

# Democratic State Committee Report

By Daniel Marks Cohen

We close this year's chapter of the Tales of the New York State Democratic Party story with a meeting late last month that – sadly – ended up largely with more of the same. The forces of reform were united in pushing back against the state party machine, but trying to launch a (albeit minor) rebellion on Zoom is just not practical. Despite an effort by progressives to make both the process of electing representatives to the DNC, and the representatives themselves, more transparent, responsive, and representative, the party-controlled slate was elected to four more years. There was a minor adjustment in that lobbyist Jennifer Cunningham voluntarily withdrew and former state party chair June O'Neill was elected, making it THREE current or former chairs, including current chair Jay Jacobs (ex officio), Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown (immediate past chair) and now former chair O'Neill. With two

exceptions (Brown and O'Neill), the entire 11-person DNC cohort is still from downstate (NYC and Long Island), and again has no Latinx or Asian representation.

We got close to electing Dutchess County Democratic Party chair Elisa Sumner. She came in first – immediately after the entire slate. But close does not count. This includes the rogue's gallery of Michael Reich and Gerard Sweeney, who are two of the Queens threesome – along with former Queens County chair Joe Crowley – that control Queens County politics. And the governor's sister was re-elected too. Reformers might have had a better chance if we were live and in person, but with Zoom the ability to communicate and express dissent was tightly controlled and muted – both literally and figuratively – by our being in a virtual format. To be honest, Jay Jacobs ran the meeting fairly; the forces of reform just did not have the votes. But it was not helped by the fact that we were pushing a rock uphill with Zoom.

I believe that even though this current skirmish is lost, the larger

fight for reform is still on, and we have set the stage for a better response four years hence. The Progressive Caucus is the main vehicle for dissent, and we have run the table with resolutions this year. When we are better organized, offline and in person, we often win. The pandemic, the recession, the looming national elections have all – appropriately, for sure – distracted us from smaller battles. But with time, some luck and a winning 2020 election, we will be in a stronger place in four years, and that will allow us to push forward again with a better result next cycle. There will be other scuffles to come in the next few years, with the Governor up for reelection in 2022, so more interesting days are clearly ahead of us. I can't wait.