

# Democratic State Committee Report

By Daniel Marks Cohen

The State Democratic Party finally called a meeting—by Zoom—for early August. The Progressive Caucus has submitted three resolutions for consideration. They are:

1. Support of actively increasing diversity among DNC members from NYS
2. Amending New York's election laws to enable machine counting of absentee ballots
3. Calling to sue the Federal government for any unlawful and unconstitutional police action

The first item I have reported on before—that the NYS Democratic Party has about a dozen elected representatives on the Democratic National Committee (“DNC”), and while some of them may make sense (the Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie), others do not (Governor Cuomo's sister). And with one exception, former State Party Chair Byron Brown of Buffalo, the entire slate is from downstate (NYC and Long Island), and has no Latinx or Asian representation. So for all these reasons, and also for democracy as opposed to gubernatorial whim, we want the process of representing the state to be more open, inclusive and diverse. I have little hope of seeing this being passed, unfortunately, as I expect that it will be tabled in executive committee (which is where all good ideas go to die) because unlike an in-person meeting where the

leadership can occasionally be embarrassed into doing the right thing, with Zoom all control is in the hands of the Governor's people, and the likelihood is that they will not want to address it. However, sometimes a little sunlight goes a long way, and even if the resolution is tabled out of existence, we may see some changes in the new slate this year by calling attention to the issue.

The second item relates to how absentee ballots are frequently disallowed by things like the voter failing to sign the back of the envelope, or the lack of a postmark, which may invalidate a ballot. Witness the mess in the 12th Congressional District, currently held by Carolyn Maloney. In the race for that seat, almost 25% of the absentee ballots, some 12,000 overall, were tossed for various reasons, which is more than three times the margin of victory (Maloney leads her opponent Suraj Patel by 3,700 votes). Absentee ballots should not be used to disenfranchise voters, and this resolution aims to clean up some of the language around the process and provide greater tolerances for voter errors so that ballots can be counted.

The third and final item is related to the horrible snatching last week of Nikki Stone, a trans activist, who was essentially kidnapped off the streets over an alleged minor vandalism earlier and held for several hours before being released with a desk ticket. While this horrific action was done by the NYPD, we have seen it occur in greater numbers by federal agents recently in such places as

Portland, Oregon, and we are trying to preempt such federal activity by demanding that the NYS Attorney General sue the federal government if such an action occurs here. It does not speak to what happens if the NYPD does it, however, although the intense media scrutiny of the cops and disapprobation heaped on the Mayor after the Stone incident may discourage future NYPD actions. Stone was later released without incident.

The State Committee meeting is next week, so I will make a report at the next club meeting about the resolution of these resolutions, and hopefully I will bring positive news.