

THE DEMOCRATIC RURAL CONFERENCE OF NEW YORK STATE

Bulletin #25

March 2015

ANNUAL LETTER TO THE MEMBERSHIP

We all did our very best during the past year to elect Democrats to Congress and the Legislature. We all worked hard in campaigns, and the Board also made financial contributions to our DRC counties and Senate candidates. While all our statewide candidates were re-elected, results were very disappointing in the other arenas. In spite of extra efforts at getting out the vote, too many Democrats did not vote. In upstate New York, Republicans came out in high numbers in protest of the Safe Act. The environment was tough, but DRC Democrats do not give up; we Rebuild, Restore and Move Forward.

During the past year, we continued to respond to your issues. Some members met with staff of the Governor, State Senate Education Committee staff, Catherine Nolan, Chair of the Assembly Education Committee, several NYS Regents and Bruce Fraser of the Rural Schools Association of New York State to share our concerns about the inequity and insufficiency of funding for many rural districts in our DRC counties, and to urge for targeted increases in Foundation Aid as well as elimination of the Gap Educational Assessment. We also asked you, our members, to contact your representatives in the Legislature to urge them to support our stance. We will continue our efforts in the coming year.

We surveyed you as to what training you would like to have offered at our 2015 Conference. Recognizing that 2015 is a year of local races, our training at the Conference to be offered by Karen Feldman who has helped us before, and Jim Dean, Chair of Democracy for American (DFA) will respond to your expressed needs.

We have ramped up our efforts to increase our visibility with a revitalized Facebook Page which has received well over 727 "likes." Also, a DRC brochure will be available for you at the annual Conference in April in Syracuse.

We are hoping to increase our geographical diversity on the Board during our election which will be held at the Conference. All officers and five Board seats are up for election. You will soon receive information from the Nominating Committee.

continued



**Register before March
17th for Group Discount**

www.nysdrc.org

2015 DRC CONFERENCE

April 17th and 18th

Syracuse, NY



Holiday Inn

441 Electronics Parkway,
Liverpool, NY 13088

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In the coming year, we will work with the State Democratic Committee to enhance our mutual efforts. Our Issues Committee will work to identify the effects of the Safe Act in order to be better prepared to respond effectively when we expect the Republicans to raise it again in a fear-inspiring, misleading manner. Contrary to Republican expressed expectations, our way of life has not been shaken, and we have better protection through increased scrutiny of permit applications. We will also monitor the increased focus and effort the Governor has extended to the lagging economic development in our areas.

We will continue to ask you to identify your concerns and try to help with your issues. We will continue providing technical assistance and a Speaker's Bureau. We will try to help financially once again. Together, we will Rebuild, Restore and Move Forward. We will win!

I thank you most sincerely for all the hard work and commitment to the agenda of the Democratic Party that you exhibit year in and year out.

Irene

In Memoriam

With great sadness and fond remembrance we say good bye to Dottie Betz, who passed away on March 5th. Dottie was a very dedicated Democrat, Union leader, State Committee member, former Hamilton Village Trustee, 13 year Democratic Chair of the Madison County Democrats and a founding member of the DRC. She will be remembered as a "DRC hero" because she was so devoted to the advancement and success of rural Democrats.

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO.....

DRC Board Meetings – Conference Call 2/7/15, Board Meeting in Cortland 3/7/15

This is a busy time for the DRC Board. While we concentrate on the planning of the upcoming Conference, being held in Syracuse on April 17th and 18th, we also continue to focus on issues and objectives.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit / Finance - Cindy Emmer

Cindy Emmer reported a balance of \$9389.78 as of 3/7/15. Reminder; 2015 Dues are due! Dues are payable to the DRC. Send \$10.00 check c/o Cindy Emmer, 858 Davis St., Elmira, NY 14901

Conference Committee – Jane Dodds

RESTORE, REBUILD, MOVE FORWARD

Spring is coming (we promise!) and so is the DRC 2015 Conference. Join us in Syracuse for a packed program of workshops, networking events, and opportunities for personal interactions with New York's Democrats. On Friday afternoon learn about new Campaign Filing requirements, a possible session on Women in Politics and chat with County Chairs. Conference attendees will enjoy our Welcome Reception, sponsored by Governor Cuomo, dinner, dessert with Eric Schneiderman,

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breakfast with Tom DiNapoli, and informative presentations by Political Strategist Karen Feldman, and Democracy for America's Jim Dean. Young Democrats may qualify for reduced registration rates, and there will be musical treats at the Young Dems Karaoke Nightcap.

The DRC offers unique opportunities for Rural Democrats to collaborate within State Senate and Assembly districts, and to share strategies for election success. County Chairs & Committee members are encouraged to bring new members and potential candidates to this annual gathering of Rural Democrats.

Register on line at www.nysdrc.org Hotel discount rate expires on March 17, so register soon!

Program Book Committee – Joyce Melfi

The Program Book Committee has been diligently working to get all of the DRC County ads created, completed and finalized, along with regular supporters who have taken ads in the past. It has been moving along, but we will be heightening the pace with more follow up emails and phone calls to shore up the regular participants. That being said, it is not enough. We need you to help us get as many new ads as we can. No one knows your counties better than you do. Please sift through your contacts with unions, candidates, electeds, businesses, Democratic supporters, etc. Help us help you. To summarize, if your county ad is not yet done, please make an effort to complete it, so we can focus on other ads. Your support and assistance is greatly appreciated.

Issues Committee – Judith Hunter

Rural School funding continues to be a major focus with the Issues Committee. After meeting with The Regents, we are in favor of a “blended approach” which adds to Foundation Aid as it reduces the Gap Elimination Assessment. We again ask you to review the “White Paper” emailed to the membership a couple weeks ago and write your own Assemblyman and State Senator advocating for this change in state policy.

I-98 - Jason Clark gave a detailed update on the progress in the North Country. The DRC has been an ardent supporter of the development of the Interstate 98 corridor; a stand-alone, limited-access, four-lane highway project that would connect I-81 to I-87 across the five northernmost counties of New York State. The independent GAO projects that at least 27,000 permanent jobs would be created as a result of this long-term infrastructure investment. Interstate 98 advocates, some of whom are DRC members are pleased to report that the NYS DOT has finally scheduled a public hearing on the first leg of the project, a bypass of US 11 around Potsdam and Canton. The meeting has been scheduled for March 25 and the DOT is expected to release its final recommendations by the end of July. Anyone wishing to become involved in the advocacy campaign can find additional information by contacting the Northern Corridor Transportation Group on Facebook or by making a donation www.gofundme.com/I98_CantonPotsdam.

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Issues Chair, Judith Hunter is examining how the SAFE Act is functioning in rural counties. While we are collecting information, we would appreciate being sent links for news stories appearing in your local press. Please email to judith.hunter@gmail.com.

By-Laws Committee – Phil Jones

Phil presented a recommendation to amend the By-Laws to strengthen the role of the Nominating Committee and stress its emphasis on broadening the geographic make-up of the DRC Board. There was also clarification of how uncontested races for the Board would be handled. The amendments to the By-Laws were approved and will be presented to the General Membership at the Spring Conference in April for final approval.

The Youth Involvement and Retention Committee – Jason Clark

Jason reports the DRC has been active over the past several months in helping to recruit Young Democrats, under the age of 38 to attend our upcoming conference. The New York State Democratic Committee has again helped to underwrite a portion of the registration fee for young Democrats wishing to attend that are under the age of 38. Jason has indicated that he has received calls from young Democrats from all over the state that have been previously uninvolved with the DRC. If anyone has a question about the committee or the subsidized conference rate, they can call Jason at 617-312-8594 or contact him by email at jasonclark2001@msn.com.

Nominating Committee – Mike Schell

There will be elections for the following ten (10) offices at the annual meeting of the DRC, held on April 18th at 9:00 AM at the annual Conference; Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Parliamentarian and five (5) Board Seats. Each office carries a two year term.

STATEMENT OF CANDIDACY: To have your name placed on the printed ballot as a candidate for an office or the Board you must, no later than Midnight, April 7, 2015, send an email to Mike Schell, Chair of the Nominating Committee, at michaelwschell@yahoo.com stating you are a candidate for the position with a brief statement as to why you are interested. Your qualifications may be included in your statement of candidacy and will be read on your behalf should you be absent from the meeting.

Communications Committee – Don Ackerman

Don reports that our Facebook page, Democratic Rural Conference of New York State now has 727 likes! Please keep visiting our Facebook page and our website nysdrc.org for upcoming information and online registrations.

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CONTACT INFORMATION AND MEMBER SERVICES

Irene Stein, Chair

iws2iws2@gmail.com

Jane Dodds, Vice Chair and Conference Chair

jmdodds@aol.com

Cindy Emmer, Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair

cindy.emmer@yahoo.com

Phil Jones, Secretary and By-Laws Chair

phildem@rochester.rrm

Don Ackerman, Parliamentarian and Communications Chair

Bdonack@aol.com

Doris Kirsch, Board Member and Assist. Secretary

wdkirsch@gmail.com

Mark Bellardini, Board member and Labor Committee Chair

bellar@earthlink.net

Mark Alquist, Board Member and Political Committee Chair

mhalquist@verizon.net

Jason Clark, Board Member and Youth Committee Chair

jasonclark2002@gmail.com

Ted Young, Board Member

tyoung28@rochester.rr.com

Bob Reynolds, Board Member

bobnkaren@live.com

Lorie Longhany, Board Member and Bulletin

lorie.longhany@gmail.com

Jeanne Crane, Board Member

jeannecrane01@localnet.com

John Hurley, Board Member

jhurley@rochester.rr.com

Joseph Pickreign, Board Member

jp11@roadrunner.com

Joyce Melfi, Program Book Chair

babbmelfi@juno.com

Judith Hunter, Issues Committee Chair

Judith.hunter@gmail.com

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DRC Board Services

Speakers Bureau

The following DRC members are available as speakers at DRC County Events:

Irene Stein, Cindy Emmer, Bill Wood and Phil Jones.

Mentoring Services

The DRC Executive Committee has many experienced County Chairs. We are available to mentor and provide support to new County Chairs.

PREPARED AND FORMATTED BY: Lorie Longhany

EDITOR: Irene Stein and Doris Kirsch