

Sudbury Democratic Town Committee

19 June 2006

Philip W. Johnston, Chairman, Massachusetts Democratic Party
56 Roland St., Suite 203
Boston MA 02129

Reference: Impressions of Sudbury delegates to the recent Massachusetts Democratic Convention in Worcester, 2-3 June 2006.

Dear Mr. Johnston:

At the meeting of the SDTC on 14 June, Sudbury delegates to the Massachusetts Democratic Convention described their impressions of and experiences at this event, and this letter summarizes their comments.

Notwithstanding the generally good organization of the Convention, relative to the debacle of 2002, the delegates were disappointed by procedures and circumstances that detracted from an otherwise useful and pleasant meeting. Their complaints encompass five points:

> The time required to vote for candidates and realize the results, three hours or more, was inordinately great. It is not understood why the results of a ballot cannot be voice-radioed, town-by-town, directly from the tellers to the tally desk, once tellers and checkers mutually agree on the numbers on the floor. These numbers could then be keyed into a spread sheet and automatically summed. A more efficient method might involve a direct radio link between computers in the hands of tellers and a computer at the tally table. The technology exists for these and other approaches, and the failure of the Massachusetts Democratic Party to adopt one or another technology is regrettable.

> The 11 AM roll call of delegates present and seated was unnecessary. A photo ID was required to enter the hall and the credentials code of each delegate was scanned, presumably into a computer databank. The fact of admission should have been proof of being present. If, at the time of balloting, a delegate is present but not seated, an alternate could be appointed quickly.

> Challenges to the credentials of a small number of delegates (12, we understood) should not have been treated as a separate, time-consuming issue. Resolution of challenges could have occurred at the outset of balloting. Indeed, challenges should have been filed and resolved before the Convention even began, or no later than the Friday night session, and should not have been left to the Saturday session.

> The Charter questions were introduced and rammed through late in the day at the time that the Convention was spontaneously adjourning and great disorder reigned on the floor. Because these questions were decided by means other than a ballot and in the face of a disengaged and nonparticipating majority, we suggest that the results, which can only represent an arbitrary opinion of the presiding Chair, be vacated and held over for consideration at next year's convention. Charter and Platform questions ought not be presented to a nominating convention, until or unless the main business of that convention can be handled in a timely manner. Such questions are better left to odd-year conventions.

As of this date, your office seems not to have announced which Charter questions failed and which passed. Can you release these results?

> Certain facilities at the Worcester Convention Center were inadequate. As in 2002, the food offerings were over-priced, slowly prepared, of generally mediocre quality, and soon exhausted. Although some \$8 box lunches were apparently made available through one or more of the concession stands, there was no announcement to this effect and very few delegates knew of their existence or location. There is no credible reason why delegates should be prohibited from bringing their own lunches and drink into the convention hall, except that such a practice might diminish the commercial gain of the operators of the hall. *Delegate Guide 2006* contained no information whatsoever about food, drink and regulations thereof. As in 2002, toilet facilities were grossly inadequate to the need and in due course became quite foul. Essential supplies were soon exhausted, and some toilets were or became inoperable. These situations suggest careless management of the hall.

We trust that you and your relevant committees will take seriously the comments herein and strive to adopt more expeditious and rational procedures for future nominating conventions.

Sincerely,

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cc: Susan Fenochiette Thomson, Cyndi Roy, Kate Donaghue, James Gowan.