

DEMOCRATIC STATE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

THIRD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT CONVENTION DISPUTE HEARING

SHARON D. MOUNDS **DISTRICT 9**
NICHOLAS VEGLIANTE **DISTRICT 18**
THOMAS GAUDETT **DISTRICT 22**

KEVIN REYNOLDS
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June 1, 2026

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

By email dated May 13, 2026, Andrew Rice submitted a complaint pursuant to Article V of the State Party Rules alleging certain procedural errors in the administration of the Third Congressional District Convention held on May 11, 2026. Mr. Rice, the Complainant, asserts that the errors invalidate the convention results and, as a result, he requests that a new convention be ordered or, alternatively, that he is deemed to have qualified to be on the primary ballot. The Complainant was represented at the hearing by Attorney Alex Taubes.

The Respondent, on behalf of the Third Congressional District Convention, was Vincent Mauro.

A virtual hearing was held on May 28, 2026. Serving on the Panel were: Sharon D. Mounds, District 9; Nicholas Vegliante, District 18; and, Thomas Gaudett, District 22.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

The Third District Congressional Convention was held on May 11, 2026 in West Haven. Here is a link to the CT-N video recording of the convention: [CT-N Video Player: Third Congressional District 2026 Democratic Nominating Convention.](#)

The delegates elected Vincent Mauro as the Permanent Chair of the Convention (the “Convention Chair”). Mr. Mauro is the Chair of the New Haven Town Committee and has been the chair of numerous conventions.

Two candidates were nominated: U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro and Andrew Rice. Following a motion to close nominations, the Convention Chair explained the voting process to the delegates. There were no questions posed so the Convention Chair announced that voting would begin.

After the ballots were tallied, the Convention Chair announced that 339 delegates cast votes and that U.S. Rep. DeLauro received 294 votes (87%) and Mr. Rice received 45 votes (13%). The Convention Chair announced that Mr. Rice fell short of the votes needed to qualify for the primary ballot. Article III, Section 13 of the State Party Rules and Conn. Gen. Stat. §9-400 requires candidates to receive at least 15% of the votes at a convention to be placed on the ballot for the primary.

As preparations began on the state for U.S. Rep. DeLauro’s acceptance speech, there was a great deal of noise from DeLauro’s supporters celebrating and Rice’s supporters expressing disappointment. In succession, three delegates moved for separate Points of Order. The first was made by Hamden Delegate Taite Lipchak. The Convention Chair did not appear to hear Delegate Lipchak ask for a Point of Order. The second was made by Hamden Delegate Bradford Picarello. The Convention Chair paused the acceptance speech preparations to recognize Delegate Picarello who raised a Point of Order challenging the following:

1. Failure to adopt rules for the convention;
2. Lack of a roll call vote; and
3. The absence of an announced period to allow delegates to change their votes.

The Convention Chair submitted the Point of Order to the body which voted against it. The Chair signaled to resume the acceptance speech preparations. After a video, U.S. Rep. DeLauro then accepted the endorsement, bringing the convention to a close.

DISCUSSION

The Complainant raises several claims to support its request for either a new convention or placement on the primary ballot. The Panel finds that four of the claims have merit and believes the circumstances presented by this convention require consideration of these claims not only under the applicable rules, but also in light of the parties' reliance on those rules and the resulting expectations.

Regarding the review under the applicable rules, the Panel must determine which rules govern the matter and whether those rules were properly followed. For the review under equitable principles, the Panel must focus on whether the outcome is fair under the circumstances. If warranted, the final step for the Panel is to determine what remedy, if any, would be appropriate.

The four claims raised by the Complainant that warrant review¹ are as follows:

1. Was the omission of adopting convention rules improper?
2. Was the ballot process, where paper ballots were submitted but not announced, improper?
3. Was the absence of a declared period for delegates to change their votes improper?
4. Did the Convention Chair properly manage the three Points of Order?

¹ The Complainant raised a number of additional issues concerning the running of the convention. However, the Panel finds that these additional issues were immaterial and do not merit further review.

Below is an analysis of the applicability of the rules on these four claims which is followed by an analysis of equitable principles to these claims.

1. *Was the omission of adopting convention rules improper?*

Article III of the State Party Rules sets forth rules for conventions that supersede rules that a specific convention may adopt. In the absence of the adoption of convention rules, for whatever reason, then the convention must still follow Article III and, if that is silent, the convention must look to Robert's Rules for guidance.

The Convention Chair acknowledged at the hearing that it was an oversight to not adopt rules for the convention. Neither the DeLauro, nor the Rice campaign raised an objection to his omission until after the voting took place and the results were announced. Also, the Convention Chair followed standard practice by having candidates nominated and seconded. He then asked repeatedly if there were any further nominations before hearing a motion to close nominations. At that point, the Convention Chair explained the voting process to the body and asked if his instructions were clear. Hearing no questions, he ordered the voting to commence.

Article III does not expressly require that each convention adopts rules to govern it, nor do Robert's Rules. To that extent, it is not improper. In this instance, the absence of adopted rules did not interfere with the nomination and seconding of the two candidates.

2. *Was the ballot process, where paper ballots were submitted but not announced, improper?*

To satisfy the State Party Rules, when a person votes in a representative capacity—such as a town committee member, convention delegate, or State Central member—there must be a record of how each representative voted, and secret ballots are prohibited. The

essential requirement is that each vote be attributable to a specific delegate and preserved as part of the official record.

A written voting procedure in which each delegate's vote is recorded next to that delegate's name and maintained as part of the convention record is substantively equivalent to a roll call vote. The defining parliamentary feature of a roll call vote is the creation of an official record showing how each member voted, rather than the physical act of calling names aloud. Accordingly, a written vote identifying each delegate and recording that delegate's vote satisfies the same purpose and provides the same accountability as a traditional oral roll call.

Here each delegate's vote, or the vote of the delegate's duly authorized proxy, was recorded next to the delegate's name and submitted as part of the official convention record for tabulation. The convention, therefore, satisfied the requirements of voting by roll call.

3. *Was the absence of a declared period for delegates to change their votes improper?*

As a matter of custom, political conventions allow for a period for delegates to change their votes. Until the vote is announced as final, a delegate has the unilateral authority to change their vote. If a delegate were denied the opportunity to change their vote, that would be improper. Neither Article III, nor Robert's Rules addresses whether a period of time to change delegate votes must be announced. The Convention Chair did not close the vote until the tallying was completed. Any delegate could have changed their vote prior to this time.

4. *Did the Convention Chair properly manage the three Points of Order?*

Robert's Rules requires that points of order are raised at the time that the alleged error took place or immediately thereafter. See Robert's Rules of Order 12th ed., §23.

Delegate Picarello's three points subsumed within his Point of Order were not timely and should have been dismissed. The Convention Chair did not recognize the two other delegates attempting to make a Point of Order. He explained that he did not hear them and the video supports his claim.

When addressing a Point of Order, Chairs will often confer with a parliamentarian or other trusted sources and then issue a ruling on the point. In this instance, the Convention Chair submitted the question to the body. Robert's Rules §23 does allow this practice if the chair is "genuinely in doubt". It seems unlikely that the Convention Chair had such doubt on these three issues and, for that reason, he should have issued the ruling and found the Point of Order was not well received for the reasons set forth above in this section.

Application of Equitable Principles

As a matter of equity, the Complainant raises a legitimate question of reliance due to how the State Party organizes its conventions. Prior to the five congressional conventions, the State Party prepares and distributes a proposed agenda and proposed convention rules to the known candidates in each district. The Complainant can argue that it relied to some degree on the proposed rules as it developed its strategy for the convention.

There is an element of fairness and reasonableness that candidates and delegates to a convention should expect. The Complainant can argue that it operated with the understanding that the proposed rules would be in effect, either in totality or substantially and that there would be an opportunity for delegates to change their vote. For a candidate who sits at 13% after the initial round of voting, the change period becomes compelling.

Further fortifying the Complainant's claim under equitable principles is that the voting process for this convention did not include an announcement how each town voted so that the candidates can track where opportunity may sit if additional votes may be needed or, for that matter, prevented. Second, the State Party did not provide a video screen tracking the vote tally. This potentially leaves the campaigns unaware of the actual count until they are able to read the submissions from each town. For a campaign on the edge of winning or qualifying for the primary, the timeliness of this information becomes critical.

Although the foregoing may not have strictly been violations of any effective rules, the Panel finds that, as a matter of equity, the Complainant has raised legitimate procedural flaws. The matter before the Panel presents a challenging question regarding how the Democratic State Central Committee should adjudicate challenges to the results of a nominating convention when it is apparent that certain procedural flaws occurred during the convention process. The Democratic Party has a fundamental obligation to ensure that its nominating process is conducted fairly, transparently, and in accordance with its rules. Delegates, candidates, and party members alike are entitled to have confidence that the procedures governing the selection of nominees will be followed.

At the same time, the Committee must be mindful that conventions exist for the purpose of expressing the will of the delegates assembled on a particular day and under a particular set of circumstances. To adjudicate the complaint before us, we need not invent new principles. Rather, we are well-advised to borrow from election

law in the State of Connecticut in deciding how to handle challenges to conventions of the state Democratic Party.²

As the Connecticut Supreme Court observed in *Bortner v. Woodbridge*, 250 Conn. 241, 736 A.2d 104 (1999) (emphasis added):

An election is essentially-and necessarily-a snapshot...The snapshot captures, therefore, only the results of the election conducted on the officially designated election day. It reflects the will of the people as recorded on that particular day, after that particular campaign, and as expressed by the electors who voted on that day...Moreover, that snapshot can never be duplicated. The campaign, the resources available for it, the totality of the electors who voted in it, and their motivations, inevitably will be different a second time around. Thus, when a court orders a new election, it is really ordering a different election. . . . The ordering of a new and different election in effect disfranchises all of those who voted at the first election because their validly cast votes no longer count, and the second election can never duplicate the complex combination of conditions under which they cast their ballots.

While noting that the courts do have the power to throw out election results, the Connecticut Supreme Court has observed that courts should "exercise caution and restraint in deciding whether to do so...respect for the electoral process mandates no less." In such election cases, the courts will only overturn an election result if the result is "seriously in doubt."

The Complainant has failed to demonstrate that the election results would have been different were it not for the flaws at the convention. At the hearing, he submitted affidavits from two delegates stating that they voted for U.S. Rep.

² The Panel did not independently research the case law discussed but instead relied upon the law provided by the Party's legal counsel.

DeLauro but would have switched to Mr. Rice had they been aware of the 10-minute changed period.³

Like elections, conventions are a snapshot in time and they cannot ever truly be duplicated. They record the viewpoints of the delegates that gathered on a particular day at a particular time. Redoing conventions will almost certainly yield a different result to some degree. Thus, when the results of a convention are vacated, the delegates that attended said convention are essentially disenfranchised.

The existence of a procedural error does not, by itself, require that the result of a convention be set aside. To hold otherwise would invite endless uncertainty into the nominating process and would risk nullifying the collective judgment of the delegates who participated in good faith. The Panel's responsibility, therefore, is not merely to identify whether a rule violation occurred, but to determine whether any such violation was of sufficient significance to cast doubt upon the legitimacy of the convention's result.

This matter requires the Panel to balance two important principles. On one hand is the necessity of enforcing the rules that govern Democratic Party conventions and ensuring that all candidates and delegates are treated fairly. On the other hand, there is the equally important principle that the outcome of a duly convened nominating convention should not be disturbed absent compelling evidence that the

³ The testimony of Mr. Anthony Fiore does not have any material impact on this analysis. He testified to the panel that he was unable to attend the convention due to exams and that his delegation chair appointed a proxy in his place. While he testified that he would have cast his vote for Mr. Rice at the convention if he had attended, that judgment is not binding on the proxy that was appointed by the delegation chair.

result does not accurately reflect the will of the delegates. The integrity of the process demands adherence to both principles.

CONCLUSION

By virtue of his complaint and the substantive points it raises, Mr. Rice has brought scrutiny not only of this convention but also of the Democratic Party's convention process at large. After carefully reviewing the testimony, documentary evidence, affidavits, and arguments presented by the parties, the Panel concludes that, although certain procedural flaws occurred during the convention, the evidence presented does not establish that the outcome of the convention was placed in serious doubt.

Ultimately, pursuant to Article V of the State Party Rules, the Panel has the power to overturn the convention result. However, like with overturning the result of an election, in the adjudication of any rules violations or other issues at a nominating convention, the Panel should only overturn the result of said convention if there is sufficient evidence presented to show that the result of the convention is in doubt.

The Panel unanimously agrees that the Complainant failed to meet its burden of showing that Mr. Rice would have received 15% of the votes cast but for these errors and flaws. Accordingly, the complaint is dismissed.