

Democratic State Committee Report

By Daniel Marks Cohen

Greetings all. First order of business: thank you. I am grateful to have been the beneficiary of the club's petitioning efforts getting me on the ballot for another term as State Committeeman. This will be my fifth term and my tenth year in the position – and since I have no opponent, I will begin my sixth term after the June primary. Thank you once again.

The NY Democratic State Committee has not met since last October. We are due for another meeting, shortly after the primary, but with COVID likely preventing us from meeting in person, it will likely be on Zoom, if at all. I had raised the concern previously that the State Committee elects a dozen members to the DNC, with Jay Jacobs serving on the DNC *ex-officio* by the virtue of the fact that he is chair of the NYSDC. That leaves a remaining 11 positions, and they are (alphabetically): Stuart Appelbaum, Vivian Cook, Jennifer Cunningham, Maria Cuomo Cole, Hazel Dukes,

Emily Giske, Carl Heastie,
Christine Quinn, Michael
Reich, Gerard Sweeney,
Robert Zimmerman.

A few of these people make sense: Appelbaum is the head of RWDSU and a significant labor leader. Cook is an Assemblywoman from Queens. Hazel Dukes is a Civil Rights activist and past national president of the NAACP. Heastie is the Assembly Speaker. But the remaining seven are more questionable: Cole is Governor Cuomo's sister, Cunningham is a political strategist, Giske is a lobbyist, Quinn is former City Council Speaker and Executive Committee Chair of the NYSDC, Reich is a well-connected lawyer in the Queens political machine, ditto for Sweeney, and Robert Zimmerman is a communications professional and really, really rich.

It seems possible that there will be some adjustments now that there have been some electoral changes in Albany. Andrea Stewart-Cousins, the Majority Leader of the State Senate, should be added and could conceivably replace Cook. But the two rich white guys from Queens (really

from Long Island where they live and work), Reich and Sweeney, have to go. They were – and still are – part of the Queens machine that was run by former Congressman Joe Crowley, the former Queens County Leader. He was beaten by Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, and speaking of her, Congresswoman AOC would be an ideal person to put on the DNC as a new progressive perspective, in addition to adding some needed Latina representation on the slate. Assemblywoman Yuh-Line Niou would be another good choice and lefty voice, and she would also provide some needed representation from the Asian-American community on the DNC as well. Mayor Lovely Warren of Rochester and Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes from Buffalo, both African-American women, are two more options, providing racial, gender and geographic diversity as well.

In fact, if you broaden the criteria beyond being from downstate and Long Island, with occasional token representation from upstate NY, you could include a wide selection of people across many regions, backgrounds,

perspectives and experience. Will we get a chance? If we were to have a meeting in public, in person, we might – the Progressive Caucus of the State Committee (a group that I am a co-founder and officer) has in the past had some success motivating the Democratic Party to do the right thing through exposure, outrage and media attention. But with everything happening on a Zoom call that will be controlled by the Governor's representatives, I am wary of being able to make much change. While the meeting will be public, who speaks will be tightly reined. There is little chance of making a lot of noise if we are literally "muted" on screen. I am still hopeful, though. The recent victories of the left in Democratic primaries has given Progressives renewed vigor, and we may be able to exert enough pressure before the meeting to force some changes. I shall keep you all apprised as this story unfolds.