

State Committee Report

By Daniel Marks Cohen

November 28, 2021

Following the poor showing of the Democrats on Election Day this November, I joined with a group of members of the New York State Democratic Committee to bring a motion of “no confidence” in the ability of current party chair, Jay Jacobs, to lead the party. This motion follows several high-profile defeats, including important losses on statewide ballot initiatives 1, 3 and 4, and the loss of winnable Democratic offices in New York City, on Long Island, in Buffalo, and in Syracuse. Together we released the following statement:

"There ought to be no question that the November 2 election was a series of devastating defeats for the Democratic Party and New Yorkers -- defeats which could have been avoided with better leadership.

The failure of three ballot initiatives related to voting reform is a stain on the Democratic party in New York State. In 21 states and the District of Columbia, same-day voter registration is the law of the land; it helps lay the foundation for an inclusive democracy. But Democratic party leader Jay Jacobs made no investments to promote these important proposals, while Republican party leaders toured the state rallying against them, investing more than \$3 million which was funneled through the state's Conservative Party. New York Senate Democratic Leadership requested assistance from our State Democratic party with the ballot proposition campaign, to no avail. Our

Democratic leaders in Congress and across the country are fighting for voting rights, but in our own state, our Democratic leader was either unaware that these proposals might not pass, or unconcerned. Either way, it speaks to a need for new leadership at the earliest opportunity.

In this election cycle, our Democrats on Long Island, Upstate, and in Brooklyn and Queens, were attacked with disinformation and lies from Republicans and were too often left undefended by the state party. In what should have been victories, our candidates were defeated, and these losses will move New York backwards in our fight against the pandemic and our fight for safe and thriving communities.

Instead of focusing on uniting our party to win this year's general elections across the state (and to win our critical ballot proposals), our chair instead divided us by attacking some candidates and endorsing others in next year's Democratic Primaries. Jay Jacobs took his eye off the ball, and the entire state has had to suffer the consequences of his lack of focus, his incompetence and his deeply culturally insensitive remarks. While GOP Chair Nick Langworthy and Republican leaders around the state were organizing against vital election reforms, our party leader was comparing the nominee of our party for mayor of the state's second largest city to an avowed white supremacist. This is simply not acceptable. Our party needs leadership that will not be distracted from the priority of winning elections, that will organize and motivate Democrats at all levels in the state, and will guard against careless and

insensitive remarks that are harmful to vital members of the Democratic coalition.

This Fall, one party was united and marching towards victory while the other was fighting itself. These failures fall upon Jay Jacobs' shoulders. He lost critical elections, including important races for County Executive and District Attorney in his own county of Nassau.

Jay Jacobs is not the Democratic leader that New Yorkers need to maintain our majority and sustain a healthy party. With so much at stake in the 2022 midterms, we can't afford another year of poor leadership. We must work together, with full trust in each other and the highest level of enthusiasm and engagement, to maintain the governorship, as well as US Senate, US House, NY Senate, and NY Assembly majorities.”

Alas, we lost the vote of no confidence at the meeting on November 16 with 25 in favor versus 144 against (and 8 abstentions), but a number of downstate and progressive-leaning colleagues joining me in voting for the motion. I believe we have started the process of reducing the likelihood of Jacobs remaining State Party chair, and increasing the chance of a replacement, and possibly an actual election, in the coming year. I personally like Jacobs, but the disappointing statements and actions of him and the State Party make it clear it is time for new leadership. I will keep you updated on how this process unfolds, as it has only just begun.