

Minutes of the Unity Democratic Club membership meeting
February 23, 2023
Held via zoom

Betsey Knapp opened the meeting by stating the purpose of the special meeting: to discuss UD Club endorsement of judicial delegates to the New York State Supreme Court nominations process. She then introduced Michael Villanova to talk about the role of judicial delegates in New York State politics.

Selecting judges is part of the Democratic club process and is somewhat opaque. Positions are unpaid and have a tenure of two years. Openings on the NYS Supreme Court are filled through the election process in November. Because NYS politics is dominated by the Democratic Party, most decisions are made in the primary election process. Each Assembly District gets assigned a number of judicial delegates based on the strength of Democratic votes in the prior election cycle. Delegates from throughout the county meet at their county Democratic Party's nominating convention (held sometime between June and November) to approve candidates for the general election.

In recent cycles, the practice was for the Assembly Member to select ½ the delegates, with District Leaders selecting the remaining candidates. This cycle, the 81st AD has been assigned 9 judicial delegates plus 9 alternates. The Assembly Member has refused to collaborate with District Leaders (A. Martin and R. Singh) and so the UDC has taken this opportunity to expand the selection process and to nominate delegates who share our values and will act on them when selecting NYS Supreme Court judge candidates.

NYS Supreme Court is the second highest court in the state. It is a general court (i.e., handles criminal and civil cases).

Next, Morgan Evers discussed the endorsement process. Endorsing a slate of candidates would commit us to petitioning for them (1500 signatures are required; we would need closer to 3000 to ensure a sufficient number after challenges), canvassing/phone banking on their behalf, and conducting poll site visibility during primary elections.

Ramdat Singh described the current situation and how our slate came together. The DLs have developed a slate of 9 delegates plus 9 alternates. Bios are available.

A motion was made to endorse judicial delegates; the motion was seconded after which the floor was opened for questions. There was a lively period of questioning. One member wondered whether the AM could still be convinced to collaborate, but the BFRDC has already endorsed a complete slate of delegates without input from the DLs.

Another member asked if UDC has developed a slate of judicial candidates. The process is to develop the slate of delegates first, after which candidates may be identified.

A vote was taken; by acclamation, the Club decided they would endorse judicial delegate candidates for this cycle.

Next the slate of delegates was presented, with lesser known candidates having the opportunity to introduce themselves. The full slate of nominees and their bios can be found [here](#).

A Q&A period ensued in which it was stated that there will be other candidates on the ballot in June. Petitioning is to start this coming Tuesday and volunteers were solicited. EC members will reach out to fill out volunteer position slots for upcoming petitioning events.

A vote was held and the slate of endorsees was unanimously approved.

The next membership meeting will be held March 23rd in Woodlawn.

Betsey Knapp adjourned the meeting at 8:14.

Respectfully submitted, Madeline Ritter, Secretary