

DRC Post-Conference Board Meeting

Saturday May 2, 2026

Saratoga Hilton Hotel

Board Members Present:

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

Board Members Absent: Bill Hughes, Tom Schimmerling, Max Della Pia, Ram Lalukota

DRC Members Present: Judith Hunter, Jane Dodds

Welcome and Call to Order:

DRC Chair Bill Thickstun called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm and welcomed Mark Streb and Caitlin Ogden to the Board. The 2026-2027 DRC Board includes:

Officers	Members (Term Ending)
Bill Thickstun, Chair	Summer Downing (2027)
Mike Zagrobelny, Executive Vice Chair	Betsy Passer (2027)
John Hurley, Treasurer	Maggie Bartley (2027)
Liz Moran, Secretary	Michael Plitt (2027)
Dia Carabajal, Parliamentarian	Jamal Malik (2027)
Roger Saltman, Central Regional Vice Chair	Ram Lalukota (2028)
Cindy Appleton, Western Regional Vice Chair	Caitlin Ogden (2028)
Mark Streb, Catskill-Hudson Regional Vice Chair	Tom Schimmerling (2028)
Ron McDougall, Northern Regional Vice Chair	Max Della Pia (2028)
	Bill Hughes (2028)

Conference Recap:

Board members discussed their impressions of the meeting- what went well, what might have gone better, and whether there are lessons for next year and beyond. Overall, the reviews were positive. The conference was well attended and ran smoothly, despite the challenges of accommodating late decision-making by the elected officials.

Comments

- Larger font on name badges needed – both first and last names
- Music?
- Not all candidates were acknowledged/ mentioned
- Registration- note on badge if candidate- symbol? Suggestion that candidates be encouraged to wear buttons signifying their status.
- Lots of positive feedback on the legislative and labor sessions
- VAN session needed a sign – plan to repeat next year. NYSC contact is Melissa Wyner
- Congratulations on the largest ever program book! Final financial accounting will be discussed at our July meeting. Shout out to Cindy, Karen, and Suzanne for their efforts and persistence.

Looking Ahead: 2027 Conference

Tentatively scheduled for Syracuse Marriott, April 23 and 24. Options for booking union hotels are increasingly limited. The DRC has this slot due to a cancellation. The Board discussed the advisability of scheduling our annual conference during Passover (2027 dates are April 21-29). Consensus emerged that scheduling during Passover would not be a major deterrent. Several reasons: availability of kosher meals, observant Jews would not attend on Friday and Saturday in any case, and the conference dates do not overlap with first or final nights.

Discussion of changes to registration

- Structure discount for timely registration “early bird discount” refundable up to 3 weeks in advance. Need a consistent policy for cancellations. Options to refund (if at least 3 weeks out), credit for next year, or donation to DRC.
- Consider a policy of no registration at the door. Jane noted that hotels ask for meal counts 15 days in advance. Meal count in 2026 was a major concern.
- Jane Dodds promoted the idea of planning 2 years ahead for conference and alternating between a location near Albany/Saratoga and more central (Syracuse).
- Need to define clear policy on comped dinners: event sponsors, moderators, speakers. All these decisions should come through the Chair for consistency.

Note: finalizing these recommendations into policy will be discussed at our July meeting.

Committee Updates

Bill reviewed status of committees and asked for volunteers to join.

By-laws committee: Dia Carabajal, Roger Saltman, Jamal Mailk. The committee is tasked with reviewing the current document and bringing recommendations for changes back to the Board for discussion. Next review scheduled for 2027.

Audit committee: Marty Doorey (chair), Barb Turpin, Mitch Ford. The committee is tasked with auditing the DRC financial records and reviewing submittals to NYS. Once the audit is complete, the committee will continue oversight of the DRC Treasurer.

Technical committee: Michael Plitt (chair), Ram Lalukota, Jamal Malik, Rick Gell. The committee is tasked with ensuring that multiple DRC Board members are proficient in Neon. Caitlin Ogden offered to get trained in Neon and support updating the database. Bill Thickstun will continue to manage the website, with support from Ed Reed and Ram Lalukota.

Communications: Maggie Bartley, Liz Moran, Dia Carabajal. Dia offered to support producing a regular DRC Bulletin. Maggie asked about the County Chair handbook project. Jamal has developed an outline.

Program book: Karen Ash will continue to lead the effort with support.

Events (conference): Jane Dodds, Summer Downing, and Betsy Passer. Help from other Board members is essential, especially preconference.

Nominating: Michael Lausell and Phil Jones are currently tasked with managing nominations and elections. Keith Batman was suggested as a resource for candidate recruitment. Consider enlisting Ed Reed to help with the back end and election buddy software.

Political/Issues Committee: Liz Moran, Mike Zagrobelny. Topics discussed during our Albany Advocacy Days need to be focused and honed down. Figuring out a path to modify election law to enable counties to choose between conventions and petitioning remains a challenge. Mark Streb and Caitlin Ogden expressed interest in supporting this effort.

Upcoming Meetings

The next NYS Democratic Committee meeting has not yet been announced (likely downstate).

The second DRC in-person Board meeting of 2026 will be Saturday July 25th at the Lincklaen House in Cazenovia (return to venue used for the summer 2024 meeting).

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was offered by Jamal Malik at 2:45 pm, seconded by Summer Downing; motion carried.

Respectfully submitted, Liz Moran- DRC Secretary