

NYS Democratic Committee

Progressive Caucus

Minutes of Inaugural Meeting

May 22, 2013

The Progressive Caucus meeting was called to order by Temporary Chair Rachel Lavine (66th AD) who explained the formation of the Caucus, and described its mission as a force for pragmatic progressive change within the Democratic Party, and through coalition with other progressive entities.

NYS Controller Thomas DiNapoli attended and addressed the body, welcoming the formation of a Progressive Caucus within the NYS Democratic Committee, and congratulating the attendees for their active work on key issues of our political time.

Nassau County and former State Chair, Jay Jacobs attended and addressed the body, welcoming the Progressive Caucus into the State Party and stating that he was pleased to be part of the inaugural activities and looked forward to working with us as a member of the Caucus.

A motion was made and seconded to operate under Roberts Rules of Order. (Passed unanimously.)

Attendees were asked to put forth ideas regarding issues they would like to see the State Party discuss. Janet Peretsky of Nassau County expressed concern about housing foreclosure moratorium, support for more low income, middle income and new graduate housing.

Elisa Sumner, Dutchess County Chair, raised the issue of fusion voting, noting that in her county it helps Republicans get elected through the Independence Party line.

Dolores Decker of Nassau County asked about the possibility of eliminating the name "Independence Party" because it was deceptive, and confused voters who were registered Independents.

Jay Jacobs noted that fusion voting was a nuanced issue, and raised as an example the role of the Working Families Party as a player in the issue of fusion voting, and emphasized that he believed it to be a positive, progressive force within the Party. Jacobs noted that fusion voting was transactional, but brought jobs, contracts, money and power to the process. Jacobs pointed out that without the Legislature intervening, we can't help the Independence Party cease to exist. Short of legislation, another solution would be to have the Governor decline their line: if the Governor declines to accept the line, the Independence Party would not exist.

Rachel Lavine commented that this was part of the deeper discussion of ethics in Albany and the difficulties with transactional politics.

An attendee noted that he lived on the VT border and that he thought NY should take steps towards a single payer system, given the soaring costs of healthcare.

Herb Geller (93rd AD) asked why did the State Committee need 2 caucuses: the Reform Caucus and the Progressive Caucus?

Rachel Lavine indicated that the Progressive Caucus would set a tone and a mission of being respectful, transparent, welcoming and inclusive of all State Committee members, as well as following its own rules and bylaws so that everyone could participate equally and fairly.

Mona Perotti of Oneida County would like to see the topic of single payer, health insurance, equitable educational funding, hydrofracking (“a huge issue”).

Rachel Lavine agreed that fracking was a critically important issue for New York, and the country, about which the State party needed to have an open, thoughtful, and substantive discussion in the future.

Tom Schimmerling of Delaware County mentioned that the Reform Caucus had passed a resolution on fracking but it had been taken off the floor at the last State Committee Meeting.

Rachel Lavine clarified that the proxy holders had a huge majority and the resolution was tabled before it could be discussed. If members want to bring it to the floor there are a number of steps that need to be taken to get it there, including better group organization in advance of a meeting.

Lew Goldstein – Executive Committee member from the Bronx stated that resolutions that are controversial cannot be acted upon in a vacuum, that the issues need to be worked out and that the Progressives need to be a force for positive change within the party, not a negative force.

Herb Geller raised an issue about the number of proxies each state committee member could hold at a meeting. (The answer is 5.)

Lori Gardner (Tompkins County) would like the state committee to address the issue of President Obama’s willingness to consider chained CPI and urge him in the strongest terms to reject consideration of chained CPI.

Jo Anne Simon, 52nd AD (Kings County) proposed a resolution calling for the resignation of former Assemblymember and former chair of Kings County Vito J. Lopez as State Committeemember (53rd AD). Lopez resigned from the Assembly following the JCOPE investigation into allegations by 8 women who had filed complaints of sexual harassment, but had not resigned from the State Committee. Current State election law allows for the expulsion of State Committee members for “corruption” and “disloyalty.” Sexually predatory behavior involving the use of public funds would appear to clearly constitute corruption. The resolution was read into the record and discussion entertained.

Larry Drumberger, 105th AD (Dutchess County) asked if the resolution was meant to trigger a hearing. Simon indicated that the procedure for expulsion appeared to be time consuming and that she believed his conduct clearly constituted corruption, but by demanding his resignation we hoped to shame him into resigning.

Trudy Mason, 73rd AD (New York County) moved to approve the resolution calling upon Vito Lopez to resign from the State Committee. Dan Cohen, 69th AD (New York County) seconded. Motion passed overwhelmingly by vote of those in attendance, with one abstention.

James M. Joyce of Niagara County noted that he was represented by a Republican State Senator, and that it was particularly difficult to elect Democrats when the Governor did ads in support of Republican State Senators. He wanted to raise the issue of party support for party candidates

Nominations for officers of the Progressive Caucus were then taken from the floor.

Rachel Lavine was nominated to serve as Chair (motion by Elisa Sumner, second by Trudy Mason).

Elisa Sumner was nominated to serve as Vice Chair (motion by Trudy Mason, second by Vincent Alfonso, and Dan Cohen). Jo Anne Simon was nominated to serve as Secretary (motion by Dan Cohen, second by Ruth Halberg). Dan Cohen was nominated to serve as Treasurer (motion by Jo Anne Simon, second by Elisa Sumner).

The slate passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned by acclamation.