Minutes: Democratic Rural Conference Meeting
Saratoga Hilton, Saratoga Springs
May 2, 2026

Call to Order

Chair Bill Thickstun called the meeting to order at 9:12 am and welcomed DRC members to the annual conference. He noted the high attendance and successful programming, and recognized Jane Dodds and the DRC Board for their efforts. Bill reflected on the quality and diversity of candidates for NYS offices; the ascendance of women of color to leadership within the Democratic party is notable. The trend in recent election turnout and results in traditionally Republican areas is encouraging for our rural counties. The 25 point swing from red to blue in Georgia, for example, would flip all our rural NY seats.

Approval of Minutes

Secretary Liz Moran introduced the minutes of February 5, 2026, general membership meeting. A motion to approve was offered by Cindy Appleton, seconded by Ron McDougall, and approved.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer John Hurley summarized the DRC financial status.

Key Bank Operating Account

Starting Balance: March 13, 2026				$30,485.91
Deposits				
	Neon payout	3/13-4/40	$15,295.47	
	Walk-in Deposit	3/14-4/30	$16,364.47	$31,659.94
Disbursements				
	Neon- one month	1/12/2026	$164.88	$164.88
Balance at April 30, 2026				$61,980.97

Key Bank PAC Account

Starting Balance: March 13, 2026				$474.11
Deposits				$0.00
Disbursements				$0.00
Balance at April 30, 2026				$474.11

A motion to accept the Treasurer's Report was made by Mike Zagrobelny, seconded by Maggie Bartley, and approved.

Report from the Nominating Committee: DRC Board Positions

Michael Lausell, Chair of the Nominating Committee, reported that four Regional Vice Chair and five Board Member seats were up for election to a two-year term. Candidates who filed expressions of interest for the seats are listed below.

- Catskill/Hudson Region Vice Chair: Mark Streb
- North Region Vice Chair: Ron McDougall
- West Region Vice Chair: Cynthia Appleton
- Central Region Vice Chair: Roger Saltman
- Board Members (5 seats): Max Della Pia, Tom Schimmerling, Ram Lalukota, and William Hughes.

Michael Lausell called for nominations from the floor. Liz Moran nominated Caitlin Ogden, Otsego County Chair, to serve as a DRC Board Member. The nomination was seconded by Bailey Lovenguf.

A motion to close the nominations and approve the nine candidates as a slate was offered by Jim Carr, seconded by Lynn Boecher; and approved.

Comments from the Chair

Bill Thickstun congratulated the new and returning Board members. He reflected on the two months of intense effort invested by DRC Board members and others to prepare for our successful conference. Despite all the preparation and planning, there are always surprises, such as attendance of Senator Gillibrand and her inspiring talk at the Governor's Reception. Income from the conference and purchase of ads in the Program Book help support DRC member counties. Chair Thickstun reviewed the schedule and highlights of the Saturday programming.

Recess

Ted Young moved, and Mitch Ford seconded, to recess the DRC membership meeting at 9:30 am and reconvene the meeting at 10:00 am.

Call to Order

Chairman Bill Thickstun called the meeting back in session at 10:00 am for the purpose of nominating candidates for the straw poll. The only Democratic statewide office requiring a primary in 2026 is Comptroller. The primary ballot will include three candidates for Comptroller: Tom DiNapoli (incumbent), Drew Warshaw, and Raj Goyle. DRC members nominated two candidates for inclusion in the straw poll.

Tom DiNapoli was nominated by Judith Hunter. She cited his successful tenure, doubling the NYS pension fund and documenting the harm caused by the Trump administration's tariffs on rural NYS, along with his continued commitment to showing up in our DRC counites. The nomination was

seconded by Lynn Boecher; she noted that the NYS pension fund is exceptionally well-funded to protect our workforce. Ms. Boecher lauded Comptroller DiNapoli's' success in anticipating and reacting to the Trump administration's harmful impacts on health care, environmental quality, and affordability.

Comptroller DiNapoli offered brief remarks of thanks and his continued commitment to the DRC as he accepted the nomination.

Carrie Gardner nominated Drew Warshaw, who was not present at the DRC. The nomination was seconded by Mary Finneran.

With no further nominations, Michael Lausell moved to close the nominations for NYS Comptroller, seconded by Roger Saltman.

Chair Thickstun reviewed logistics of the straw poll and asked for a motion to adjourn the DRC meeting. Ted Young moved, and Dia Carabajal seconded, to adjourn at 10:40 am.

Postscript: Chair Bill Thickstun announced results of the Straw Poll at 1:25 pm
Tom DiNapoli: 184
Drew Warshaw: 7

Meeting summary prepared by Liz Moran, DRC Board Secretary