___ NO ___
ENCLOSE \$10 FEE AND MAIL TO STEVE JONES AT ADDRESS BELOW.

Democratic Rural Conference of New York State --
c/o Michael W. Schell, Chair
316 Sherman St., Watertown, NY 13601
(315) 782-0004 Telephone -- (315) 788-5949 Facsimile
Secretary - Steven Jones, Box 224, Hart Road
Morrisville, New York 13408
Telephone: (315) 684-3406



CHAPTER FOUR: THE DRC GROWS UP 1997

Steve: The DRC quickly became an important part of Democratic politics in the state. Yet, it wasn't legally part of the state party. At the urging of the party's counsel, Jerry Harper, the state party decided the DRC should not be an official part of the party. So we were independent- and that turned out to be a good thing. While the state chair Judith Hope was supportive of us, Judith wouldn't be chair forever. Since we were now legally independent, whoever succeeded Judith would not be able to dictate to the DRC. We'd make our own decisions.

To this day, the DRC, while working closely with the state party, **remains legally independent from the state party and any other organization.**

Issue 2 of the North 40 came out of Mike Schell's office on November 1, 1996 with one of his most famous quotes as its headline "**Unite for Voice and Victory**". He also spoke of our 3 prong attack ("just like a North Country pitchfork" he said) to "prod the voters: issues, political help and empowerment".

The first official meeting of the new DRC Executive Committee (Officers and Directors) was held on November 23, 2006 at a popular pub on Tipperary Hill in Syracuse, Coleman's Irish Pub, a venue suggested by John Fitzgibbons. Assembly Majority Leader Mike Bragman attended, as did a Syracuse University Professor, who offered to have his students assist us in research. **Colemans** became our regular meeting place for years, with much accomplished because of, or in spite of, the refreshments available.

Unsung Heroes:

Mike: Two women who were not official members of the DRC made important contributions to its formation. **Charlotte Sullivan**, John's

wife, and **Tara Seamen**, John Fitzgibbons' fiancé put much time and effort and talent into organizing our events and providing energy and enthusiasm during our early years. Charlotte had been Oswego's first lady when John was mayor and started the Harbor Fest. She had organized that important NYSDC meeting in Oswego in 1995. Charlotte lost her battle to cancer in 1999 . Tara is now Mrs. John Fitzgibbons. I should also mention **Steve Jones' daughters, Kellaura and Andrea**, who were often present and helped out to a great extent. And, we'd better not forget the patience and sacrifice of our wives Cindy Jones and Jacki Schell who put up with our frequent absences and distracted behavior. Lisa Hartman, my legal assistant, did much of the typing and clerical work and was indispensable.

Judith Hope was a good source of advice and support, and was also valuable in guiding us away from causing unnecessary division with the state establishment. Her husband Tom Twomey was a valued advisor and provided support in a number of ways, especially in use of the internet where he was way ahead of the curve. Sadly, Tom passed away suddenly in 2015.

The Task Forces Create:

This was a busy year for us, as we were trying to meet the expectations we had raised for ourselves, and doing it all for the first time. We had to invent many of the things that are now considered part of the DRC tradition.

Task Forces worked all year and put forth proposals for adoption.

An **Empowerment Task Force** under Steve Jones came up with ways to exert influence over state candidates and leaders. It was this group that recommended that the **DRC not endorse** primary candidates, (a rule still observed), and to hold a **straw poll convention** to test the upstate appeal of candidates, as well as to command their attention. It was this committee that also began efforts to assure small **county representation**

on state committee selections for things like national convention delegates.

Stu Brody and Carol Tibbits co-chaired the **Issues Task Force** and first developed the concept of a **candidate questionnaire** and a **candidate rating process** to assess the “upstate friendliness” of a candidate’s positions. This has resulted in candidates being forced to familiarize themselves with upstate issues. Again, the process is practically the same today as it was recommended by the task force.

The **Political Task Force**, chaired by Marty Mack, wanted the **state party to provide training** and help for local elections. (The state party, under Judith Hope and John Sullivan, would provide more help and guidance than we could have ever hoped for, including seminars, a campaign handbook, and financial help.) Marty’s task force also refined and developed the straw poll/candidate rating system.

Finally, John FitzGibbons’ **Information and Outreach Task Force** proposed providing election analysis to DRC members (again, the state party came through) and encouraging participation in the state party by holding DRC events at NYSDC meetings.

Straw Poll- Over the next year we secured our place in New York State Democratic politics, culminating in our coming of age at the March, 1998, Ithaca straw poll convention that established the conference as a permanent power in New York State politics.



Carol Tibbits, DRC Founding Vice Chair, Orleans Co, addresses the DRC



DRC Founding Treasurer John Fitzgibbons, Oswego, opens the Straw Poll Convention in Ithaca March 1998.

IN BRIEF

PLS
5/13/97

Rural Democrats plan first statewide conference in Albany

ALBANY — The 8-month-old Democratic Rural Conference, made up of county chairs and state committee members from the state's 40 least populous counties, is scheduled to hold its first statewide meeting here this week.

Democrats from Oswego, Cayuga and Madison counties will get a look at — and some free reception food and drink courtesy of — a number of downstaters with statewide ambition: gubernatorial candidate James LaRocca of Long Island and attorney general hopefuls Eliot Spitzer and state Sen. Catherine Abate, both of Manhattan.

Former Attorney General Oliver Koppell also plans to attend, according to conference chairman Michael Schell, Democratic leader of Jefferson County.

The conference, scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday at the Omni Hotel, is designed to make sure the voices of Democrats from small counties aren't drowned out by the New York City metropolitan region and the big cities upstate.

— Erik Kriss

Supp P-5

Northern New York

Sunday, May 11, 1997
State News B2
Obituaries B+

Section

B

Rural Democrats Asked To Endorse Rating System for State Candidates

By Eric Durr
Times Albany Correspondent

ALBANY — Rural Democrats meeting here this week will be asked to endorse a strategy to make the party's candidates responsive to their political needs and concerns.

Watertown attorney Michael W. Schell, chairman of the conference and the Jefferson County Democratic Committee, said that he and other leaders of the Democratic Rural Conference of New York State propose that the group hold straw polls to rate candidates for statewide office.

The conference would not endorse candi-

dates, a customary prerogative of county political leaders, Mr. Schell said.

Providing endorsements, and the promise of political and perhaps monetary support, is the traditional way local party chairmen make sure a candidate is responsive to their concerns.

The number of endorsements a candidate gathers and from whom they come also play a role in opening the pocketbooks of political donors.

But the Rural Conference encompasses too many counties to be able to make endorsements, Mr. Schell said. For reasons ranging from the geographic to the personal, county chairmen may have reasons for

picking candidates that other conference members would not want to back, Mr. Schell said.

Instead, conference members will indicate their preferences for candidates with a straw poll and a rating scheme based on candidate positions on rural issues, Mr. Schell said.

Democrats vying for statewide office will have an interest in getting a good rating, forcing them to go upstate, meet local people and learn about the concerns of rural voters, Mr. Schell said.

"We represent 75 percent of the state geographically. If a candidate can go into rural area and go into fund-raisers and say,

I've been highly recommended by the Democratic Rural Conference, which represents rural counties, and my opponent hasn't, that will help," Mr. Schell said.

Potential Democratic contenders like New York City Public Advocate Mark Green, who wants to run against Sen. Alvin Abbate, D-Manhattan, who wants to be attorney general, are already seeking out the Rural Conference, Mr. Schell said. The formal rating process will increase the upstate group's influence on the statewide party, he said.

Rural Conference members will hold a special meeting on Thursday to consider

the recommendation of the conference board prior to the regular noon meeting of the state party.

Along with acting on the straw vote and rating idea, members also will have a chance to talk informally before the main meeting, Mr. Schell said.

"In the past, state committee folks from these small counties would go into these meetings not knowing anybody else and essentially be ignored," Mr. Schell said.

"One thing we want to do is make the folks in these counties feel like they belong and let them have some fun," Mr. Schell said. "It's not always fun being Democratic chairman in a Republican County."

CHAPTER FIVE: THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE IN 1997

Mike: As the DRC task forces in 1997 began developing a plan for evaluating candidates and building a structure for the 1998 straw poll, the statewide political scene was heating up as candidates began announcing. Over the previous decade the state's politics had been transformed by an abrasive Republican Long Island political operative named Alphonse D'Amato, who got himself elected to the U.S. Senate in 1980, and in 1994 got George Pataki elected governor and Dennis Vacco elected Attorney General.

So Republicans held three of New York's four statewide offices, as well as the state Senate, and one of the two U.S. Senate seats. (Democrat Moynihan held the other seat. Democrat Carl McCall had been appointed State Comptroller by the legislature to fill a vacancy). Heading into the 1998 elections, Democrats hoped to stop the D'Amato machine.

We knew that if we did things right, and if we were lucky, The DRC could play an important part in the elections. **This was the DRC's first big test and the first opportunity to make a mark (or to fall on our faces.).**

As 1997 wore on, we established our **candidate rating system and straw poll rules,** and candidates began revealing themselves.

Some candidates were quick to identify the DRC and its straw poll convention as an opportunity- others initially dismissed us and, just as candidates had done for years, ignored the smaller upstate counties.

The field of candidates we would assess was broad:

Governor:

Incumbent George Pataki had been in office since 1995, having upset Mario Cuomo by pushing a pro-death penalty agenda. He was popular with the public, despite an administration that flagrantly catered to Al D'Amato's pay to play system.

The Democrats presenting themselves for governor were:

Jim LaRocca, a Long Island business leader and former State Transportation Commissioner, was working hard travelling the DRC counties seeking support.

Peter Vallone, the New York City Council Speaker gave a little lip service to the DRC, but essentially focused his campaign on New York City.

Betsy McCaughey Ross was a bizarre candidate. She had made her name as a Republican attack dog criticizing Hillary Clinton's attempt to reform the health care system. She later became Pataki's Lt. Gov, but was dumped by Pataki's folks for insubordination. Now she changed parties and was running for the Democratic nomination for Governor. Charles Joe Hynes, the Brooklyn DA, and New York City lawyer and activist Richard Kahan rounded out the field.

U.S. Senator:

Seeking to challenge incumbent Republican Alphonse D'Amato were:

Former Vice Presidential candidate **Geraldine Ferraro** of Queens. An icon, she was the first woman in history to be nominated to a major party national ticket. But she spent little effort to gain the straw poll votes of the DRC, possibly overestimating her innate support.

Mark Green, the New York City Public Advocate who had lost to D'Amato for the Senate in 1986. He spent 1997 and 1998 travelling upstate meeting with DRC members seeking support.

Congressman **Charles Schumer** from Brooklyn. Little known outside of New York City, his campaign consultant Hank Morris advised him to essentially ignore the DRC.

Attorney General:

Incumbent Republican Dennis Vacco of Buffalo had been handpicked by D'Amato in 1994 to run against and defeat Oliver Koppel, who had been appointed by the legislature.

Among the Democrats, the favorite was State Senator **Catherine Abate**, but a little known attorney from Manhattan, **Eliot Spitzer** was working harder than any other statewide candidate, constantly criss crossing the state attending local Democratic dinners, spending countless hours at kitchen tables in DRC members' homes. Former AG Koppel and former counsel to the governor Evan Davis did little to build straw poll support and accordingly gained little attention.

Lt. Governor: Plattsburgh Mayor **Clyde Rabideau** as a favorite son of the DRC had the clear advantage, but Manhattan political leader **Charlie King** worked hard to pick up support. Barbara Kavanaugh of Erie County, and Sandy Frankel of Monroe County would also eventually join the race.

Comptroller: **Carl McCall**, as the Democratic incumbent, had the field to himself.

draft

CANDIDATE RATING SYSTEM

(5/15/97)

The DRC Board of Directors will award, upon a two-thirds vote, the following ratings for state-wide candidates:

“Highly recommended”

“Recommended”

“No Rating”

Adopted 5/15/97

CRITERIA

The Board will consider the following in making its determination:

1. **Ability to Lead Entire State:** The candidate has demonstrated that he/she recognizes the geographic, demographic, and economic diversity of the State and is capable of and committed to providing leadership on behalf of New Yorkers in all parts of the state.
2. **Knowledge of Issues:** The candidate has demonstrated he/she is knowledgeable about issues of most concern to voters in small rural counties and is prepared to address them in a positive manner.
3. **Party Building:** As a party leader, the candidate has expressed and demonstrated a commitment toward building the party on a state-wide basis - upstate and down, big county and small. In event of primary, will commit to endorsing party nominee.
4. **Fairness in Sharing of Political Power:** The candidate has expressed respect for, and a commitment to, defending the rights of small county Democrats to be represented in the decision making processes and in governmental and political positions (ie: Convention delegates, electoral college, state committee leadership, statewide ticket, etc.) (Such respect and commitment may be demonstrated by the candidates' appearances in small counties, contacts with local leaders, providing assistance where appropriate, and participation in DRC events.)
5. **Inclusion:** Has expressed and demonstrated a commitment to conducting an administration that includes DRC counties in terms of both people and issues.
6. **Voter Appeal:** The candidate's qualities and background provide potential voter appeal in DRC counties (among Democrats, independents, and cross-over Republicans).
7. **Campaign in DRC Counties:** The candidate has committed to bringing his/her campaign to DRC counties, should he/she receive the Democratic nomination. (ie: Would provide help for local candidates in terms of campaign appearances and voter coat tails).
8. **Other criteria:** Such other criteria as DRC members may consider appropriate to the needs of their counties, the state, and the party.

Democrats press rural concerns

Muller to head Dems meeting

Kim Muller, Otsego County Democratic Committee chairwoman, will be emcee at the annual Democratic Rural Conference luncheon in Albany Thursday.

Democratic leaders from the state's 40-less populous counties will meet in Albany today and Thursday to set a political agenda for 1998 campaigns.

The organization is a coalition of county chairs and state committee members that formed last September to help rebuild the Democratic Party in the state's rural — and mostly Republican — regions. At the meeting this month, members will talk about candidate endorsement and rating candidates on their commitment to addressing needs of residents of small, rural counties.

The Democratic Rural Conference meeting will be at the Omni Hotel in Albany and will precede the state Democratic Committee meeting, which starts Thursday.

Muller, a possible candidate for Oneonta city mayor this year, is featured in the May issue of the Democratic Rural Conference publication, "The North Forty."

By KENNETH LOVETT
Ottaway News Service

ALBANY — Democratic activists from rural areas across the state have been meeting here the past two days to promote issues important to their communities, and to hear party leaders promote themselves for statewide office next year.

Addressing the Rural Democratic Conference of New York State were two possible gubernatorial candidates, three potential attorney general candidates and one lieutenant governor wannabe.

"It's a good opportunity to hear from those considering running while at the same time letting them know the specific concerns we have for rural New York," said Kim Muller of Oneonta, the former head of the Democratic Rural Conference.

Muller, Otsego County Democratic chairwoman and a candidate for Oneonta mayor, said job creation, property tax relief and support for agriculture head the list of the conference's concerns.

Democrats are trying to mobilize early for upcoming elections given the heavy advantage Republicans have in most upstate communities.

Consisting of representatives of 40 counties, the Rural Democratic Conference was established last year to raise awareness of rural issues within a party heavily dominated by urban

and suburban concerns. Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, the state Legislature's top Democrat, addressed the group Thursday. Silver's speech served more as a pep rally aimed at energizing the party for the 1997 local campaigns and 1998 statewide elections than addressing any of the specific concerns of rural New York.

"Today through Election Day 1998 we must continue to craft a clear message to bring our unique vision to the people of New York state," Silver said. "Every race is winnable."

In his remarks, Silver did not mention how a New York City issue — the possibly elimination of rent control — has been holding up legislative action on three issues rural New Yorkers rank among the most important: passage of a state budget, welfare reform negotiations and work on a property tax relief package.

Thursday morning, the group heard from James Larocca, the Long Islander who thus far is the only Democrat to declare his candidacy for governor. New York City Council President Peter Vallone, who is considering a run, also spoke. Larocca, who accused Gov. George Pataki of failing to take an active role in aiding upstate and rural communities, was labeled by some as "competent and energetic," although few Democrats thought he would be the ultimate candidate.

New York State

Candidates Courting Rural Democrats

Party Bosses From 'North 40' Counties Meet, Attract Hopefuls for State Offices

Times Albany Bureau

ALBANY — The three Democrats who want to replace Dennis C. Vacco — all from New York City — came courting support Thursday from the Democratic Rural Conference headed by Jefferson County Democratic Chairman Michael W. Schell.

G. Oliver Koppell, who was attorney general in 1994 but lost the party's nomination that year, Elliot Spitzer, who also sought the Democratic nod in 1994, and state Sen. Catherine M. Abate, D-Manhattan, made very visible appearances at the rural conference's spring meeting at the Ormni Hotel.

Mr. Spitzer sponsored a reception for the upstate Democrats Wednesday night, while Ms. Abate bought Thursday breakfast for the crowd. All three were given formal opportunities to speak, along with the valuable chance to schmooze with county chairmen and their surrogates.

Also on hand to begin early cultivation of political support were New York City Council Speaker Peter Vallone, who said he is considering a run against Gov. George E. Pataki, and James Larocca, the only declared Democratic gubernatorial candidate.

"This is a very good way of connecting with people," said Mr. Vallone, the voice of the Democratic majority on the New York City Council.

All in all it was exactly what he'd hoped for, Mr. Schell said.

He had expected 30 to 40 people at Wednesday night's dinner and 71 showed up, Mr. Schell said. The effort to make upstate Democrats more important and visible in state party circles is suc-

ceeding, Mr. Schell said.

Normally, upstate Democrats meeting in Albany for one of the party's Executive Committee meetings would simply cool their heels and wait, and not get to know each other, he said. On Thursday, he said, the bosses of the Democratic parties in the "North 40" counties spent the morning getting to know each other and putting together a united agenda, Mr. Schell said.

"We're no longer an isolated bunch of little nobodies," said conference member Irene Stein. "We're united somebodies."

The Democratic hopefuls were clear about why they attended the rural conference meeting.

"These are very important people," Ms. Abate said. "They represent 70 percent of the geography of the state."

"As a Democrat who is considering running statewide, as someone said, it's the margin that's needed for victory," Ms. Abate said.

"It's obvious candidates have to start early and I'm planning on being a candidate for attorney general again," Mr. Koppell said.

"I have already been in touch with all of (the county party heads), but it's a wonderful opportunity to see them together and also to encourage what they are doing because the Democratic Party has got to gain strength in these smaller, more rural areas where we have not done well," he said.

He made it a point of attending the rural conference meeting because the upstate areas are a vital part of the party, Mr. Spitzer said. "We as Democrats have to pay attention if we are going to reclaim our statewide offices."

Along with being wooed by potential candidates, the upstate Democrats approved a plan under which the rural conference would hold straw ballots to rate candidates as acceptable or unacceptable.

This sends the same message as an endorsement, without depriving county party bosses of their right to make endorsements, Mr. Schell said.

The rural conference members were asked to consider taking positions on issues ranging from a total end to all property tax for school funding, shifting instead to an income tax, to repealing the death penalty, rolling back "victims rights" and ending mandatory sentencing.

They also were urged to support New York City Democrats in maintaining existing rent control laws under the principle that it is a home rule issue.

State Democratic co-Chairs Judith Hope and John Sullivan were on hand to offer a pep talk to the group, along with Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, D-Manhattan.

Every electoral race in 1998 is winnable, Mr. Silver said. He attacked the Pataki administration for failing to provide jobs and undermining public education and called on the upstate Democrats to work hard during the year and a half until the election.

"This is a great time to be a Democrat in New York state," Mr. Silver said. The Democrats will "reclaim what belongs to us because we represent the people," he said.

He also praised Mr. Schell and the rural conference for "telling us what is necessary for rural communities that are Democratic."

5/16/97

CHAPTER SIX: “MARCHING TOWARD THE STRAW POLL WITH PITCHFORKS IN OUR HANDS”

Steve: The DRC Executive Committee continued to meet at Coleman’s Tavern in Syracuse, in preparation for the May 1997 State Committee meeting where the DRC membership would meet.

Mike: An early guest at our regular executive committee meetings at Colemans was Assembly Majority Leader Mike Bragman of Syracuse. He was helpful and supportive, but we were careful to not be co-opted and to maintain a friendly but arms-length relationship. That turned out to be wise as, unbeknown to us, **Bragman was planning a coup** to overthrow Speaker Silver. The coup was executed in 2000 and failed. Bragman left politics a short time later.

Do We Endorse Candidates?

Steve: The Executive Committee presented a proposed amendment to the by-laws at the May meeting of the members, as follows: “**Endorsing Candidates- The DRC will not endorse candidates.**” There was considerable discussion but the consensus was that our organization should not rise, or fall, on the fortunes of a particular candidate, and that our purpose as an organization was to get all candidates to address issues of concern to rural NY. Every member, and each county organization, would be free to endorse as they chose, but the DRC itself would not endorse. The amendment assed on a voice vote and then the members approved a plan to hold the first ever DRC Convention and straw poll in the spring of 1998, which would allow DRC members to hear candidates for statewide office address rural issues and then express their individual support for those candidates, by secret ballot.

To assist the delegates with evaluating the candidates, there would **first be a candidate voting process**, where candidates would answer a questionnaire, and be interviewed by DRC members several weeks

before the convention, and then be rated prior to the convention. The plan passed with overwhelming support.

First Annual DRC Conference

Mike: Our **first annual conference** was held **May 14-15 of 97 in Albany** at the Omni Hotel (now the Hilton) and attracted the top Democratic leadership from all over the state as well as aspiring candidates for statewide office.

Organized by Denise King, we made sure we had lots of social as well as political events: a reception, sponsored by gubernatorial candidate Jim Larocca, a hospitality suite sponsored by AG candidate Eliot Spitzer, and a dinner for DRC members, followed by refreshments at the bar. John Fitzgibbons was dinner emcee, and roamed the room giving every attendee 60 seconds to give their own speech. The next day started with breakfast sponsored by AG candidate Catherine Abate, a business meeting at which many of the task force recommendations were adopted, Treasurer John Fitzgibbons reported that the DRC had \$102.90 in the bank. Kim Muller presided over a **DRC luncheon** at which Judith Hope and Speaker Silver both spoke and endorsed the DRC's efforts. The State Chair noted that the DRC had already been mentioned at a recent Democratic National Committee meeting.

Steve: The September 1997 meeting of the membership at the State Committee meeting in Westchester saw the finalization of plans for the candidate rating system, and an effort to convince the State Committee to hold its 1998 convention in an upstate city. It also began the annual discussion about **where to hold our own convention**, whether to hold it at a hotel, or perhaps on a SUNY campus, and how to **find union hotels within our 41 counties**. As part of the State Committee meeting, the DRC hosted a hospitality suite and invited the entire State Committee. It was a huge success and further advanced the cause of rural Democrats as

we introduced the entire party to beer, wine, cheese and other delights from our home counties.

Meetings of the Officers and the Executive Committee followed on November 5 and November 15, 1997 in preparation for the mailing of the first ever Candidate Questionnaire by Steve and Andrea Jones in late November. We found a union hotel in a DRC county that had open weekend dates for us, and that's how the **Ithaca Sheraton was chosen as the site of the 1998 Convention and Straw Poll.**

The origins of the Straw Poll

Mike: Issues about the straw poll were debated at length in the DRC planning meetings leading up to the March 98 Straw Poll convention. **We hoped the straw poll would be perceived like Iowa and New Hampshire** in presidential campaigns: as an initial test of strength of the candidates, and as a hammer that forced candidates to campaign in our counties and address our issues. DRC delegates represented counties with critical swing voters that were lost in the 1994 campaign. Which candidates would be most appealing to rural swing voters in the general election?

We would hold the candidates' feet to the fire: the questionnaire would put them on record on rural issues. **We sought pledges to campaign in rural counties** and support local candidates and committees, and to support the nominees of the party. We asked DRC members to hold off on personally endorsing candidates until after the straw poll.

Decisions were finalized:

First, unlike other straw polls, only county chairs and state committee people could vote- people actually selected by Democrats in their counties to represent them.

Second, unlike the state convention, the **ballots would be secret**. Delegates could vote their conscience without fear of reprisal, so we'd get a truer picture of a candidate's support.

Third, no proxy voting. DRC members had to be present to vote, or send an alternate from their own county to cast their ballot.

Fourth, the only **candidates** to appear on the printed ballot are those **who submitted themselves to the review process**: questionnaire, interview, and rated "favorably" (although candidates could be written in). Our hope was that no candidate would risk an unfavorable rating, and therefore each would commit to participating in the process. The DRC as a matter of policy did not endorse as an organization, but it did evaluate and rate candidates. We wanted all of our candidates to earn a favorable rating, and since the inception of the process **every candidate has both participated and received a favorable rating**.



Figure 1 Seated: Treas. John Fitzgibbons, Bill Thompson, Lorie Gardner, Cathy Ulfik; Standing- Andrea Jones (with spoon and glass timer), Denise King, Bob Kersch, Ruth Young, Irene Stein, Stu Brody, Cindy Emmer, Leon Kalmus, Dottie Betz, Chair Mike Schell, Secretary Steve Jones.

January 24, 1998, meeting of DRC Executive Committee and other DRC members to complete candidate interviews and finalize Straw Poll Convention arrangements. [photo by Leon Kalmus]

Date

Candidate Name
Address

Re: Candidate Rating System

Dear _____ :

The Democratic Rural Conference appreciates your interest in running for office. We recognize the commitment required to run for office, especially in a state as large and diverse as ours. We would like to help you spread the message about your candidacy and your qualifications to the voters in our 41 counties.

The DRC is an organization of the Democratic County Chairs and the Democratic State Committee members from the 41 counties in New York with populations under 150,000. The DRC By-laws prohibit the DRC from endorsing candidates for office, but we are actively engaged in rating candidates with a "Favorable", "Unfavorable" or "No Rating" classification, similar to the rating system that bar associations use for candidates for judge. We are committed to using the "unfavorable " classification sparingly.

Attached is a copy of our Candidate Rating System, as adopted by our membership on 5/15/97 and revised on 9/29/97. Also enclosed is a Questionnaire for you to complete and postmarked to us by December 5, 1997. After reviewing your completed Questionnaire, we would be pleased to meet with you no later than January 10, 1998. Please contact Chair Schell to arrange the time and place.

Though this is the first time that the DRC has conducted a Candidate Rating System, we have adopted some ground rules to assure the fairness of the process, as follows:

1. Members of the Executive Committee will rate the candidates. Those members who rate candidates in any particular contest have pledged to remain uncommitted to any candidate in that contest until they cast their vote at the DRC Convention. Those who have already committed to a candidate, will not take part in the rating of any candidates for that office.

2. All candidates are welcome to answer the Questionnaire by December 5 and be interviewed by the Committee by January 10.

3. The purpose of the Candidate Rating System is to educate voters in DRC counties about the qualifications of candidates, but an important secondary goal is to educate candidates about those counties and the issues of importance to those voters. The DRC is not directed toward promoting candidates from any region, but rather to promoting the matters that concern us, to all candidates.

4. This is a new process and we can all learn from it. We appreciate your comments about the system and how we can improve it.

How will these ratings be used? The DRC will hold a Convention in early 1998. We will ask all candidates to personally address the convention, which will include DRC members, and other interested Democrats who choose to attend. Those DRC members attending will vote in a straw poll to express their individual preference for each office. THIS WILL NOT BE AN ENDORSEMENT BY THE DRC, only an expression of the individual preferences of those who happen to be present. We expect that the candidate ratings should be released by the committee several weeks before the convention, to give DRC members information about the candidates and to generate interest in attending the convention. In fairness to all candidates, we have set a single deadline for submitting the completed Questionnaires, and for an interview by the committee.

Our hope is that every Democratic candidate will receive our "Favorable" rating because that will show the voters that those candidates are familiar with the issues we care about and are committed to representing the entire state. We encourage you to participate and we look forward to receiving your completed Questionnaire postmarked by December 5. If you have any questions, please call Chair Schell.

Very truly yours,

Mike Schell, DRC Chair
316 Sherman Street
Watertown, NY 13061
(315) 782-0004

Steven R. Jones, Candidate Rating Chair
Box 224
Morrisville, NY 13408
(315) 684-3406

TIMES UNION

ALBANY, NEW YORK ■ SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1987

Democratic hopefuls court rural votes

City-based candidates for governor, U.S. Senate venture upstate in search of an edge

By **MARC HUMBERT**
Associated Press

ALBANY — Faced with the prospect of multicandidate primaries that could split New York's urban vote, Democrats thinking of running for statewide office next year are lining up to court rural support.

"If we divide the city vote, which I don't think we will, rural areas could determine the vote, no question," U.S. Rep. Charles Schumer of Brooklyn said Friday.

Meanwhile, the party's rural leadership, concerned about the past domination of the party's affairs by their New York City-based colleagues, are seeking new ways to influence the process.

Schumer, seeking the Democratic nomination to challenge Sen. Alfonse D'Amato next year, is one several prospective statewide candidates who will be seeking to impress party leaders from rural counties today.

The candidate review committee of the state party's Democratic Rural Conference plans to interview some candidates today in Albany and more on Jan. 10 in Oneonta, said Michael Schell, rural conference chairman.

The sessions are being held in private. "It's basically a way to get the candidates to focus on rural areas and the rural leaders and the rural issues," said Schell, who is Jefferson County's Democratic chairman.

Schumer and New York City Public Advocate Mark Green, who lost a Senate race to D'Amato in 1986, are already competing for the Democratic Senate nomination. Also eyeing the race is former vice presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro, who represented Queens in Congress.

The lineup of prospective candidates for governor also has a distinctly non-rural and non-upstate cast to it. Already seeking the gubernatorial nomination are Brooklyn District Attorney Charles Hynes; Richard Kahan, a New York City developer who once headed the state Urban Development Corp.; former state Transportation Commission James Larocca, a Long Island lawyer, and New York City Council Speaker Peter Vallone. Also considering the race is Lt. Gov. Betsy McCaughey Ross, who has homes in Manhattan and on Long Island.

Schell said that in late January, the full board of directors for the Democratic Rural Conference will issue ratings of the various candidates. That will be followed by a statewide Democratic rural convention March 27-28 in Ithaca when representatives from the state's 41 rural counties will hear from the candidates and take a straw poll vote on them.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE CHALLENGE OF THE BIG 13-

Mike: Our relevance to New York State politics was directly challenged by the big city leaders in 1997. It was a test of whether we would gain clout through our unity, or be proven irrelevant once and for all. **The Queens political organization tried to engineer the selection of the 1998 candidates without a primary and without the input of a single rural Democrat.** Queens chair Congressman Tom Manton organized a closed door meeting in Queens of the “Big 13 political bosses”: the party leaders from the 13 most populous counties. Of the 50 upstate chairs, only four were invited. (Three of the 13 would end up in jail, others came under investigation, one is presently under federal indictment).

The idea was that the 13 would all coalesce around 1 candidate in each of the statewide offices being contested, thereby avoiding damaging primary elections. The group controlled 82% of the weighted vote at the convention. By doing this, they would shut out the other 49 counties as well as the candidates that didn’t get their blessings.

Knocking On a Closed Door

The “Big 13” meeting was held on December 13 at the Crowne Plaza at LaGuardia Airport. When I learned of the plan through media reports I called the Queens party and tried to get myself invited. Party secretary Mike Reich was cordial, but said I’d be let in only if I agreed the DRC would be bound by the decision of the group. I said I couldn’t bind the other county chairs that weren’t there, but that if I wasn’t let in, I’d go anyways and stand outside the closed doors and hang out with the media. I was friendly with a couple of the chairs in the Big 13 group and they took my side. **Eventually they let me in.** I know Judith Hope was unhappy with Manton for this effort to bypass the rest of the party. I think Judith may have weighed in with them on how bad they’d look by locking me out.

The potential in DRC counties was for statewide Democratic candidates to draw up to 35 to 45% of the vote there, making it very difficult for Republicans to win statewide. To offset the downstate vote, Republicans needed to get 55 to 60% of the upstate vote. But in 1994 our gubernatorial candidate, Mario Cuomo, only drew 16 to 30% of the vote in rural counties, costing us the governorship.

Clearly this was bossism and would be perceived by the electorate as such. I stayed in touch with Carol, John Fitzgibbons, Steve, Marty, Kim, and Denise. They felt that reaching a consensus on candidates was not a bad idea, but only if all elements of the party had a chance to weigh in. We in the DRC knew that if this group of men had their way (yes, every one was male) and dictated the Democratic ticket, it would give the Republican media machine a gift: the opportunity to say that in 1998 the Democratic party was tightly controlled by downstate. By selecting candidates through a secret process, Democrats would suffer the same fate they suffered in '94- an electoral disaster.

I was given (somewhat reluctantly) an opportunity to speak. I pointed out that the counties that were left out represented a large portion of the swing voters in the state- the voters who decided elections. **The DRC, I told the group of 13, would not be silent if their members and constituents were cut out of the process by back room dealing.** We demanded that all Democrats across the state, upstate and down, big county and small, have a roll in selecting our candidates. The nominations should be fought out at the convention by the state committee members elected by the Democrats in their communities, and if necessary, by the Democratic voters in a primary.

I don't think my words carried much weight, as the meeting went on with each chair jockeying for his favored candidate, or trying to trade for the best deal. But I think several of them were now concerned about the appearance of the process. They met at least twice more over the winter, and I attended each time, joined at the last meeting by Denise King.

Anointing Candidates Proves Difficult for Democrats

NY TIMES 12/14/87

Leaders Try to Avoid More Primary Battles

By RICHARD PÉREZ-PEÑA

Democratic Party county leaders, hoping to avert crippling primary battles next year, held the latest in a series of meetings yesterday intended to unite the party behind one candidate each for governor and United States senator.

The meeting, held at a hotel in Queens within sight of La Guardia Airport, showed immediately how difficult the task would be as three prospective candidates for governor said from the outset that they would not support the consensus ticket if they were not part of it. Representative Thomas J. Manton, the Queens Democratic leader, who had helped arrange the meeting, said the county leaders would nonetheless attempt to forge a consensus ticket for next November's elections at a meeting scheduled for Jan. 10.

"What we're trying to do is to develop a slate of competent, progressive candidates who are not ideologues of the left or the right, but have appeal to the average voter, and that's not always possible in a primary," he said.

As yesterday's session showed, major factions within the party are at odds over which candidates to back, or have hesitated to take positions.

In trying to unseat Gov. George E. Pataki and Senator Alfonse M. D'Amato, the Democrats are trying to duplicate the Republicans' success of 1994, when the party closed ranks behind Mr. Pataki at the state party convention. But more than that, the Democrats are trying to avoid a repeat of the debacle of the last Senate race, in which a fierce intraparty battle left the Democratic candidate, Robert Abrams, too weak to compete against Mr. D'Amato.

The county leaders cannot prevent candidates from getting on the primary ballot, but they can make it more difficult. The leaders who met yesterday control 82 percent of the delegate votes at the state party convention next spring, and any candidate who gets at least 25 percent of the total convention vote automatically wins a place on the ballot. Those who fall short must collect thousands of signatures to reach the



Timothy Fazel for The New York Times

Democratic leaders met yesterday to try to unite behind one candidate each for governor and United States senator. From left, G. Stephen Pigeon, Herman D. Farrell Jr., Thomas J. Manton and Stephen J. Sab

Finding moderate and appealing primary candidates is a difficult task.

ballot, a time-consuming and expensive process.

A consensus may be more likely in the race for governor than in the contest for the Senate, and party officials say the only person with a realistic chance of being that choice is the City Council Speaker, Peter F. Vallone. Mr. Vallone has the support of Mr. Manton, and yesterday's meeting was thus widely viewed as an effort by Mr. Manton to orchestrate an early show of support for his candidate.

Accordingly, three of the other Democrats seeking the gubernatorial nomination, Richard Kahan, James LaRocca and Charles J. Hynes, all said they would not abide by any consensus that left them out.

Mr. Kahan, former head of the state's Urban Development Corpora-

tion, has shown strength in fundraising, and Mr. LaRocca, a former State Commissioner of Transportation and Energy, has support from several county chairmen outside New York City.

But Assemblyman Clarence Norman Jr., the Brooklyn Democratic leader, and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver favor Mr. Hynes, the Brooklyn District Attorney. Mr. Norman said he was not prepared to commit to support the outcome.

A fourth potential candidate, Lieut. Gov. Betsy McCaughey Ross, did not respond directly when asked whether she would support a consensus that left her out.

In the Senate race, the party is even more fragmented, with two strong Democrats already running, Representative Charles E. Schumer of Brooklyn and Mark J. Green, the New York City Public Advocate. A third formidable candidate, Geraldine A. Ferraro, is weighing whether to enter the race.

"There's no way you prevent any of the three of them from getting 25 percent at the convention," one county leader said.

Among leaders from the four larg-

est counties — Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan and the Bronx — Herman D. Farrell Jr. has taken the position, stating his support for Green.

The attempt by party leaders to impose their consensus on the convention has prompted some dissent within the party that the process is antidemocratic. "It smacks of bossism," Mr. LaRocca said.

Mr. Manton dismissed the dissent as a relic of bygone days. "We're dealing with these kind of meetings show that we have some relevance to the process," he said.

In recent statewide elections, Democrats have often hurt themselves with bloody primary battles that left the eventual nominee weakened, as in 1992, when Mr. D'Amato was elected to a third term. Republicans, by contrast, have rarely had contested primaries.

Past attempts to anoint Democratic candidates have often been unsuccessful. The last two times it was tried in gubernatorial races, the party favorites, Howard J. Sams in 1974 and Edward I. Koch in 1982, lost their primaries to Hugh L. Carey and Mario M. Cuomo.

New York State

Democratic Candidates Hoping for Boost at Rural Conference

Associated Press

ITHACA — Democratic candidates are converging here this weekend in an attempt to impress party leaders from 41 rural, upstate New York counties which proved critical to Republican George Pataki's 1994 election as governor.

All the Democratic candidates for statewide office in November planned to address the first "convention" of the Democratic Rural Conference today, and hoped afterward to win straw-poll voting by the county leaders in attendance for various offices.

Michael Schell, chairman of the conference and former Jefferson County Democratic Chairman, said the group's goal is to give rural Democrats a more significant say in who the party's candidates are, and to make those candidates more sensitive to issues outside of New York City such as a slump in milk prices and the effects of the state's long decline in manufacturing.

By promoting candidates who are

stronger on "upstate" issues, Schell said, Democrats would be more competitive upstate on Election Day than they have been in recent elections.

Pataki was particularly devastating in upstate rural counties in 1994 against Mario Cuomo, winning by an average 77 percent to 23 percent margin over the incumbent Democratic governor.

"We need to run well in those counties because that's where the swing voters are," Schell said. "We don't need to carry them, but we need to get in the 35 percent-to-45 percent range."

There are about 1.5 million registered voters in the 41 counties represented by the Democratic Rural Conference.

Democrats running for U.S. Senate and governor will get 10 minutes each today to address the group while the candidates for attorney general will be allotted seven minutes and those for lieutenant governor five minutes.

A straw-poll vote will follow for each office after the "delegates" hear from the candidates.

Those familiar with the makeup of the group and the campaign so far say former state Transportation and Energy Commissioner James Larocca is likely to win the straw poll for governor, former U.S. Rep. Geraldine Ferraro for U.S. Senate, Manhattan lawyer Elliot Spitzer for attorney general and Plattsburgh Mayor Clyde Rabideau for lieutenant governor.

Of all the statewide Democratic candidates in 1998, only Rabideau is an upstate.

Voting will be done by the county chairmen and chairwomen in the 41 counties, plus members of the Democratic State Committee from the region.

"We can't just forget about the upstate and the rural vote," said Democratic state Comptroller H. Carl McCall, who is running unopposed in his party for re-election, said. "I think it is going to be a good test."

Lt. Gov. Betsy McCaughey Ross won a straw poll for governor last weekend at an event sponsored by the Schenectady County Democratic committee. But anyone who paid an admission fee to that event could vote, and she and other candidates made sure they had partisans on hand.

"They're won't be any packing" of the hall in Ithaca, McCall said. "I'll be a truer indication of support."

New York City Public Advocate Mark Green, who is running for U.S. Senate, said the conference is Ferraro's turf.

"I feel like Navy playing Army at West Point," Green said. "But I am confident that we will be competitive in her home stadium."

Democrats must learn to close the upstate-downstate chasm, Green said.

"I want to be a candidate who brings upstate and downstate together so we can stop this self-defeating Hatfield-and-McCoys attitude which hurts us when the lower 49 of-

ten unite against New York state," he said.

The third candidate in the Senate race, U.S. Rep. Charles Schumer of Brooklyn, made the unusual request in the days leading up to the convention of asking the delegates not to vote for him.

"I know many of you have already committed to vote for another candidate on Saturday because you know my opponents better than you know me," Schumer wrote. "I want to take this opportunity to ask a favor: even if you were considering voting for me, do not cast your vote for me at this caucus, instead allow me to simply introduce myself."

Opponents said that was merely a sign that Schumer knew he didn't stand a chance of winning and wanted to minimize the embarrassment of a poor showing.

Ferraro, Schumer and Green are vying for the nomination to oppose Republican Alfonso D'Amato's bid for a fourth term in the Senate.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE DRC EVALUATES THE CANDIDATES

Mike: Fortunately for the DRC, and for the party as whole, the “**Big 13**” were never able to agree on candidates. But the effort to essentially hijack the party’s selection process demonstrated the importance of having a strong DRC to be a counterweight and to protect the interests of the 1.4 million Democratic voters in our counties.

As a result of the challenge of the Big 13, and their failure to close the process, our straw poll became our big test: would the media give it credence? Would candidates participate? Would our own membership embrace it?

In the meantime, the DRC task forces were engaged in the serious business of **planning the first DRC candidate evaluations and the straw poll convention.** What questions should be in the candidate questionnaire? How do we rate candidates, and how do we avoid burdening a candidate with a bad rating? Do we conduct interviews and who should be able to participate?

A lot of work, but fun and stimulating work. We were inventing! And we had a wonderful group of enthusiastic, bright, hardworking people who all got along well and shared the same goal.

Steve: The first meeting of the **Candidate Ratings Committee** was held on December 20, 1997 at the Desmond hotel near Albany. The committee was comprised of members of the Executive Committee, but was open to all DRC members, and to all Democrats. Five candidates (LaRocca, Spitzer, King, Green and Schumer) were interviewed separately and each was allowed 50 minutes, including a 5 minute opening statement, and a limit of 3 minutes to answer each question.

Koppell, Abate and Davis), lots of press, and over 25 members and friends asking questions. It was also announced that day that our effort to have the State Convention held upstate was defeated.

The DRC Executive Committee met in Ithaca on January 24, 1998, to review the convention site, and to conduct two final candidate interviews (Rabideau and Vallone). Treasurer Fitzgibbons reported \$446.74 on hand.

On March 1, 1998 the DRC Executive Committee met in Syracuse; State Chair Judith Hope and State Executive Committee Chair John Sullivan traveled to Syracuse to attend. They pledged State Committee staff support to help with the upcoming DRC Convention and Straw Poll. They also announced **that John Sullivan was resigning as Chair of the State Executive Committee, and that they were asking support for our own DRC parliamentarian, Marty Mack, to serve as Chair of the Executive Committee;** Mike Schell had also been mentioned for the position but he chose to remain as DRC Chair. [Mike: a personal note on this meeting. That morning Marty picked me up from St Joseph's Hospital where I was in recovery from a heart cath procedure. I was supposed to go home to recuperate, but we went directly to the DRC meeting. I couldn't miss it!]

Steve: A resolution was unanimously approved supporting Marty Mack for the position. It was reported that the Big 13 had failed to come to an agreement about any candidates.

On March 14 the DRC Executive Committee met in Albany in conjunction with the State Committee workshop. "A Rural NY State of Mind" was adopted as the theme of our 1998 Convention and Straw Poll, as suggested by John Fitzgibbons.

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE - DRC CANDIDATE RATING SYSTEM

Candidate: Name

Home address

Office address

Home telephone

Office telephone

Fax

e-mail

What office are you seeking?

List the offices that you have held, and the time period in each

Educational background

CRITERIA

1. ABILITY TO LEAD THE ENTIRE STATE- What contacts and experiences have you had with parts of the state, other than where you currently reside, which would demonstrate your recognition of the diversity of this state and your ability to provide leadership on behalf of all New Yorkers.?

2. KNOWLEDGE OF ISSUES- What issues do you believe are of most concern to voters in small rural counties, and how will you address those issues in a positive manner?

3. PARTY BUILDING- How have you expressed and demonstrated a commitment toward building our party statewide, upstate and downstate, big county and small?

WILL YOU COMMIT TO SUPPORT THE WINNER OF ANY DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY FOR THE OFFICE YOU ARE SEEKING?

5. INCLUSION- If elected, how would your administration include the people from DRC counties and address the issues of concern in those counties?

6. VOTER APPEAL- What qualities or experiences do you have that would attract support from voters in DRC counties, not just from Democrats but also from non-enrolled voters and cross-over Republicans?

7. CAMPAIGN IN DRC COUNTIES- How would you campaign in DRC counties? Would you personally appear with local candidates?

8. OTHER CRITERIA- Please set forth anything else you would like us to consider .

9. QUALIFICATIONS- List your qualifications for the office you seek.

THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE MUST BE POSTMARKED ON OR BEFORE
December 5, 1997 AND MAILED TO MIKE SCHELL, 316 Sherman Street,
Watertown, NY 13601.

ALL INTERVIEWS WITH THE CANDIDATE RATING COMMITTEE MUST BE
CONDUCTED BY January 10, 1998

Date:

Signature of the Candidate:

Convention focuses on rural issues

Group supports gubernatorial candidate

James LaRocca

By BRIAN E. TROMBLEY
Staff Writer

ITHACA — The local delegates to the first convention of the Democratic Rural Conference, held in Ithaca over the weekend, want candidates to pay more attention to issues that affect counties like Otsego and Chenango.

Jobs and the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact were two of the hottest topics at the convention, which brought together representatives of 41 rural N.Y. counties.

Oneonta Mayor Kim Muller, a DRC board member and member of the state Democratic Committee, gave the nominating speech for Plattsburgh Mayor Clyde



KIM MULLER

Rabideau, who is seeking the job as the state's lieutenant governor.

Muller said one of the reasons she supports Rabideau is because he started the City Mayors Coalition, which lobbies for cities that have SUNY campuses.

She said she also respects the way Rabideau helped spur a comeback by personally luring companies like Montreal-based subway car manufacturer Bombardier to his city, which lost 4,000 jobs when the Plattsburgh Air Force Base closed.

At the conference, Rabideau got 79 votes to Manhattan lawyer Charles King's 38. Barbra Kavanaugh, a councilwoman at large in Buffalo who got no votes in the balloting, also announced her candidacy for lieutenant governor Saturday.

A straw poll of the Democratic party officials who attended the conference on Saturday showed Mark Green, New York City public advocate, edging out Geraldine Ferraro for the right to represent the party and challenge incumbent Sen. Alfonse D'Amato.

At an appearance Sunday in New York City, Green renewed his call for Ferraro and U.S. Rep.

Charles Schumer of Brooklyn to hold a series of debates between now and Primary Day. Ferraro has indicated that she does not want to debate until late this summer.

Green got 70 votes, while Ferraro got 51. Schumer received four votes.

Catherine Ulfik, Chenango County Democratic Committee chairwoman and a member of the party's state committee, said she was impressed by gubernatorial candidate James L. LaRocca, the former state transportation and energy commissioner.

LaRocca received twice as many nominating votes as his nearest competitor, incumbent Lt. Governor and former Republican Betsy McCaughey Ross.

"LaRocca addressed the problems of rural New York and supports New York joining the Northeast Dairy Compact," Ulfik said.

Gov. George Pataki has not been recognizing the problems rural counties face, she said, and LaRocca could spur changes if he is elected.

"I'm reading how wonderful Pataki is for the state's economy, but Pataki has had nothing to do with the economy. It's mainly Wall Street," she said.

"What about rural counties like Chenango, Tioga, Madison or Wyoming County in the western part of the state? Their economies haven't improved."

Muller, who chaired the gubernatorial nominating committee, echoed Ulfik's comments, saying Pataki has done very little for job growth — with the exception of a few communities — and has done little to help prevent large company layoffs at Kodak and Rubbermaid.

LaRocca easily won the Democratic Rural Conference's gubernatorial straw poll with 57 votes. McCaughey Ross got 27 and New York City Council Speaker Peter Vallone received 24. Brooklyn District Attorney Charles Hynes got 17 votes and Urban Development Corp. Chairman Richard Kahan received three.

Vallone aides said on Sunday that U.S. Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, D-Pindars Corners, will endorse Vallone for the Democratic nomination for governor at news conference to be held in Buffalo today.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

From the Ba

Rural Democrats Meeting...

► From Back Page

the forming of a specifically upstate Democratic group, decided it was a good idea now, Mr. Schell said.

The conference convention in Ithaca next Friday and Saturday will feature appearances by all of the Democratic gubernatorial hopefuls, attorney general candidates, U.S. Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan and other key Democrats.

"I think we've been successful beyond expectations in getting the statewide candidates to focus on the smaller counties, and on issues affecting smaller counties, and on the importance of reaching out and doing well," Mr. Schell said.

The convention is a sign that the Democratic Rural Conference has come of age and is part of the political structure of the state, he said.

"This is an organization that has legs," he said.

The convention will give rural Democrats a chance to socialize, network and exchange political stories. The highlight, though, will be straw polls taken in each of the state's major races.

The votes, Mr. Schell said, aren't considered binding on conference members and aren't to be considered an endorsement by the caucus. But clearly every candidate would like to win.

"The message is that here is a candidate who can be successful, not just downstate, in the large counties, but with the political leaders in the small counties," Mr. Schell said.

Hopefully, that message will be taken into account by party leaders when candidates are being picked, Mr. Schell said.

"If the candidate shows very little or no support in those counties, then it would be a real mistake for the party to select that candidate," he said.

"But the state convention is going to have to take a lot of factors into consideration in selecting candidates," Mr. Schell said. "And there may be various shadings in what is important in a candidate."

It isn't necessary that the party pick the candidate who does best with the rural Democrats, Mr. Schell said.

Mr. Schell's message of the importance of winning upstate is getting converts, like gubernatorial candidate Charles "Joe" Hynes of Brooklyn, who says upstate is the electoral battleground. But veteran Utica pollster John Zogby says it's just not so.

The argument advanced by upstate Democratic leaders that Mr. Cuomo lost in 1994 because the upstate Democrat rank-and-file stayed home doesn't hold water, Mr. Zogby said.

"That kind of rationale is the same as saying, 'We lost because we didn't get enough votes,'" he said.

Zogby International was the only polling company to predict correctly George E. Pataki's 1994 win.

"Obviously, he needed to do better in upstate New York. He wasn't going to in 1994. The polls never showed that he would," Mr. Zogby said.

Mr. Cuomo lost because he didn't get the votes he needed in New York City and that's still where Democrats will win or lose in 1998, Mr. Zogby said.

"The upstate vote is always important, and now with a Republican incumbent the Republican incumbent has, right now, a pretty good large advantage in the polls in upstate and, at the same time, he has a pretty decent advantage in the suburbs," Mr. Zogby said.

"Now the issue is: Can a Democrat win in New York City by a plurality of maybe 600,000 to 700,000 votes?" he said.

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Upstate ^{3/21/98} Democrats Convening

Rural Conference 'Has Come of Age'

By Eric Durr

Times Albany Correspondent

When the gavel hits the podium at the Ithaca Holiday Inn next weekend, formally opening the Democratic Rural Conference of New York convention, it will be the end of a long road for Watertown lawyer Michael W. Schell.

Spurred on by underwhelming Democratic voter turnout in the 1994 gubernatorial race, Mr. Schell, Jefferson County's former Democratic chairman, decided it was time to energize upstate Democrats.

The Democratic Party was being perceived as a New York City-only party because upstate rural concerns and issues weren't being given their due.

Leaders from the rural counties would show up at Democratic functions and wander around lost while the big-city pols were back-slapping, catching up and cutting deals, Mr. Schell said. It may not have been intentional, but the result was that rural issues weren't part of the Democratic mix, he said.

After the defeat of Gov. Mario M. Cuomo, post-election analysis suggested that rural Democrats had simply stayed home. Mr. Schell, along with Democratic Party co-chairman John Sullivan of Oswego, decided they'd change that.

"We need to get 30, 34, 45 percent in those counties, not the 23 percent we got in 1994," Mr. Schell said.

The tool they created to energize the Democratic Party upstate was the Democratic Rural Conference, and Mr. Schell went from being its chief organizer to its chairman.

And the state's Democratic leaders, who for years had discouraged

See Rural — Page 30

Island May Go to DEC

Local Paragraphs

N.Y. Democrats woo rural party leaders

ALBANY (AP) — Faced with the prospect of multi-candidate primaries that could split New York's urban vote, Democrats thinking of running for statewide office next year are lining up to court rural support.

"If we divide the city vote, which I don't think we will, rural areas could determine the vote, no question," U.S. Rep. Charles Schumer of Brooklyn said Friday.

Meanwhile, the party's rural leadership, concerned about the past domination of the party's affairs by their New York City-based colleagues, are seeking new ways to influence the process.

Schumer, seeking the Democratic nomination to challenge Sen. Alfonse D'Amato next year, is one of several prospective statewide candidates who will be seeking to impress party leaders from rural counties on Saturday.

The candidate review committee of the state party's Democratic Rural Conference plans to interview some candidates on Saturday in Albany and more on Jan. 10 in Oneonta, said Michael Schell, chairman of the rural conference.

The sessions are being held behind closed doors. "It's basically a way to get the candidates to focus

on rural areas and the rural leaders and the rural issues," Schell, who is Jefferson County's Democratic chairman, said.

Schumer and New York City Public Advocate Mark Green, who lost a Senate race to D'Amato in 1986, are already competing for the Democratic Senate nomination. Also eyeing the race is former vice presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro, who represented Queens in Congress.

"By banding together the rural chairs may be the mouse that roars politically in '98, especially if there are two or three downstate candidates for Senate," Green said. "The margin of difference may well be how these rural counties vote."

The lineup of prospective candidates for governor also has a distinctly non-rural and non-upstate cast to it. Already seeking the gubernatorial nomination are Brooklyn District Attorney Charles Hynes; Richard Kahan, a New York City developer who once headed the state Urban Development Corp.; former state Transportation Commission James Larocca, a Long Island lawyer; and New York City Council Speaker Peter Vallone. Also considering the race is Lt. Gov. Betsy McCaughey Ross, who has homes in Manhattan and on Long Island.

For state attorney general, four New York City lawyers are eyeing the nomination: state Sen. Catherine Abate; former Cuomo administration counsel Evan Davis; former interim attorney general G. Oliver Koppell; and former Manhattan prosecutor Eliot Spitzer.

State Comptroller H. Carl McCall, a former president of the New York City Board of Education, is expected to be unopposed for the nomination in his bid for re-election.

Also, party leaders from the state's larger counties, including New York City, are attempting at closed-door meetings to reach a consensus on who to support for the nominations. The process is being led by U.S. Rep. Thomas Manton, the Queens Democratic chairman.

While Schell has been invited to observe the Manton-led process, he has reservations about it.

"They have to be very careful to not feed the perception that the big counties downstate control the party," Schell said.

Schell said that in late January, the full board of directors for the Democratic Rural Conference will issue ratings of the various candidates.

CHAPTER NINE: THE FIRST STRAW POLL CONVENTION- MARCH 1998

The Battle of Ithaca—the 1998 straw poll:

Steve: March 27, 1998, was the opening day of our first DRC Straw Poll. Entering the hotel lobby, candidate posters were plastered everywhere, and campaign workers for all the candidates were busy distributing campaign material. First, the Executive Committee met to finalize plans, confirm the interview of Carl McCall and his rating, and recommend that the By-Laws be amended to allow for a new class of DRC membership to be called “Honorary Member” and to bestow that honor on former Lt. Gov. **Stan Lundine**, (Chautauqua Co), John Sullivan and Marty Mack.

The Convention was opened by Chair Mike Schell at 6:40 PM with a packed house of 226 seated for dinner. Master of Ceremonies John Fitzgibbons took the microphone around the room so each person could introduce themselves. Irene Stein welcomed us to Ithaca. State Chair Judith Hope spoke of rebuilding the party from the grass roots, as exemplified by the success of the DRC. **Carl McCall gave the keynote dinner address**, and was thereafter declared the unanimous winner of the straw poll for State Comptroller. Steve Jones presented the proposed change to the by-laws to provide for Honorary Members, and to name Lundine, Sullivan and Mack as our first Honorary Members, which also passed unanimously. Though the dinner ended, the night was still young, and fortunately not too cold because as the desert reception hosted by Eliot Spitzer began, a fire alarm went off, spilling everyone in the hotel into the street. We mingled with Fred Dicker of the NY Post, the firemen, and the candidates; a fire alarm is a great equalizer, but it was certainly a disappointment for the Spitzer campaign. Thanks to the firemen discovering it was a false alarm, we were soon enjoying desert, and then moving on to the late night music and dancing sponsored by Lt. Gov candidate Charlie King.

Saturday began with a 7:45 AM meeting with the candidates' representatives to discuss balloting and other convention issues. This was the most difficult moment of the convention for the convention committees as most of us felt obliged to remain at the Friday night parties until they were closed down in the wee hours of Saturday. Meanwhile, DRC members were treated to breakfast, then gathered in the ballroom for the official convening of the First DRC Straw Poll.

The meeting was gaveled to order, as DRC members, campaign volunteers, reporters, and camera crews shoe-horned into the ball room. Red White and Blue bunting hung from the ceilings, the room was wallpapered by posters of 18 candidates. The podium was surrounded by bales of hay to provide a reminder of our rural roots. A row of TV cameras lined the wall opposite the podium.

Assemblyman Martin Luster welcomed the delegates to Ithaca and introduced his friend Assemblyman Paul Tonko who spoke about agriculture. (Tonko would later run unsuccessfully for DRC chair, but successfully for Congress). Later Congressman Maurice Hinchey welcomed us to his district.

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan gave the keynote address. His message was to Democratic candidates: upstate and the DRC counties were becoming increasingly influential in elections as upstate turned out 69% of its voters, compared to 40% in New York City. **Pay attention to upstate, he said, that is where close elections are decided.** Moynihan who lived in Pindars Corners, Delaware County, had carried 40 of the 41 DRC counties in his last re-election, was then unanimously declared an Honorary Member of the DRC.

Then came the candidate presentations and balloting. Each office was handled separately with candidates introduced for one office, then voting took place before moving on to the next office. Each candidate was introduced by a DRC member, then given a brief opportunity to make his or her case to the delegates. Steve Jones chaired the meeting as the

four candidates for Attorney General were nominated. All speeches throughout the day were strictly timed by Steve's daughters Kellaura and Andrea, who announced that time was up by ringing a cow bell. Kim Muller chaired the convention during the speeches and balloting for Governor.

Mike: We proved that there is, in fact a free lunch as Dave Roos, an AT&T lobbyist, became the first corporate sponsor. Congressman Hinchey insisted on speaking during lunch and became frustrated with the growing hum in the room as hunger for cold cuts temporarily trumped hunger for rhetoric.

Steve: After lunch, Mike Schell took the Chair for the Senate race and Cindy Emmer took the chair for the Lt. Governor race.

Straw Poll Results:

Steve: Looking at the results of the straw polls, it can hardly be said that the DRC picked all winners. But let me make a few observations:

Attorney General: Eliot Spitzer eked out an upset victory (54 votes to 49 for Abate, 19 for Koppell and 4 for Davis) but went on to become our party's nominee and to win an even closer race against Dennis Vacco that fall.

Governor: Jim Larocca garnered 56 votes to 27 for Betsey McCaughey Ross, 23 for Peter Vallone, 17 for Charles Hynes and 3 for Richard Kahan, but Vallone went on to win the nomination, though he was defeated by Pataki in the fall.

For **Lt. Governor, Clyde Rabideau**, the Mayor of Plattsburgh, and a DRC county resident, got 79 votes, Charlie King got 38 votes, Sandra Frankel got 6 votes and Barbara Kavanaugh received 1 vote. Rabideau later became Vallone's running mate. Charlie King,

who learned to milk a cow while campaigning in Wyoming County with Bob Kersch, would later become the Chair of the New York State Democratic Committee under Governor Andrew Cuomo.

For **Senator, Mark Green** had 70 votes, Geraldine Ferraro had 51 and Chuck Schumer had only 4 votes: in fact Schumer had addressed those present and acknowledged that his campaign had dropped the ball by not organizing for this event and practically told us he wouldn't blame us for not voting for him. Yet, we all know Chuck went on to victory that fall, and we see him in each and every one of our counties at least once a year; maybe the DRC can claim that as a victory too.

Geraldine, in her speech, said "You may have been ignored in the past, but today you're leading the way."

Mike:

I was overwhelmed by the response to the Straw Poll Convention. **Every statewide Democratic candidate**, almost all of them from downstate, was there, accompanied by staff and volunteers, sponsoring events, and providing souvenirs to each delegate. **Every major political reporter** in the state was there, many of whom went to become national political reporters. **Every DRC county was represented**, and so were most of the larger counties, including several "big 13" chairs.

There was no question that the DRC had become a relevant and potent political entity.

It was unseasonably warm, with record March temperatures in the 80's. The optics were exciting: posters covered every bit of the lobby, campaign staffers were ubiquitous handing out buttons and other political items, the ballroom overflowed with delegates and reporters. The nominating process, led by Kim, Cindy, and Steve went very smoothly. Our balloting process actually worked thanks to Peg Bahou of Cortland and other county election commissioners who oversaw the process.

And we had fun! Friday night parties sponsored by Charlie King and others were joyful, and helped cement DRC friendships and coalitions.

On Saturday , after the convention adjourned in late afternoon, our planning group met in the bar. Over cocktails, exhausted but elated, we held our first of many convention “post mortems”. The next morning we awoke to read newspapers from across the state carrying the news of the results of the DRC’s first Straw Poll Convention.

There was no doubt we had gotten the attention of the candidates, the statewide media, the political establishment, and most importantly, our small-county leaders.

Reflections on the Straw Poll:

Mike: as Steve has noted above, we didn’t exactly become king makers for the straw poll winners. But that wasn’t the point. The true value is forcing the attention of the candidates, media, and political establishment on our counties and issues- and clearly the DRC straw poll succeeded on those counts.

While the straw poll results don’t predict state wide winners, they do show the strength or weakness of candidates with voters in the rural counties, which are a treasure trove of swing voters. While **Peter Vallone** won the primary for governor, his weakness in the general election upstate was foreshadowed by his defeat in the DRC by Jim Larocca.

Another value of the straw poll process is to gain pledges from the candidates and holding them to the pledges. **Betsy McCaughey Ross**, in her DRC candidate interview, committed to supporting the winner of the primary. When she lost to Vallone, she began to backtrack from that pledge, signaling she would continue her campaign on the Liberal line. I publicly called her on it in a New York Times story by Adam

Nagourney on May 16 (*McCaughey Ross is Caught Between Two Party Pledges*). The DRC had given me a hammer that the state party itself didn't have.

Chuck Schumer, of course, went on to be elected Senator despite his poor showing at the DRC. Not long after, he told me (and also the New York Times) that his one big mistake in the campaign was to write off the DRC. He has more than made up for it: ever since he took office he has honored a commitment to visit every county every year, and his focus on rural issues has earned him the nickname "The Brooklyn Farmer."

We can claim somewhat of a kingmaker roll in the race for **Attorney General**, where Eliot Spitzer exceeded expectations by eking out a victory over favorite Catherine Abate. Buffalo News Political reporter Bob McCarthy said to Eliot: "How does it feel to suddenly be the frontrunner?" Eliot went on to win that election, get reelected in 02, and get elected governor by the largest margin in state history, before resigning office in 2008. He always said the DRC was the key to his winning in 1998.

Lt. Gov. winner of the DRC Clyde Rabideau would accept Peter Vallone's offer to run as a team. In a surprising development, Clyde was defeated in the primary by little known Brighton Supervisor Sandy Frankel, partly because of her gender, partly because her name was similar to a popular New York City union leader. Clyde was later defeated for reelection as Mayor of Plattsburgh, but moved to Saranac Lake where he was elected mayor and serves there to this day.

In later years, the DRC Straw Poll continues to influence state politics. I hope others will write of the controversial 2002 straw poll where Andrew Cuomo edged out Carl McCall for governor, and the 2006 straw poll where Eliot Spitzer crushed a challenge from Tom Suozzi for governor, and Hillary Clinton beat back a hometown Ithaca challenger.

DRC STRAW POLL '98 OFFICIAL RESULTS

Governor

Hynes	17
Larocca	56
Kahan	3
Ross	27
Vallone	23
blank	<u>1</u>
	127

Senate

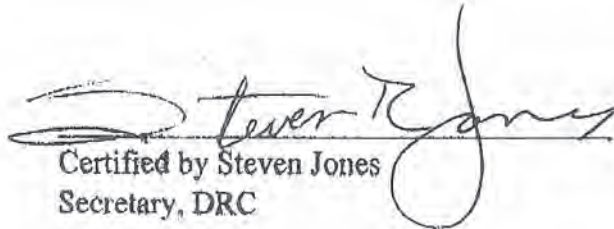
Green	70
Ferraro	51
Schumer	4
blank	2 ² <i>step</i>
	127

Attorney General

Abate	49
Davis	4
Koppell	19
Spitzer	54
blank	<u>1</u>
	127

Lt. Governor

Rabideau	79
King	38
Frankel	6
Kavanaugh	<u>1</u>
	124


 Certified by Steven Jones
 Secretary, DRC

Rural Democrats Pick 2 Against Pataki, D'Amato

Associated Press

Front Pg
Washington Times 3/29/98

ITHACA — Rural Democrats picked two lesser-known candidates Saturday to take on Gov. George Pataki and U.S. Sen. Alfonse D'Amato this fall: former state commissioner James Larocca and New York City Public Advocate Mark Green.

At the first convention of the Democratic Rural Conference, party leaders from 41 New York counties with populations of 150,000 or less voted for their favorite nominees for statewide office in the November election.

It wasn't a day for luminaries Geraldine Ferraro and Lt. Gov. Betsy McCaughey Ross to shine.

Larocca, who declared his candidacy for governor 15 months ago, handily defeated McCaughey Ross by 56 votes to 27, with 23 delegates choosing Peter Vallone, speaker of the New York City Council.

McCaughey Ross is scheduled to be in Wauertown at about noon today at the Partridge Berry Inn to attend a brunch sponsored by the Jefferson County Democratic Committee.

"Name recognition will cure itself as the campaign goes along," said Larocca, who acknowledged he was far behind on public recognition statewide but had been favored by insiders to win the straw poll.

"Now that we've demonstrated a grassroots

See Rural — Page A9



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Former state commissioner James Larocca heads toward the podium Saturday at the state's first Democratic Rural Conference in Ithaca.

Rural Democrats...

► From Page A1

ability within the party, we can begin to take our message outside to the public," he said. "This is a quantum leap for my campaign."

Larocca served in former Gov. Mario Cuomo's administration through 1985 as transportation commissioner.

Green's defeat of Ferraro, the former U.S. congresswoman — and by a margin of 70 votes to 51 — was much more of a surprise.

"This is an upset win. This is a tradition," he said, drawing laughter from supporters. "If Geraldine cannot beat me in March upstate where she is strongest, she won't be able to beat me in the September primary either.

"Eventually, people will not regard me as an upset winner and I hope that happens the night I beat Al D'Amato."

The third candidate in the Senate race, U.S. Rep. Charles Schumer of Brooklyn, made the unusual request in the days leading up to the convention of asking the delegates not to vote for him until they know him better.

Only four did.

"This came around a little early," said Schumer, who has concentrat-

ed so far in urban and suburban districts and won't hit the rural campaign trail until the spring.

The candidates converged on this Finger Lakes college town in a bid to impress Democrats in upstate regions that proved critical to Republican George Pataki's 1994 election as governor.

"You can't get elected in New York state as a Democrat unless you carry upstate New York," said U.S. Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the keynote speaker.

Organizers said the group's goal is to give rural Democrats more say in selecting nominees and making candidates more sensitive to upstate issues, such as slumping milk prices and the effects of the decline in manufacturing.

In 1994, Pataki won an average 77 percent of the vote in upstate rural counties against 23 percent for Cuomo, the incumbent Democrat. About 1.5 million people are registered voters in the 41 counties represented by the Democratic Rural Conference.

Manhattan lawyer Eliot Spitzer beat state Sen. Catherine Abate 54 votes to 49 in the attorney general contest; Plattsburgh Mayor Clyde Rabideau won in the lieutenant governor poll.

Larocca, Green, Spitzer finish on top in straw poll of small-county Democrats

By ROBERT J. McCARTHY

News Political Reporter

ITHACA — They represent only 15 percent of New York's Democrats, but delegates from 41 rural counties still flexed some powerful political muscles here Saturday by hanging new front-runner status on three statewide hopefuls: James L. Larocca for governor, Mark Green for U.S. senator and Eliot Spitzer for state attorney general.

The straw poll of small-county Democrats, which many compared to the Iowa caucus or New Hampshire primary, touched off a flurry of political spinning as winners flaunted their new-found leading roles and also-rans put on the best face to second- and third-place finishes.

The results provide the winners with momentum toward receiving the Democratic State Convention endorsement in May, but even that could prove moot since primary voters are expected to decide in September who the candidates will be.

While heavyweights like Peter E. Vallone in the gubernatorial race and Geraldine A. Ferraro in the Senate contest promised to stage comebacks at the convention, Saturday's vote seemed to reflect the spadework the winners have undertaken among upstate party organizations — some for over a year.

"The numbers are substantial — two to one over the presumed front-runners, and we beat the combined results of the next two candidates," said Larocca, a Long Island resident and former state transportation commissioner. "It begins to define and narrow the field."

Green, the New York City public advocate, took direct aim at the consistent leader in the polls, Ms. Ferraro, the former Queens congresswoman and vice presidential candidate.

"If Geraldine Ferraro can't get more votes than me in an area of the state where she is known best, I really don't see how she can defeat me in September," Green said.

The voting in all contested statewide races, including a unique campaign for lieutenant governor, was decisive.

In the race for governor, Larocca got 57 votes to 27 for Betsy McCaughey Ross, the current lieu-



Associated Press

James L. Larocca: candidate for governor.

tenant governor and another early poll leader; 24 for Vallone, the New York City Council speaker; 17 for Brooklyn District Attorney Charles J. Hynes; and three for former Urban Development Corp. Chairman Richard Kahan.

Assemblyman Sam Hoyt, D-Buffalo, one of Lt. Gov. Ross' top backers, called her 27 votes an "enormous victory."

"Larocca had an operation on the ground here for 18 months," Hoyt said. "Betsy McCaughey Ross announced just 10 days ago, flew in here last night and still got 50 percent of the vote — and we didn't really work hard at this."

Vallone's supporters also emphasized that the Queens resident did not expect to fare well Saturday and expressed satisfaction with his third-place finish.

"It still shows he has the ability to engender strength outside New York City," spokesman Peter Ragono said.

Vallone could receive a boost with expected backing from Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who addressed the Saturday parley. Sources said the senator is expected to weigh in on Vallone's behalf soon, with Moynihan staffers wearing Vallone buttons Saturday.

In the Senate contest, Green outpolled Ms. Ferraro 70 to 51. Rep. Charles E. Schumer of Brooklyn sparked mild outrage by asking his supporters to hold off voting until the May convention in Westchester County. He acknowledged that his support among ru-

ral Democrats is thin.

"I have focused on the suburban and urban areas of upstate New York, and while I had planned to get to these counties, this came around a little early," Schumer said. "In the populated areas, I'm way ahead."

In the four-way race for attorney general, Spitzer got 54 votes. State Sen. Catherine Abate of Manhattan claimed a solid second spot with 49. In a clear blow to his efforts, former Attorney General G. Oliver Koppell of the Bronx tallied 19 votes, while former gubernatorial counsel Evan Davis of Manhattan managed only four.

Spitzer left Ithaca with momentum. "It's significant; it demonstrates I have support across the state," he said.

Koppell said he had not expected stellar results. "It's only the beginning; we've got 5½ months to go," he said.

He added that he will not only stay in the race but also has retained Buffalo campaign consultant Joe Slade White to coordinate a statewide media campaign that he said will result in significant primary support.

One other race, the unique independent campaigns of five people for lieutenant governor, resulted in a solid victory for Plattsburgh Mayor Clyde Rabideau. In a campaign emphasizing his upstate roots, he scored 79 votes, compared to 38 for Manhattan attorney Charlie King, six for Brighton Supervisor Sandra Frankel, one for Buffalo Council Member at Large Barbra A. Kavanaugh and none for New Rochelle Councilwoman Christina Selin.

Ms. Kavanaugh and Erie County Democratic Chairman G. Steven Pigeon both emphasized that they were not surprised by the vote count, especially in view of the months-long efforts of Rabideau and King.

"Clyde is a hometown favorite because he's from a rural area," Ms. Kavanaugh said. "I'm just grateful I could formally enter the race."

She said she will continue efforts to gain the second spot, which is normally the choice of the gubernatorial nominee but could be subjected to a primary contest if candidates can qualify for the ballot.

"It begins now," Ms. Kavanaugh said.

R E G I O N

McCaughy Ross Is Caught Between Two Party Pledges

By ADAM NAGOURNEY

Lieut. Gov. Betsy McCaughy Ross said yesterday that she would not honor a pledge she made to upstate Democratic leaders to support her party's nominee for Governor because it might force her to renege on another pledge—one she recently made to the Liberal Party to win support for her own gubernatorial campaign.

Ms. McCaughy Ross made the commitment in January to support her party's nominee. But she said that even though she was intending to seek the support of the Liberal Party at that time, she had been unaware of the party's historic insistence that its gubernatorial candidate campaign vigorously on its line through November.

Ms. McCaughy Ross agreed to the Liberal Party pledge three months after her commitment to upstate Democratic leaders; the Liberal Party chose her as its gubernatorial candidate last weekend.

"I would not say I'm breaking a pledge," Ms. McCaughy Ross said after the existence of the conflicting pledges was reported in yesterday's editions of The Democrat and Chronicle of Rochester.

"I am the undisputed front-runner and I'm confident that I will be in the Democratic nominee. I mean, to turn down the Liberal Party nomination under the terms on which the nomination is always offered would be to fall on my sword. And for the Democratic Party to fall on its sword."

Ms. McCaughy Ross said that she would not abandon her pledge to the Liberal Party that she would aggressively campaign on its line through November. "I've given my word," she said. "I'm not going to lie to get



Ruby Washington/The New York Times

Lieut. Gov. Betsy McCaughy Ross said yesterday that she would not honor a pledge to back the Democratic Party's nominee for governor.

any party's nomination." Ms. McCaughy's political predicament yesterday was the result of a collision between a candidate who is new to elective politics and one of the more unusual wrinkles in New York State politics.

Because of the state's election laws, the Liberal Party every four years chooses as its gubernatorial candidate someone who it believes will win 50,000 votes on its line, and thus assure it a permanent spot on the ballot until the next gubernatorial election.

Accordingly, the Liberal Party insists that its gubernatorial candidate pledge to campaign aggressively through November on its line—even if that means campaigning against a

with party leaders. "They didn't ask me specifically about a third party," she said. "I'm not saying that to be evasive. Had they asked, I would have paused and said, 'What are the rules?'"

Ms. McCaughy Ross noted that no statewide Democratic candidate had won election without the Liberal Party's support since its creation in 1944. "As the front-runner in the Democratic contest, if I turned down the Liberal Party nomination, it would be tantamount to guaranteeing George Pataki election," she asserted. "History proves that."

Mr. Schell, of the Democratic Rural Conference, said: "I think we need to rely on what she has said directly to us and assume she will honor the commitment."

The dispute came as Ms. McCaughy Ross won the endorsement of an important Democratic leader, Stephen J. Sabbath of Nassau County. He argued she was the best candidate the party had to avoid a political catastrophe this November.

Democrats and Liberals usually endorse the same candidate, and Democratic candidates tend to figure out ways to finesse the issue that has ensnared Ms. McCaughy Ross.

Her rivals quickly seized on the issue yesterday as evidence that Ms. McCaughy Ross was already running against the party she just joined. Kevin McCabe, the campaign manager for Peter F. Vallone, the New York City Council Speaker who is running for governor, said her switch was "the reason that Peter Vallone is going to beat Betsy McCaughy." He added: "With Vallone, you know where you stand. With the Lieutenant Governor, you're never quite sure."

CHAPTER TEN: WE LOOK AHEAD

Mike: So we had come a long way from those early discussions in the 80's. Where the 1994 state convention leadership kept all but one small-county leader off the podium, the **1998 State convention in Rye** was a different story: 14 DRC leaders took the podium. In the 1996 national convention delegate selection process, Steve and I were able to get the NYSDC to make a rule change that required that delegates live in the districts they were to represent, a contrast from the days that out-of-district delegates had been forced upon us. **We gained a seat on the Democratic National Committee, which was filled by Irene Stein, and for the next 20 years a DRC member would hold either the chairmanship of the state party, or the executive chairmanship!**

Statewide candidates now courted our membership and began addressing rural issues that in the past had been ignored by many Democrats. Counties that had been written off by Democrats now became competitive because the political landscape was changing, not solely because of the DRC, but the DRC was certainly a part of that.

The state party began providing help in the form of training, technical assistance, and financing, allowing the DRC counties to be more effective in local campaigns.

The DRC members took pride in their organization, many friendships were made. Social events and having fun became a key part of being in the DRC. I was asked to speak at the Democratic National Committee meeting in Louisville, KY, and bring the idea to leaders in other states. (Denise King would carry the national message further when she chaired the DRC in later years.)

As the years have gone by, **the nation's top Democratic leaders have made the DRC a stopping place:** a former President (Bill Clinton), Democratic presidential nominees (John Kerry, Hillary Clinton, George McGovern), iconic Democratic leaders (Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Howard Dean, General Wesley Clark, Sen Kirstin Gillibrand), future U.S. Senate Democratic leader Sen. Charles Schumer, state governors Spitzer, Paterson, and Andrew Cuomo, and virtually every prominent Democrat in New York State. Remember when we couldn't get any politician to pay attention to us? That was before the DRC.

Now that we had some clout, we could focus on advocating for **rural issues** like farm policy, aid to rural schools, internet access, etc., and my successors, Denise King, Stu Brody, and Irene Stein took the DRC to a new level of advocacy.

By the fall of 1998 the DRC already seemed a fixture in New York State politics. I wrote to Charlie Merrell, chairman of the nominating committee, to officially declare my candidacy for reelection as Chair. I cited the many accomplishments of the DRC and its leadership team in its first two years, but then confessed my interest in continuing as chair was "a selfish one":

" Frankly, I'm having a great deal of fun with this. As perpetual underdogs, Democrats from rural counties are like no other politicians. They are stubborn, they are independent, and they like to have fun. I greatly enjoy being with them, I enjoy their company, and I admire their pride and commitment to our party."

Those words are as true in 2016 as they were in 1998. For Steve and me, long past our leadership days, we will always take great pride in the DRC.

ARCHIVES

The following documents were selected by Steve Jones and Mike Schell from among hundreds saved in file boxes. They consist of minutes, newsletters, correspondence, etc. and are generally in chronological order. The number of documents included depends on the edition of this history: the anniversary issue contains some samplings; the complete edition has all the relevant minutes and more; the SUNY Archives edition will contain virtually every relevant document.

This history and its archives end in March 1998, and other members are encouraged to supply further documents for later meetings and events and contribute copies to the SUNY Archives in Albany. We also encourage others to provide their memories of the DRC to add to this document and to the Archives.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Mike Schell stepped down as DRC chair in 1999 to become Executive Chair of the NYS Democratic Committee, and returned as DRC chair temporarily in 2001. He joined the political staff of AG Eliot Spitzer in 2002, and became a senior advisor to the governor 2007-2010. He returned to the practice of law until retiring in 2016. He and his wife Jacki reside in Chaumont, Jefferson County. They spend time with their 10 grandchildren. Mike is part owner of the Watertown Rapids, a collegiate level summer baseball team.

Steve Jones served as Secretary of the DRC from 1998 until 2007. Elected as a Delegate to the 2000 Democratic Convention in Los Angeles, he worked to make sure that delegates and alternates were selected from rural counties. He continued to serve on the State Committee and the State Executive Committee until 2014, and was named an Honorary Member of the DRC in April 2015. He practices law in his hometown of Morrisville, and serves on the College Council of Morrisville State College.



TIMELINE DRC 1993-2017

1993- Mike Schell, Steve Jones, Marty Mack discuss the feasibility of creating a "small county caucus". The idea is shot down by Governor Cuomo's political staff and state committee.

1994-

June- small-county leaders virtually excluded from playing any role in the NYS Dem Convention.

November- George Pataki defeats Mario Cuomo for governor in an upset, carrying every upstate county but Erie. Cuomo's vote in the future DRC counties was 23%.

1995-

April- John Sullivan (Oswego) elected co-chair of NYS Democratic Committee, joins the effort to explore a small-county caucus.

September - NYSDC meeting in Oswego includes barnstorming session that reignites the idea of a small county caucus.

December- Rural Caucus Steering Committee convened to plan formation of caucus

1996-

March-April- Steering committee travels upstate, meets county chairs and scm's, builds support

September 17- DRC organizing meeting. THE DRC IS BORN! Officers and board elected, by-laws and motto "Unite for Voice and Victory".

1997- Task Forces produce DRC agenda and action plan, including campaign assistance, rural policy, and candidate evaluation process. Downstate leaders (Big 13) try to dictate nominees for 1998 races.

1998-

March- First Straw Poll Convention draws attention from statewide candidates, is widely covered by media.

June- At state convention, DRC members play prominent roles with 14 members speaking from the podium. DRC sponsors reception that is attended by all state leaders.

JOHN SULLIVAN Oswego County, was Chair of the NYS Democratic Executive Committee and facilitated the founding of the DRC. This is excerpted from his draft autobiography:

When Judith (Hope- NYSDC Chair) and I stopped fighting and I concentrated on the formation of the Democratic Rural Conference, things started looking up. It was not an easy lift at first. I have to say that during the three years I served as Chairman, I remember getting only three telephone calls directly from Shelly, and they all had to do with the formation of the DRC, which Shelly initially viewed as a threat. He called it a rump caucus. It has always been a balancing act for Upstate Democratic politicians to unite in the face of the overwhelming downstate centered powers in the party. Upstate democrats have always felt like appendages, and when you would attend state Committee meetings, you were just there to insure a quorum and to rubber stamp what the big County bosses had already decided to do. I first felt the wrath of downstate politicians when, as a County Chairman in 1978, I worked in concert with Mike Bragman, Cicero Democrat, then Onondaga County Chair, and member of the Assembly, and past Chair of the Onondaga county legislature, to form the first Association of Upstate Chairs. It was at a meeting of the State Committee in the old Biltmore hotel, and if memory serves, Dominic Baranello from Suffolk county was Chair back then, and John Marino was his Executive Director. Mike Bragman wanted to have a caucus meeting of Upstate chairs, and he asked me to be the tentative chair of the event, and we extended invitations to all the Chairs north of the Tappan Zee bridge for coffee and doughnuts, and a frank discussion about our role, or non role in the party. I convened the meeting, giving Mike ample cover, and noticed John Marino standing near the door of the meeting room, trying to hear what was being said. We didn't get very far in organizing the caucus, and were called in for a meeting with Dominic to see if our feathers couldn't be unruffled a bit. Ironically, although I was just the front man, I did ultimately get the bill from the hotel for the coffee and donuts, courtesy of Mike Bragman. He was always a sly one that Mike Bragman.

So, in 1975, when the idea first surfaced about the possibility of forming an Upstate small County coalition, it was rough sledding at the outset. ;After I became Co-Chair of the party in 1995, the following year we had a State Committee meeting in Syracuse, and I organized a workshop to round out the event. The workshop was held in a hotel along the river in Oswego, and we provided buses for the delegates to take them from their hotel in Liverpool to the Oswego daylong event. Speaker Silver and his chief of Staff Judy Rapfogel attended, as did Assemblyman Denny Farrell, (who drove up in his red) and lots of other members of the Assembly, Senate and State Committee. I organized a wine tasting reception along the riverbank at Sunset, with wines being donated by famed finger Lakes winemaker Willy Frank. We had a tent erected behind the hotel along the river, and I also arranged for the Oswego yacht club to provide sailboat rides for anyone who wished to go out on the water to see the beautiful Oswego sunset. We had lots of takers. It was basically a redo of the idea I had advanced a year before about getting everyone up the the Thousand Islands, before the Sharpton fiasco. This time, it worked.

Even today, when I see Judy Rapfogel, she reminisces about her one and only sailing cruise in the Oswego "Harbuh", and the beautiful sunset. She once told me , " Everytime I get all wound up and excited I think about that boat cruise, and the sunset in the Harbuh, and feel relaxed

again". After all she has been through these past two years, I am sure Judy must be ready for another sunset sail.

At the workshop that day, several Chairs advanced the idea of forming a coalition of Upstate Chairs, and perhaps the most vocal proponent of the idea was Carol Tibbits, Orleans County Chair, along with Mike Schell of Watertown, and Steve Jones of Madison county. We held an organizing meeting, and then Mike and I set out on a statewide tour to assess the receptivity of the idea among the chairs and committee members. We traveled to meetings of regional chairs in Batavia, and Saranac Lake, and Syracuse, and that culminated in our first DRC organization meeting in Syracuse, just off the Thruway, in August of 1976. The DRC was born. Mike Schell was named Chair, and Steve Jones was given the job of drafting a constitution and by laws. The membership was limited to the Chairs and State Committee members from the 40 smallest counties population wise. Some people called us "People with pitchforks". and our theme became, "United for voice and victory". (Show photo) Judith was not initially supportive of the effort, but grew to eventually embrace it, as did Shelly. I always had to assure Shelly that this was a group of Shelly supporters in Pataki prone areas of the state. He didn't buy it at first, but was eventually persuaded after a group of us went to Albany to have a sit down with him about it, and he was invited to be the speaker at our first ever event, which we held in Binghamton.

The Democratic Rural Conference has grown to be a very important part of the Democratic party in NYS over the last nearly 20 years since it's founding, and at one point, it even appeared as if we were the tail wagging the dog. The popularity of our 'straw poll' was what catapulted the DRC to prominence, and our first organizational meeting in Binghamton in the fall of 1976 set the foundation for it's later success.

That meeting was held at the same time as the Broome County open, a rather famous golf championship that featured such up and coming notable golfers as Tiger Woods. Tiger was actually staying at the same hotel, and we bumped into him on the elevator, carrying his golf clubs. I didn't know who he was, and neither did Charlotte , who remarked " What's a nice young man like you doing going golfing on a rainy day like this" "That's what I do mamm", he said, with a smile. After he exited the elevator, Mike Schell said to me, "Do you know who that was? "No" I said, "Tiger", he rejoined. I said, "Tiger Who?"

"Tiger Woods!" Mike exclaimed. "You don't know who Tiger Woods is?" "No, sorry Mike, I don't follow golf."

As Tiger Woods career and notoriety expanded from those days forward, so did the reputation and power of the Democratic Rural Conference, which I am proud to say that I was one of the founders of. Even Howard Dean, former Vermont Governor, when he became Chair of the DNC, took a leaf out of our playbook and tried to advance a 50 state agenda, leaving no stone unturned. He was simply taking our rural conference formula and applying it nationally. Howard Dean even came to speak to a couple of our conferences in Lake Placid. Other national notables such as former Sen. George McGovern, John Kerry, and Hilary Clinton were keynote speakers at one or more of the events. I am proud to say today that I am still a lifetime honorary member of the DRC, and look forward to their next event. I haven't missed many over the last 20 years.

DRC HISTORY FOLLOWING THE '98 CONVENTION

1998 December- Mike Schell replaces Marty Mack as NYSDC Exec Chair, DRC Vice Chair Denise King becomes DRC Chair 1998-2002.

2002- Denise King replaces Mike Schell as NYSDC Exec Chair, Mike returns as DRC Chair; Mike later resigns to join Spitzer campaign. Stu Brody elected to replace Acting DRC Chair Kim Muller, serves 2002-2009.

2009- Irene Stein elected DRC Chair (remains as chair as this goes to press 2018, becoming longest serving DRC Chair)

The following are excerpts from annual convention programs detailing DRC activity from 1998-present:

Chapter 3:

New York's DRC Gaining National Attention

...the King of the Credentials" of the 2000 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles.

While Denise King was DRC chair, the focus of the group's efforts was to follow up on the organizing that had occurred and to expand our outreach, bringing a voice to the concerns of rural New York to as large an audience as possible. King traveled to a majority of the 41 counties that made up the DRC at that time, wrote op-eds, and did some TV interviews. She was invited by then DRC Chair Terry McAuliffe to serve on a panel in Washington, D.C. that addressed issues in rural areas.

"It was a great experience as Joan

Lester and I met people from across the country and that initial panel served as the genesis for the DNC Rural Working Group, Council under the DNC Chairmanship of Howard Dean," she said.

The NYSDRC expanded our in-house communications with a greatly revised "North 40," ably done by Sarah Kloos. Thanks to Steve Jones' advocacy, we were able to get rural New Yorkers identified as a group that needed to be represented on delegate slates in a fairer way and we had more DRC folks on slates for the 2000 and

beyond conventions.

King convinced Judith Hope and David Cohen (state party executive director) to establish the first grants program for upstate counties, which enabled many counties to open campaign headquarters for local election cycles. Hope felt the DRC deserved a seat on the DNC delegation from New York, so we were able to negotiate a dedicated spot for one of our members. Subsequent chairs have honored that commitment and Irene Stein held that seat for many years, followed by Barbara Fiala.

We met with leaders like Chuck Schumer — a roundtable discussion in Cooperstown that really broke the ice; with then US Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman (who puts mustard on everything!) and then HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo in Rochester; sponsored a reception for Tipper Gore in Albany when Al was running for president (even Mayor Jennings was impressed!); and hosted Hillary Clinton's arrival during her historic run for Senate. (When the Secret Service told us we had to cut 50 people from the luncheon, Carol Tibbits and I took them on and with Hillary's intervention, nobody lost their chance to meet her and everybody who paid for lunch got in!) Not only did Hillary make history, but so did the DRC.

Our 41 counties were given vote goals from the Clinton campaign that would significantly increase the Democratic performance and potentially make the difference in the race. In 40 of the 41 counties, we exceeded those goals and in the 41st county, we exactly matched it. On election night, Hillary acknowledged the Democratic turnout and performance in our counties as one of

the main reason she won.

At the Los Angeles Convention in 2000, Bill Wood was the "Master of the Credential." David Cohen told me he knew the DRC had made it when he looked into the delegation seating for NY and saw more DRC members there than people from anywhere else in New York! Prior to the 2004 Convention, DRC Board Members Cathy Ulfik, Irene Stein and I (at the time I was no longer DRC Chair but an Honorary Member) were in DC to recruit participation in the Lake Placid Presidential Forum. We had discussions with all of the presidential contenders and were able to enlighten them on issues of concern to rural voters. In 2004 at the Boston Convention, the three of us were on stage when a little-known senator from Illinois delivered a speech heard round the world. I remember turning to Cathy and saying, "that Obama could be Hillary's running mate in 2008."

From all of my years with the DRC starting in 1996, I will remember the sense of camaraderie, the fun we had dancing 'til wee hours in the early years, and the knowledge that we were making a difference in NY politics and beyond. To hear Howard Dean tell the people in attendance at the Rural Council in Denver in 2008 that the DRC of NY was his inspiration for the 50-State Strategy made all we have done for 15 years even more worthwhile. Still, it is those victories at the local level that point to the vital work of the DRC does and the necessity of its continued success.

Chapter 3 written by Denise King.

Chapter Four:

Growing and Strengthening up to 47 Counties

Our very successful annual conferences continued to a kind of pinnacle with a Presidential Forum at Lake Placid under the leadership of Stu Brody, who had succeeded Denise King when she became Chair of the NYSDC Executive Committee. The DRC attracted extensive state-wide media attention, and even a few mentions nationwide.

The DRC participated vigorously in a "Take Back the Senate Campaign", sending a "Boots on the Ground" group of volunteers, coordinated by Board Member Dan McCandless to help in a special election to elect Darrel Aubertine in February 2008.

The DRC entered into a relationship with the Senate Democratic Campaign Committee where candidates who were not their primary focus were awarded smaller grant funding, a relationship continuing when Irene Stein succeeded Stu Brody as Chair.

The DRC grew when it became 47 counties strong when our criteria changed to add four new counties.

The rural group entered the electronic age when our Newsletters, well-produced by Mike Schell, Kim Muller, Sarah Kloos and Brad Mintener were replaced with electronic bulletins which go to members after each meeting. Board Member Don Ackerman edits them with the help of our indefatigable Secretary Phil Jones. With the continuing help of Ian Brody, there is a website, a page on Facebook and a list-serve so that members can communicate with one another.

The DRC offers orientation to new Chairs, mentoring and technical assist-



DRC Chairwoman Irene Stein behind a sign showing rural New York's continuing clout.

-ance to all. Our Board also offers a Speakers' Bureau to our member counties.

Our elected officials clearly realize the need to gain upstate support. Their continuing attendance at our conferences is just one indication. We were delighted to have Governor David Paterson attend a DRC board meeting in Syracuse while he was in office. Our group also has been honored by visits from Lt. Governor Robert Duffy and Charlie King and NYS Senator David Valesky. We have heard from U.S. Senator Gillibrand and Congresswoman Maloney via conference calls.

The Board has begun an ongoing discussion of our upstate rural issues with Lt. Governor Duffy. After talking with us at a Board meeting, our Issues Committee Chair Cindy Lockrow organized a meeting in Albany with Duffy's economic development policy advisor Brian Quario.

Chapters 4 and 5 were written by Irene Stein.

Chapter Five:

Keeping It Going; Keeping It Growing

We celebrated our 15th Anniversary at Proctor's in Schenectady in 2011. It was a very exciting and successful event featuring our fantastically effective Governor Andrew Cuomo as well as our Senior United States Senator Schumer. The Senator attended straight from a flight back from China, and we were very pleased. We cannot conceive of a DRC conference without him. We heard from our outstanding junior Senator Kristin Gillibrand by video and, in person from Lt. Governor Duffy. State Comptroller, Tom DiNapoli, Senate Leader John Sampson, Congressman Paul Tonko, and State Committee Executive Director Charlie King. Sadly, our new Attorney General Eric Schneiderman was unable to attend because of the medical condition of a family member. On the second day, of the Conference, and because 2011 was a year of local races, we offered campaign training provided by Democracy for America.

Some of our most recent activities include:

- *individual members working to help elect now Congresswoman Kathy Hochul

- *a visit to the January 2012 DRC Board meeting from Senator Valesky where redistricting was a major focus; we were also pleased to have Sheila Comer the new NYSDC Chair of the NYSDC Executive Committee in attendance.

- *an initiative facilitated by Mark Bellardini to work with organized Labor on issues of common interest

- *a continuation of the provision of modest financial contributions to member counties

- *passage of a resolution urging our State officials to alter the NYS School Funding Formula to redress the issue of the disproportionately low funding for so many of our rural school districts

- *a Forum on horizontal fracking to educate ourselves on the issue. Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton (125th Assembly District) and Adam Schultz, Esq., of the Speaker's-bureau of the Independent Gas and Oil Association presented "pro" and "anti" positions with a large amount of time dedicated to questions and answers from DRC folks. This was so successful that DRC plans to have future forums as critical issues are identified.

"You, our members, are of course, where the rubber really hits the road and we value your participation and opinions. We have surveyed you as to your issues and their prioritization as well as your suggestions for improving our conferences," said Irene Stein, DRC chairwoman. "We try to provide you with some financial support for your campaigns. Our Annual Conferences and Straw Polls continue to attract attendance and interest. Stay tuned..."

Rural Cancer 9/6/85 - Oswego NYSAC Meeting

Mike Schell - Person
Robert Bowman St. Lawrence
Jim McMan (for Keith Osborne) Chemung Co.
George Munn (for Jim Wood) Delaware Co.
Kim Muller Otsego County
Barbara Steinwachs Yates Co.
John J. Gibbons
Carol Abbotts - Orleans
Steven Jones Madison County
Teresa Martellotta - Albion
William Scriber Oswego Co.
Amina R. Baker - Hamilton County
Gertie R. Baker - Hamilton County
Wm. A. Montfort
Carol Perry Franklin County
Dorothy M. Betz Madison County
Daniel Tagliento Saratoga County (518) 584-6966
Linda Gaydushek Schoharie Co. 518-872-2317 (H) ^{W=} 762-4681 ext 325
Joanne + Paul Hannon Star Rte, Merrill NY 12953
Bob Kersch WYO CO 518-425-686
716-322-7778

Rural Caucus -

9/6/95 - Oswego

11/1/95 - 11/1/95

Bob Hirsch Wyoming County -
Try to have meeting of all rural counties -
what is a rural county? -
regions? -

Mike Schell mentions reform caucus has clout beyond their
#s and wonder if we could do the same.

John Sullivan asks that we agree to meet somewhere, he
will come and meet w/us. No state comm planned till
next year in NYC. John says the "Chairs" groups have been
not functioning.

Bob says keep positive and stick together.

John says he + Judith will appt a rural ~~committee~~.

steering committle. Get an attendance list together.
Dot Bely says be sure this is for State Comm, not just
Chairs of each County.

Mike Schell says shoot for Healdman Co for a meeting ~~for~~
~~a meeting~~ after the election.

John Sullivan asks Mike Schell to be

MINUTES

A meeting of the Rural Caucus was held at the Quality Inn, Buckley Road, Liverpool, New York on Monday, December 18, 1995 at 12:00 noon. Those attending were Mike Schell, a long time State Committee member and recently elected County Chairman of the Jefferson County Democratic Committee, Orleans County Chair, Carol Tibbits, Wyoming County Chair, Bob Kersch, Marty Mack, State Committeeman and former County Chair of Cortland County, John Fitzgibbons, State Committeeman and former County Chair of Oswego County, Steven Jones, State Committeeman and former County Chair of Madison County, and Executive Chairman of the New York State Democratic Committee, John Sullivan of Oswego.

The meeting was opened by Mike Schell, who was congratulated on his recent election as Jefferson County Chair. Mike was designated as the temporary chair of the caucus.

John Sullivan, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the State Democratic Committee, reported on the status of petitioning for the Presidential Primary and solicited comments regarding petitioning and delegate slates. There was widespread dissatisfaction with the slates.

Chairman Sullivan mentioned that he has received a number of complaints from other congressional districts regarding party workers who were unable to get on the delegate slates. He has explained to them that there are a limited number of spots available and he will do his best to see that those who did not get on slates will get credentials to the convention in Chicago, though he admits that he is still waiting for an accurate count on the credentials that New York will be entitled to pass out for the convention. He also mentioned that a number of people are asking for spots on the platform committee, the rules committee and the credentials committee.

Chairman Sullivan also mentioned the need for fundraisers, particularly upstate to help the State Committee and local committees raise money. He mentioned the possibility of regional fundraisers with one now being scheduled for Watertown with the "lions share" of the proceeds going to the local committee.

There is also a plan to have house parties held as fundraisers on the night of the Presidential primary.

Chairman Sullivan also mentioned that President Clinton will be holding a fundraiser in New York City on January 11th. The cost will be \$1,000.00 per person.

Sullivan also mentioned that there will be a retreat scheduled in New York City for the weekend of February 24 - 25.

Sullivan also mentioned that the opening of the new headquarters in New York City was an excellent event, but only two representatives from Upstate appeared. In his Oswego headquarters, Sullivan now has a part-time staffer from the Democratic Committee.

Currently the State Committee is temporarily operating out of Senator Martin Connor's office for its base in Albany. Chairman Sullivan expects to spend one or two days a week in Albany when the session begins. Chairman Sullivan also noted that the best time to reach him is after 4:00 p.m. and he is trying to set aside time each day from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. to return his phone calls. His number is 342-4871. His wife, Charlotte, will be helping soon with the organization of fundraising activities.

Chairman Sullivan was pleased to see a number of rural representatives appear at the meeting and encouraged us to work together to represent upstate rural interests.

The State Committee is interviewing vendors to provide voter lists to local committees. This involves a substantial commitment of money on the part of the State Committee and the National Committee, but it should net considerable results. A candidate or a local committee will be able to request a list of prime voters or target mail to certain ethnic groups by using these lists. Mailing labels will be available at a very reasonable rate from the chosen vendor.

There was considerable discussion about the next meeting of the rural caucus and it was decided to include in the caucus those counties with population of less than 150,000 people. County Chairs and State Committee members from those counties will be members of the caucus. Steve Jones will draft a set of By-laws that can be reviewed at the next meeting. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 22 - 23, 1996, probably to take place in the Auburn area. There was discussion about combining a fundraiser with the conference, but it was felt that it might be better to separate the fundraising and concentrate on a conference with a major speaker who will draw rural representatives, and assist us in forming a new organization.

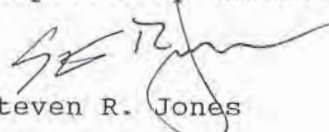
Chairman Sullivan was asked when the next meeting for the New York Democratic Committee will be held. He said there is no meeting scheduled at this time, but perhaps a meeting will be held in conjunction with the retreat scheduled for February 23-24.

Bob Kersch suggested the need for a press release about today's meeting in the hope of encouraging other rural Democrats. Chairman Schell appointed Steve Jones to the post of Temporary Secretary of the Rural Caucus and asked him to draft the press release and the minutes of this meeting.

There was discussion of the logistics of the conference to be held March 22 through 23. Chairman Schell will ask Chairman Sullivan's staff to help us with the cost of mailing, accommodations, and planning a speaker. It was expected that since we have 30 to 40 counties in the rural category, we might expect a turnout of 40 to 120 people for the conference. Among the items that Chairman Schell will put on the conference agenda will be a discussion of issues that are vital to rural New Yorkers, political problems that we encounter (such as our town caucuses), consideration of the form that our organization should take, and the adoption of by-laws. Mention was made of the expense associated with the caucus and it was suggested that perhaps each County that sends delegates or participates in the caucus could contribute toward the expenses of the caucus.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Steven R. Jones

11/23/96
Board of Directors

MINUTES OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC
RURAL CONFERENCE OF NEW YORK STATE HELD ON SEPTEMBER 17, 1996
AT BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

The first organizational meeting of the Democratic Rural Conference of New York State was called to order at 10:25 A.M. on September 17, 1996 at the Binghamton Regency Hotel by Jefferson County Chair Mike Schell, who served as Chair of the Steering committee for the DRC.

Chair Schell introduced Orleans County Chair, Carol Tibbets, who had served as Vice-Chair of the Steering Committee. Tibbets spoke of the "shared frustrations and goals" of democrats in smaller counties and the need to "unite our voices". She noted that the State Committee has made great strides in the last few years and that, when she was a State Committee member, it seemed that everything presented to the State Committee was "cut and dried". She spoke of the leadership shown by Judith Hope and John Sullivan, and she introduced John Sullivan.

Executive Committee Chair John Sullivan remarked on the tremendous turnout for the founding of the DRC. He said that it is important that democrats in smaller counties have "our voices heard" and that "we have a positive attitude of wanting to contribute." He spoke of the DRC as a "vehicle to drive the Democratic Party back to prominence" and noted that the voter file project, which is nearing completion, will be particularly helpful to smaller counties. He noted that he and Chair Judith Hope appreciated the efforts of the DRC Steering Committee and all the work they have done to bring us together for this organizational meeting. He then introduced Marty Mack of Cortland County, candidate for Congress and former Cortland County Chair.

Marty Mack recognized the efforts of Mike Schell who started planning for a rural conference 2 years ago. Mike once worked as an aide for Congressman Sam Stratton who wanted to run for Governor in 1962 but was unable to secure the nomination because he was from upstate. Mack noted that in the 1800s each county had only one vote on the State Committee, and that Alton B. Parker of Cortland County rose to the Chairmanship of the State Committee at 33 years of age. Mack said that our purpose in forming the DRC is to find the common ground and the common vision between our own counties, and the other counties throughout our state, large and small, upstate and downstate.

State Committee Chair Judith Hope addressed the convention, congratulating us on "a job well done, that needed to be done". She called the DRC "a great gift to the Democratic Party of New York" and she spoke of the strength of our party at the local level. She also noted that it was evident at the national convention in Chicago that the New York delegation was a "parade of our outstanding talent" and of the great depth of that talent.

Exec. Comm. Chair Sullivan introduced Mark Green, New York City Public Advocate, who congratulated Chairs Hope and Sullivan on the "remarkable comeback" that they have produced for our party, which has "brought us to the brink of huge breakthroughs in 1996 and 1998". He also congratulated Chair Schell and the DRC Steering Committee for recognizing the need to unite smaller counties. He noted that "Unity is Victory" is our slogan for 1996 and that Marty Mack exemplifies the quality of our candidates.

Exec. Comm. Chair John Sullivan introduced Steven Jones, State Committee member and former County Chair from Madison County, as the Secretary of the DRC Steering Committee and as the James Madison and Benjamin Franklin of the DRC by-laws. Jones distributed copies of the proposed by-laws and mentioned that the Steering Committee was prepared to recommend certain modifications to the proposed by-laws that had been distributed several weeks ago through the State Committee mailing. Jones first explained the initial proposal, and then explained proposed modifications that would make the DRC independent of the State Committee and would increase the number of directors to ten and increase the size of the Executive Committee to 15, with a requirement that six members of the Executive Committee would constitute a quorum. Irene Stein moved that the by-laws be accepted with the modifications recommended, Kim Muller seconded. There was discussion, led by Bill Montfort of why we chose to establish 150,000 as the population cut off for membership. Mike Schell noted that the figure came from a study done by the Office of Rural Affairs. Jones noted that the Steering Committee had considered the idea of "associate memberships" in the DRC for larger counties that have rural areas, at the suggestion of Chair Sullivan, but had decided to keep things simple at this time and consider such ideas in the future.

Kim Muller proposed an amendment to the provision about Voting, to allow a person who is a County Chair and a State Committee member to cast 2 votes, or to designate some other Democrat from his or her County to cast the second vote. There was a second. In the discussion that followed it was determined that there were 8 such Chairs/Committee members in the room. The amendment was approved 23 to 15.

Keith Osborne proposed that the title of the organization should be "The Democratic Rural Conference of New York State" instead of "The Democratic Rural Conference" as had been proposed in the modifications recommended by the Steering Committee. There was a second. The amendment was approved.

It was proposed that the words "and attend" be deleted from the paragraph about Officers so that the Secretary would not be required to actually attend all meetings. Seconded and approved.

Dick Abbott of Chenango County moved that a comma be inserted in the Meetings paragraph so that it would read, "Upon the written request of 20 members, the Executive...". Seconded and approved.

There was discussion of proxy voting and whether it should be allowed. Jones explained that the Steering Committee had also been divided on this issue but had decided that proxy voting might discourage people from personally attending meetings. Jones asked someone to propose proxy voting, so the issue could be decided on its merits by those assembled. There was a motion and second, discussion followed and the motion was defeated.

There being no further amendments, the By-laws were approved.

Chair Schell noted that we were late for our luncheon meeting and he announced that the meeting would resume at lunch.

Charles Merrill, the Chair of the Nominating Committee, reported that the Nominating Committee recommended the following slate of officers:

Chair	Mike Schell of Jefferson County
Vice Chair	Carol Tibbets of Orleans County
Secretary	Steven Jones of Madison County
Treasurer	John Fitzgibbons of Oswego County
Parliamentarian	Marty Mack of Cortland County

There were no other nominations. John Vona seconded the nominations. The nominations were approved on a voice vote.

Charles Merrill then announced that the Nominating Committee had received inquiries from 10 people who were interested in serving on the Board of Directors and that the by-laws, as approved, provided for 10 positions. Those nominated by the Nominating Committee were:

- Stu Brody of Essex County
- Cindy Emmer of Chemung County
- Cliff Hay of Schoharie County
- Bob Kersh of Wyoming County
- Kim Muller of Otsego County
- Almina Baker of Hamilton County
- Irene Stein of Tompkins County
- Ruth Young of Schuyler County
- Bill O'Dell of Catteraugus County and
- Denise King of Columbia County.

Merrill asked if there were any other nominations. Cathy Ulfick of Chenango County nominated Dick Abbott, Chenango County Chair. There was a discussion about distributing ballots and then a discussion about amending the by-laws to provide for one more member of the Board of Directors. Cliff Hay then rose to withdraw his own name from consideration and he moved that the other 10 be elected. There was a second and the 10 were elected as Directors.

Exec. Comm. Chair Sullivan then introduced the new Chair of the DRC, Mike Schell.

Chair Schell spoke of the history of the DRC and the breakthrough that occurred at the State Committee retreat in Oswego when Chairs Hope and Sullivan were the first State Committee leaders to welcome the formation of a rural conference. He noted that many counties, besides our 41, have rural areas, and that our conference is for the chairs and state committee members from the 41 counties, but it will often speak for the concerns of all rural New Yorkers. He noted that our 41 counties represent 80% of the state by geography, but not by population, and that "if dirt was power, we'd have it". He spoke of our mission to "carry our counties for the democratic candidates and to have fun doing it". He mentioned that we would have a newsletter to keep us informed, and that we would be "visible, vocal, loyal to our cause, loyal to each other and loyal to our party.

Exec. Comm. Chair Sullivan introduced the head table and the introduced Speaker of the Assembly Sheldon Silver who called the DRC a "vital link to the Democratic Party" and lauded Mike Schell and his "message of inclusion".

Chair Judith Hope introduced Bill DeBlasio of the Coordinated Campaign, who spoke about the DRC pulling together, just as the labor movement is pulling together with the party now. He promised large quantities of basic literature for the campaign, along with a small allotment of buttons and posters for each county.

Chair Schell thanked everyone for attending the birth of the DRC and the meeting was adjourned.

The Democratic Rural Conference
of
New York State
CHARTER MEMBER LIST '96

3 A

CC= County Chair
SCM= State Committee Member

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Box 127
Essex NY 12736

Merly Macie
Box 332
Cortland NY 13045

Watson, Jason- Herkimer County/SCM

36 West Monroe St.
Little Falls, NY 13365
Home: (315)823-0102
Fax: same
Dues paid: 9/96

Margaret, Williamson S.J.- Oswego County/ViceCC & SCM

253 US 11 South
Central Square, NY
Home: (315)668-3925
Dues paid: 9/96

Wood, Bill- Cortland County/CC

26 Madison St.
Cortland, NY 13045
Home: (607)756-6537
Work: (607)756-9531
Fax: (607)756-6537
Dues paid: 9/96

Young, Ruth S.- Schuyler County/SCM

1580 Sugar Hill Rd.
Watkins Glen, NY 14891
Home: (607)535-9566
Work: same
Fax: same
e-mail: rsycat@vivanet.com
Dues paid: 9/96

approved 9/17/96

BY-LAWS OF THE DEMOCRATIC RURAL CONFERENCE OF THE
NEW YORK STATE DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE

TITLE- The organization shall be known as "THE DEMOCRATIC RURAL CONFERENCE OF THE NEW YORK STATE DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE".

PURPOSE- The purpose of the conference shall be to represent and promote the interests of rural New Yorkers within the New York State Democratic Party and within the government of the State of New York.

MEMBERS- All members of the New York State Democratic Committee who are elected to represent counties with a population of less than 150,000 and all Chairs of Democratic County Committees from counties with a population of less than 150,000 shall be members of the conference upon payment of annual dues which are set at the sum of \$10. Dues shall be due each January 1st and must be current for any person to participate or vote. When a person ceases to be a member of the State Committee or a County Chair, their membership in the conference shall cease.

MEETINGS- The first organizational meeting shall be held on September 17, 1996. Subsequent organizational meetings shall be held every two years on the same day as the first meeting of the State Committee held after the primary in even numbered years. Officers and directors shall be elected at the organizational meeting. Regular meetings shall be held on the same day as each State Committee meeting. Special meetings may be called by the Chair or the Executive Committee. Upon the written request of 20 members, the Executive Committee shall call a special meeting to consider a specific subject. Notice of all meetings shall set forth the place, time, date and purpose of the meeting and shall be mailed to each member at least 10 days and not more than 30 days before the meeting.

QUORUM- Fifteen (15) members personally present shall constitute a quorum. No business may be transacted without a quorum.

VOTING- Each member personally present shall have one vote. There will be no proxy voting. In the event that a County Chair is also a State Committee member, ^{they shall have two votes and} ~~then he or she~~ may designate another registered Democrat from his or her County to cast his or her extra vote.

RULES OF PROCEDURE- Robert's Rules of Order Revised shall govern the conduct of all meetings, except in situations where these By-Laws conflict, in which case these By-Laws shall control.

OFFICERS- Officers of the organization shall be the Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Parliamentarian. There shall also be ^{ten} ~~four~~ Directors. The ¹⁵ ~~9~~ officers and directors shall constitute the Executive Committee and shall all be elected to terms of 2 years at the organizational meeting by the membership.

MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE- Meetings of the Executive Committee shall be held upon call by the Chair or the written request of 3 members of the Executive Committee. Notice of any meeting shall set forth the place, time, date and purpose of the meeting and shall be mailed to each member at least 5 days before the meeting. Each Executive Committee member personally present shall have one vote; there shall be no proxy voting. ^{six members} A majority of the Executive Committee shall constitute a quorum and no business may be transacted without a quorum.

DUTIES OF THE OFFICERS- The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the members and the Executive Committee. The Chair shall also annually report, in writing, to the members and shall perform such other duties as are necessarily incident to the office of the Chair. The Vice-Chair shall, in case of death or absence of the Chair or the Chair's inability to act for any reason, perform the duties of the Chair. The Secretary shall give notice of ~~and attend~~ all meetings of the members and the Executive Committee and keep a record of their proceedings; the Secretary shall also conduct correspondence and carry into execution all orders, votes, and resolutions not otherwise committed. The Treasurer shall collect all dues and other income and shall keep a list of all members and the date their dues were paid; the Treasurer shall also keep an account of all money received and expended and shall make a report at each meeting and at any other time requested by the Chair; all money shall be deposited in a bank approved by the Executive Committee and disbursements shall only be made upon a voucher approved in writing by the Chair; funds may be drawn only up signature of the Treasurer; the funds, books and vouchers in the Treasurer's hands shall at all times be under the supervision of the Executive Committee and, at the expiration of the Treasurer's term shall be turned over (with any other property) to the new Treasurer.

VACANCIES- Any vacancy in the office of an officer or director shall be filled by a vote of the Executive Committee.

COMPENSATION OF OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS- There shall be no compensation of officers or directors.

COMMITTEES- Besides the Executive Committee, there shall be such committees as are appointed by the Chair to consist of as many members as the Chair may deem advisable. The term of each committee and the members thereof shall end immediately upon the opening of the biennial organization meeting. The Chair shall be an ex-officio member, with right to vote, of all committees.

AMENDMENTS- These By-Laws may be amended by a majority vote of the members present at any duly called meeting where the notice of the meeting has included the proposed amendment, or by a two-thirds vote from the body without prior notice.

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING
DRC 9/17/96
BINGHAMTON REGENCY

[9:00-9:55 Campaign training session]

10:00 CALL TO ORDER

10:02 CAROL TIBBITS--FRUSTRATIONS OF A SMALL COUNTY CHAIR
INTRO JOHN SULLIVAN--CONVENING CHAIR

10:06 JOHN SULLIVAN--BRIEF HISTORY OF ORIGINS AND NEED FOR DRC
INTRO OF MARTY MACK

10:10 MARTY MACK--IMPORTANCE OF RURAL VOTE
INTRO OF STEVE JONES

10:15 STEVE JONES--PRESENTATION OF RULES

10:22 CHARLES MERRELL--NOMINATING COMM. REPORT
ELECTION OF OFFICERS

10:25 SCHELL--GOALS OF DRC

10:35 MERRELL-- NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

10:37 SCHELL--APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES

10:40 IRENE STEIN AND CINDY EMMER--ANNOUNCE BREAKOUT SESSIONS

10:45 INTRODUCTION OF DIGNITARIES FOR BRIEF REMARKS
JUDITH HOPE
MARK GREEN

10:55 ADJOURN TO BREAKOUT SESSIONS

[11:00-11:35 BREAKOUT SESSIONS]

[11:45-12:30 DRC LUNCHEON]



Otsego County Democratic Committee

P.O. Box 883

Oneonta, New York 13820



KIM MULLER
Chair

22 September 1996

Contact: Kim Muller 433-1924

*** * * MULLER ELECTED TO DEMOCRATIC RURAL CONFERENCE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS * * ***

Kim Muller, Chair of the Otsego County Democratic Committee, was elected to the first Board of Directors of the Democratic Rural Conference of New York State at the Conference's first meeting on 17 September 1996. Muller said that the purpose of the Rural Conference is to give members an opportunity to bring greater attention to issues significant to people in counties in New York with populations less than 150,000. The conference will hold workshops for members and other interested individuals, sponsor speakers on pertinent topics, and provide an opportunity to network with others from rural counties across the state.

The Board of Directors has ten members representing various geographical regions of the state. The Conference includes people from the 41 counties with populations less than 150,000.

Monday's meeting was scheduled contiguously with the meeting of the New York State Democratic Committee. Along with Muller, attendees were Leon Kalmus, State Committee member, and Otsego County Representative Catherine Rothenberger.

Muller said that discussions on the impact of the Republican tax plan on New York were especially interesting. *"More money goes out of New York than comes in from the federal government. The Republican tax plan would exacerbate that situation, because New York currently receives a high amount of Medicaid funding, which would be reduced under Bob Dole. The people of New York State would have to make up for that loss of funding. Bottom line is, we can't afford Bob Dole or his tax plan!"*

Muller said she looks forward to working on the Rural Conference Board. *"There are several areas that I hope to raise discussion about, including taking a closer look at the funding mechanism for local governments and school districts; and evaluating the situation with jobs and wages in rural areas."*

Muller said she believes her experience as a member of the Otsego County Board of Representatives will be valuable in working on issues important to citizens from small counties across New York.

SEE SECTION

B

Schell Leads Rural Democrats

Riches Abound at Hopewell Hall

SUNDAY September 22, 1996

Mostly cloudy today, with high of 65. Rain likely tonight. Low in middle 40s. Details on Page A6.



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D.

Watertown Daily Times

* \$1.75

Sunday, September 22, 1996

43,219

Schell To Head Rural Democrats Attorney Elected at State Meeting

By Eric Durr Times Albany Correspondent

ALBANY — Watertown lawyer Michael W. Schell was elected chairman of the New York Democratic Committee's Rural Conference last week during the party's Binghamton meeting.

There was nothing surprising in the move, since Mr. Schell had been hand-picked to head the steering committee establishing the conference by state party Executive Chairman John T. Sullivan, Oswego.

Now the real work of changing New York's "political landscape" can begin, Mr. Schell said.

"We can change the age-old feeling that Republicans take these (rural counties) for granted and Democrats write them off," he said.

The conference will concentrate on three areas, Mr. Schell said: informing state party leaders about rural concerns, helping Democratic leaders in rural counties build their parties, and forging social bonds between upstate and downstate Democrats.

That last item is more important than it sounds, Mr. Schell said.

Too often upstate Democrats will attend party functions in Albany and New York City and feel lost and left out in the crush of New York City Democrats and statewide officials, he said. They don't even know each other, Mr. Schell said.

Developing those relationships is essential to ensuring that upstate concerns are heard by the party leaders, Mr. Schell said.

The conference will establish an issues committee to "assess and lay out what issues are most important to rural areas," he said.

"We can report to the statewide leaders and candidates what their emphasis should be in campaigning upstate," Mr. Schell said, "and also talk to them about modifying positions that may not be consistent with the views of voters in the less urban counties."

The key is to find common con-

County Dems Work To Stay In Limelight

By Roger G. Smith Times Staff Writer

A high profile is working for local Democrats, so they'll try to stay in the limelight.

A local party organizational meeting Tuesday night will double as a mini-convention for its candidates, with the keynote speech from the state's top Democratic elected official, Comptroller H. Carl McCall.

The fanfare created by Mr. McCall's appearance follows other highly visible moves made since Michael W. Schell took over as county Democratic Party chairman last year.

It seems to be working. The number of county committee members who are active in party affairs and vote for the leadership has almost doubled since last year, with 40 new participants bringing the number to nearly 90.

More active party workers means more work can get done, and the mix of new and old members better shapes ideas, Mr. Schell said.

"I think it's going to make a difference," he said.

Turning routine party business into a spectacle is

See Dems — Page B7

cerns of all New Yorkers and emphasize them, Mr. Schell said.

"I think, really, what we're looking for is a dialogue so that they understand the problems of the voters upstate and they factor that in

See Schell — Page B7

Schell Elected Head of Conference On Concerns of Rural Democrats

►From Page B1

when formulating their positions on issues," Mr. Schell said.

"I think they need to know what the effects are on the non-urban voters as well as the urban voters," he said.

"I think there is a lot of common ground, but there are some things we will never agree on," he said.

A good example is welfare, he said. "Upstate there's more of a priority on welfare reform whereas downstate there's more priority on preserving the welfare system."

But many of the upstate/downstate frictions are a simple matter of communication, Mr. Schell said.

"I don't think non-urban voters have any different view of assault weapons that our brothers and sisters downstate," he said. "I think the folks downstate have to realize they scare the hunters up here when they frame the issue in certain ways."

The third goal of helping upstate Democratic leaders will be in the hands of a political committee, Mr.

Schell said.

That committee will search for the best ways to help Democratic leaders in rural counties organize and deal with the media and also assure that the voices of smaller counties are being heard in party councils, Mr. Schell said.

State Democrats are taking the Rural Conference seriously, Mr. Schell said.

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, D-Manhattan, the party's key figure these days, asked to speak to the group in Binghamton, Mr. Schell said.

New York City Public Advocate Mark Green, who is gearing up to run for U.S. Senate, also visited the group to get his message out, and Rep. Charles Schumer, D-Manhattan, who has gubernatorial hopes, called to apologize for not being able to make it, Mr. Schell said.

"If there's a negative for our party in doing this I wouldn't be surprised if it's that the Republicans are going to take a renewed interest in rural areas too," Mr. Schell said.

Dems Bringing Air of Convention To Local Organizational Meeting

►From Page B1

necessary, Mr. Schell said.

Local Democrats have to stand out in the largely Republican north country, where GOP "stars" are around all the time because they hold most of the elected offices, Mr. Schell said.

"We have to work a little harder," he said. "It's a good way to remind people there are two parties."

Using the federal equal-time provision for local radio advertising; drawing such big-name speakers as the daughter of the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, and making periodic political jabs at local Republicans all have drawn attention.

Tuesday's event is another example. Political party meetings usually consist of raising a few hands, electing the leaders and going home.

The "convention" starts at 7 p.m.

Tuesday, at the Italian-American Civic Organization club rooms, Belknap Avenue, which will be trimmed with red, white and blue balloons and bunting. Mr. McCall will speak, candidates will discuss issues, and party officers and a newly scaled-down executive committee will be elected.

"We want to do something a little special," Mr. Schell said, "let them know being a Democrat can be fun."

Mr. Schell hopes party members go home with new enthusiasm. He was at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago a few weeks ago and said he wasn't ready to leave all the excitement.

DRC STRAW POLL RULES

- 1) Straw Polls will be by secret ballot.
- 2) There is no proxy voting. Alternates may vote if their name, address, phone number and County have been provided to the DRC Secretary prior to balloting, and if they are voting in place of a DRC member whose 1998 dues have been paid, or if they are casting the 2nd vote of a DRC County Chair who is also a State Committee member. Alternates must be selected by their County Chair, and must be residents of the county they are elected to represent.

4:00 p.m.
5:00 p.m.
6:30 p.m.
- 3) In order to vote, the 1998 dues of the DRC member must be paid.
- 4) No person may cast more than 1 straw poll vote for each office, except that a DRC County Chair who is also a State Committee member may cast 2 votes or may allow an alternate to cast one of their votes.
- 5) Straw polls will be conducted throughout the convention, so that once the candidates for a particular office have been nominated, seconded and heard, the straw poll for that office will be conducted. The results will be announced throughout the day.

9:00 p.m.
- 6) All candidates will be included on the straw poll ballot in the sole discretion of the DRC Executive Committee.

10:00 p.m.
- 7) Each candidate shall be entitled to one poll watcher to observe the tabulation of the ballots for the straw poll for the office that candidate is seeking.

10:30 p.m.
- 8) The DRC does not endorse candidates. The straw poll is only an expression of the individual preferences of those DRC members (and alternates) who happen to attend the convention.
- 9) DRC members must produce photo identification at the registration table to pick up their registration packets and ballots.
- 10) Challenges to any straw ballot vote shall be addressed to the DRC Secretary, whose decision may be appealed to the Chair, whose decision shall be final.

*Please note
Hospit*

**MINUTES OF THE 1998 CONVENTION OF THE DEMOCRATIC
RURAL CONFERENCE OF NEW YORK STATE HELD
MARCH 27-28 AT ITHACA , NY**

The convention was called to order by Chair Mike Schell at 6:40 p.m. on Friday March 27, 1998 at the Holiday Inn, Ithaca, NY. After the pledge to the flag led by Denise King, the Invocation by Bob Kersch and the singing of the National Anthem, Chair Schell made opening remarks and introduced the master of ceremonies, John Fitzgibbons. Irene Stein and Barbara Mink delivered welcoming remarks. The Whirlygigs of Wells College provided musical entertainment. Fitzgibbons took the microphone around the room so all in attendance could introduce themselves. The convention was addressed by State Chair Judith Hope, who spoke of rebuilding the party from the grass roots, as exemplified by the success of the DRC. State Executive Comm. Chair Marty Mack addressed the convention about George Pataki. A special award was presented to John and Charlotte Sullivan for their help in founding the DRC. John Sullivan addressed the convention and introduced Carl McCall.

Comptroller Carl McCall addressed the convention and was thereafter the unanimous winner of the straw poll for Comptroller.

Secretary Steven Jones addressed the convention about a proposed change in the By-Laws that was not included in the meeting notice, and which has been recommended by the DRC Executive Committee, to add the following language to the MEMBERSHIP clause of the Bylaws:

"Honorary DRC memberships may be conferred upon such Democrats residing in DRC counties who have or are providing extraordinary service to the party or the DRC, such as serving in a statewide leadership position or holding statewide office. These memberships shall be conferred by majority vote of the membership or of the Executive Committee. Honorary memberships shall be non-voting and non-dues paying."

On motion of Stein/Ulfik the motion was unanimously carried.

Jones then reported that the Executive Committee recommended honorary membership for Stan Lundine, Marty Mack and John Sullivan. On motion of Cliff Hay/Jasewicz the motion was unanimously carried.

Jones then introduced Cindy Emmer to the convention as the person who had worked tirelessly on registration and dinner reservations for the convention. He also announced that there would be a meeting with candidates and/or their staff representatives on Saturday at 7:45 AM to discuss balloting and other convention issues.

The convention recessed until the next morning at 8:30 AM when Chair Schell introduced Assemblyman Marty Luster who welcomed the convention to his district. He then introduced his colleague Paul Tonko who addressed the convention on agriculture and energy issues.

Steven Jones chaired the meeting as the four candidates for Attorney General were nominated, seconded and then addressed the convention. The Straw poll was taken and the results were Eliot Spitzer 54, Catherine Abate 49, Oliver Koppell 19, and Evan Davis 4.

Senator Moynihan addressed the convention. On motion of Delaware County Chair, Jim Wood, the convention unanimously declared Moynihan an Honorary Member of the DRC.

Kim Muller chaired the convention during the speeches and balloting for Governor. The results were Jim Larocca 56, Betsy McCaughey Ross 27, Peter Vallone 23, Charles Hynes 17, and Richard Kahan 3.

Congressman Maurice Hinchey welcomed the delegates to his district.

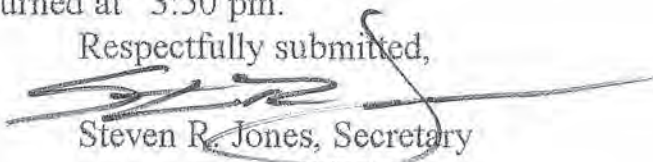
Mike Schell chaired the convention during the speeches and balloting for US Senate. The straw poll results were Mark Green 70, Geraldine Ferraro 51, and Charles Schumer 4.

Cindy Emmer chaired the convention during the speeches and balloting for Lt. Governor. The results were Clyde Rabideau 79, Charles King 38, Sandra Frankel 6, Barbra Kavanaugh 1, and Chris Sellin 0.

Chair Schell delivered closing remarks and Secretary Jones noted the hard work of the 4 election inspectors: Peg Bahau, Kitty Wolbert, Tara Seaman, and June O'Neill, plus the work of other volunteers like Kellaura Jones and Andrea Jones who assisted with vote counting and timed all speeches, and the work of Jackie and Kate Schell who prepared the name tags and decorations, and Charlie and Sue Merrill who assisted with decorating the hall.

The convention adjourned at 3:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Steven R. Jones, Secretary

Big 13

Speech to NYC Democratic Chairs -- December 13, 1997

My name is Mike Schell and I am the Chairman of the Jefferson County Democratic Committee - I know that's not a big deal to you - it's not even a big deal to my wife - but this party is important to me just as it is important to you. I've worked very hard for this party just as each of you have. I was one of the earliest to endorse Hugh Carey - and I was one of the first if not the first upstate state committeeman to endorse Mario Cuomo in 1982, and I spent several years in the 60's and early 70's on the staff of Congressman Sam Stratton who really proved Democrats can win in Republican counties.

I've given my life to this party and it hurt me to see what happened to this party in 1994 - and it bothers me terribly when I see this party divided upstate and down, big county and small - because divided we lose - together we can win.

That's why a bunch of us started the Democratic Rural Conference to bring the small counties together to work with the large counties and make the Democratic party truly a statewide party.

I know you want to avoid division and that's why you are meeting here today, to avoid a divisive primary. I want to commend you for the time that you are spending on this, for the time that you commit to your party, and for your leadership and efforts. Certainly if we have clear front runners and there is a way to avoid divisive primaries, we should try to do that - but we should try to do that - whatever the results are, whether we can avoid a primary or whether candidates are selected in a primary or at the convention - we need to be sure to select a ticket that people feel has been selected as part of an open process, and a ticket that can get the support that Democrats need statewide to win. We can't do what we did in 1994 and write off those small counties (statistics).

*Do not completely fix our focus on them
You are critical to the success of the party regard that issue*

DRC ->

And you should hear the reactions from Democratic leaders around upstate New York to the rumors and news reports of this meeting.

They are outraged by what they perceive as a handful of men getting together and

be helpful in a party

trying to take control of a process that should involve the entire State - not just the big counties - but the small counties. The small counties are where the swing voters are. It's the counties where we lost the Governorship in 1994 because the swing voters in these counties who had supported him before voted against him.

These are people who are Democrats because they deeply believe in the principals of the Democratic party - these Democratic leaders in the small counties fight everyday against Republican majorities - they have no access to fundraising because the only people with money are the Republicans - they have no access to patronage because their local governments are Republican - yet they fight for our statewide candidates and pick up large amounts of independent and even Republican voters. They deserve to be a part of this process. And as Democrats we should all believe in openness and process. All a closed process can do is hurt our candidates.

This isn't something I'm going to go out and say to the press, I'm saying it to you. No matter what happens here today, the people who have been directly elected by the Democratic voters, the State Committee, will still be deciding on this ticket in June. And no matter what we do here today, in all probability, many of these candidacies will be filled by the Democratic voters in the September primary, so if we do nothing else here today, let's do everything we can to avoid hurting these candidates, let's commit to proceeding on an open process that involves all the Democratic leaders in this state so that when we are done and a candidate is selected, he can have the support statewide, and this can be a truly statewide Democratic party.

① ② ③ ① ② ③

COUNTY LEADERS WEIGHTED VOTE ANALYSIS					
	'94 Gubernatorial		% Statewide		% of 13 Counties
Albany	PV PV	61,719	KA OK	2.715	3.319
Bronx	PV PV	153,477	OK OK	6.752	8.253
Erie	JH JH	137,678	ES ES	6.057	7.403
Kings	JH JH	285,625	ES ES	12.566	15.359
Monroe	PV PV	87,062	ES ES	3.830	4.682
Nassau	LR JH	198,298	ES ES	8.724	10.663
New York	PV PV	282,299	OK OK	12.420	15.180
Onondaga	JH JH	51,522	KA ES	2.266	2.770
Queens	PV PV	237,732	OK OK	10.459	12.784
Richmond	- -	48,614	OK OK	2.138	2.614
Rockland	JH JH	38,020	ES ES	1.672	2.044
Suffolk	LR -	144,494	ES ES	6.357	7.770
Westchester	PV PV	133,142	OK OK	5.857	7.159
13 County Total		1,859,682		81.813	100.000
% Vote-13 Counties		1,239,788			
1/3 Vote-13 Counties		619,894			
Balance of State		413,221		18.180	
TOTAL		2,272,903		99.993	

KA-6
 OK 95 49.31
 ES 47 52.67

OK 51 51.0
 ES 27 38.0
 LR 18 10.5

40.5

DRC Convention Schedule

~ Saturday, March 28th ~

- 7:00 a.m. - Breakfast Reception (Panache Room)
sponsored by *Jim Larocca*
- 8:30 a.m. - Convention Re-Convenes
Featured speakers:
Assemblyman Marty Luster
Assemblyman Paul Tonko
- 9:00 a.m. - Attorney General
Nominations • Speeches • Balloting
- 10:00 a.m. - Keynote Address
Hon. Daniel Patrick Moynihan
United States Senator
- 10:30 a.m. - NYS Governor
Nominations • Speeches • Balloting
11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Lunch compliments of AT&T
- 12:30 p.m. - U.S. Senate
Nominations • Speeches • Balloting
- 1:30 p.m. - NYS Lt. Governor
Nominations • Speeches • Balloting
- 3:30 p.m. - Closing Remarks
- 5:45 p.m. - Post-Convention Reception
Convention Adjournment

(Tentative)

DRC Convention Schedule

~ Friday, March 27th ~

- 4:00 p.m. - Registration table opens
- 5:00 p.m. - Welcome Reception
sponsored by *Clyde Rabideau*
- 6:30 p.m. - Dinner and official convening of
convention
(wine compliments of *Oliver Koppell*)
Comptroller: Nominating and Balloting
Featured speakers:
H. Carl McCall
Judith Hope
John Sullivan
- 9:00 p.m. - Dessert Reception (Panache Room)
sponsored by *Mark Green*
- 10:00 p.m. - After Dinner Cordials (Seneca Room)
sponsored by *Eliot Spitzer*
- 10:30 p.m. - Dancing/Refreshments (Gazebo Room)
sponsored by *Charlie King*

(Tentative)

DEMOCRATIC RURAL CONFERENCE

316 Sherman Street

Watertown, New York 13601

Telephone: (315) 782-0004 — Facsimile: (315) 788-5949

September 17, 1998

Hon. Elizabeth McCaughey Ross
PO Box 353 - Gracie Station
New York, New York 10128

Dear Betsy:

I now call upon you to honor your pledge to the members of the DRC, and support Mr. Vallone and other members of the Democratic ticket.

Sincerely,

Michael W. Schell
DRC Chairman

DEMOCRATIC RURAL CONFERENCE

Michael W. Schell, Chairman
316 Sherman Street, Watertown, New York 13601
Telephone - (315) 782-0004 — Facsimile (315) 788-5949

May 7, 1998

CONFIDENTIAL

Hon. Elizabeth McCaughey Ross
PO Box 353 - Gracie Station
New York, New York 10128

Dear Betsy:

Thank you for attending the Democratic Rural Convention. I hope you enjoyed the experience and the opportunity to meet so many rural county leaders in one place. We certainly enjoyed having you with us.

I wanted you to be aware that some members of the Conference have raised concerns about news reports concerning your intentions to run on the Independence and/or Liberal line. You will recall that when you met with our candidate review committee you were asked whether you would be willing to commit to supporting the nominee of our party, should you not be the party's nominee. (All candidates were asked the same question). According to the minutes of the meeting, you indicated that you would commit to supporting the Democratic nominee for Governor, as long as the process was fair and open, ie: you "were included with the other candidates."

We were pleased to provide you with the DRC "favorable" rating, based in part upon your response to that question.

News reports seem to indicate that you have now pledged to actively campaign for Governor as the candidate of another party or parties, regardless of whether you are the Democratic candidate. It has been pointed out that such a pledge on your part would indicate your willingness to run against the Democratic nominee, an apparent retreat from your commitment to the DRC.

In light of those concerns, could you please drop me a line confirming your intention to support our party's nominee so that I may reassure our membership of your commitment to our party.

We look forward to receiving your reply in the near future, and also to seeing you at the convention in Rye.

Sincerely,

Michael W. Schell
DRC Chairman

MWS:llh

Larocca: Pataki's Policies Ignore Rural New Yorkers

Times Albany Bureau

ALBANY — The only Democrat officially running for governor came here looking for upstate rural support Wednesday.

James L. Larocca, former head of the Long Island Association and a Transportation commissioner during the first Cuomo administration, said rural New York and upstate small cities are being ignored by Gov. George E. Pataki.

"The Pataki administration is asleep at the wheel when it comes to the economy of upstate and rural New York," Mr. Larocca said.

He urged the creation of regional state and local government partnerships with business and colleges that target the economy of upstate areas to spur job growth.

His experience working with Long Island business shows this is the way to go, Mr. Larocca said.

In the realm of more practical politics, though, Mr. Larocca, who said he's raised about \$150,000 to take on Mr. Pataki, was in town to host a reception for the Rural Democratic Conference, chaired by Jefferson County Democratic Chairman Michael W. Schell, and make a good impression on the members.

Mr. Larocca was to address the group here this morning.

"I am seeking to be the nominee of my party," Mr. Larocca said. "They are part of the party. They are part of the state of New York and a very important and often under appreciated

part of the state of New York."

"So I think it is absolutely appropriate for me to reach out to them," Mr. Larocca said.

"Rural New York feels it has been absolutely neglected and ignored in all of the ways which they are struggling to a viable economy," Mr. Larocca said. "It is true within the Democratic Party. It is true within the Republican Party."

"It's wrong and it's bad politics," Mr. Larocca said.

Although the rural conference will not endorse candidates, he'd still like its seal of approval. "I would be pleased to be rated acceptable by those folks," he said.

Gaining support is a slow and steady process, Mr. Larocca said. He's already gained the endorsement of St. Lawrence County Democratic Chairman Daniel C. McNamara and would probably get the backing of Mr. Schell if he didn't head the rural conference, Mr. Larocca said. Mr. Schell's position means he has to stay relatively neutral, Mr. Larocca said.

Mr. Larocca attacked Mr. Pataki's attempt to make the state more "business friendly" as being a dead end economic development route.

The Pataki administration, he said, has gutted environmental protections, but that doesn't make business more likely to locate here.

Also, Mr. Pataki's much-touted tax cuts have done little to help the overall economy, he said

Democrats Schmooze at Parties on Eve of Convention

New York State

By Eric Durt

Times Albany Correspondent

RYE BROOK — Democrats today were to get down to the serious business of designating favored candidates for governor, comptroller and attorney general.

Tuesday night, though, was one big schmooze as Dems ate, drank and twisted arms from one end of the Hilton Hotel here to the other.

The big show was a reception held for Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver by the Kodak company where delegates could eat and drink to their heart's content, and get their picture taken. The Silver reception was the place to be and every candidate for attorney general, governor and lieutenant governor was there, working the crowd and being noticed.

But there were plenty of smaller parties being thrown throughout the massive hotel complex. Plattsburgh Mayor Clyde Rabideau, the north county's favorite son for the lieutenant governor, threw a party in his suite that got pretty raucous.

And over in the Democratic Rural Caucus room, Lewis County Chairman Charles Merrell was slicing up Croghan bologna, while Rural Caucus Chairman Michael W. Schell, Watertown, was pouring Belgium beer made in Otsego County. Visitors to the "Taste of the DRC" reception, which included favored gubernatorial candidate Peter F. Vallone and attorney general hopeful G. Oliver Koppell, could sample McAdam cheese from St. Lawrence County, Nestles candy made in Fulton and apples from Chazy.

Rural Democrats are getting a lot more notice this year than they have in the past, Mr. Merrell said.

The big buzz among rural Democrats was the chance that Mr. Rabideau would be the party's favored candidate for lieutenant governor. Mr. Merrell, who favors Mr. Vallone for governor, said a Vallone/Rabideau ticket would be a good mix.

Larocca Counting on Rural Democrats in Convention Battle Against Vallone

Times Albany Bureau

RYE BROOK — The man who won the overwhelming endorsement of rural Democrats in March said Tuesday he's counting on retaining that support as the party's state convention gets under way here.

James L. Larocca, a Long Islander who began his quest for governor 18 months ago, said his strong showing at the Ithaca meeting of the Democratic Rural Caucus has encouraged other party members to back him over New York City Council Speaker Peter F. Vallone, Brooklyn District Attorney Charles J. Hynes, former Urban Development Corp. head Richard Kahhan and Democrat-come-lately Lt. Gov. Betsy McCaughey Ross.

Mr. Vallone is favored to be the party's "designee" the recipient of the majority of votes, especially since party leaders decided Tuesday evening to limit delegates to one ballot. Traditionally, convention delegates cast votes several times, allowing them to switch votes from a candidate the county may have promised support for to the one they truly favor.

Mr. Rabideau, busy all day circulating among the delegates, said he thought he had a very good chance of being the chosen candidate for the No. 2 slot when delegates vote for that position Thursday.

There was probably a lot of last-minute deal making going on, said Jefferson County Democratic Chairman Ronald Cole. He, however, hadn't had his arm twisted yet, Mr. Cole said.

The candidates were all over the place, chatting up delegates and trying to look certain of victory. Lt. Gov. Betsy McCaughey Ross, a newcomer to the

party, was the center of plenty of attention. She doesn't expect to win the 25 percent of the delegate vote needed to automatically be assured of a place on the primary ballot, Ms. McCaughey Ross said, but the Democrats have been treating her very nicely.

Mr. Vallone, assumed to have a lock on the coveted slot of "designee," smiled at everybody and wouldn't comment when asked about his chances. Meanwhile, campaign workers for James L. Larocca, who began running for governor in December 1996, were circulating the rooms assuring everyone

because he won the upstate counties, where Mr. Koch's New York City attitudes turned off voters, he carried the day, Mr. Larocca said.

There's a very good chance that 1998 will be a repeat of 1982, with himself in the role of Mr. Cuomo and Mr. Vallone as Mr. Koch, Mr. Larocca said.

Mr. Vallone is expected to command the majority of support from the New York City delegation, which dominates the convention process because of its size. But a candidate who doesn't have upstate support isn't viable, Mr. Larocca said.

He's the only candidate who's been able to demonstrate strong, consistent support both upstate and downstate, said Mr. Larocca, who was president of the Long Island Association before beginning his campaign.

While he expects to win a place on the primary ballot, Mr. Larocca said he wasn't letting his guard down. "The lovely air of Westchester is rife with the crosscurrents of deal making," he said. "One should not get complacent."

that Mr. Larocca would get 27 percent of the delegate votes.

New York millionaire Elliot Spitzer, candidate for the attorney general's job, called attention to himself by posing with a worker dressed as a cigarette pack and another dressed as a carton of milk. His goal, Mr. Spitzer said, was to attack incumbent Republican Dennis C. Vacco for once saying that milk caused health risks for some people just like tobacco.

He knows the difference between milk and tobacco, Mr. Spitzer said.