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Lost weekend (continued)

THE DELEGATES who made for the exits after the gubernatorial candidates strutted their stuff missed out on the event's lone bit of drama. After the Democratic platform had been rubber-stamped, the convention took up proposed changes to the state party's charter. And the ensuing hubbub shook those who'd stuck

Related links

[Massachusetts Democratic Party](#)

Includes a link to the party's revamped platform and, in the near future, should include the amended charter and the text of speeches given at the convention.

[Blue Mass. Group convention coverage](#)

Notes from the 2005 Democratic convention from a good local political blog, including some nice


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around out of their collective stupor.

First, a bit of history. Three years ago — bolstered by a groundswell of support among independent and Green voters who became Democrats just before the party's nominating convention — the insurgent gubernatorial campaign of former

Clinton labor secretary Robert Reich nearly succeeded. Since then, there's been lingering distrust between the Reichies, who see themselves as the progressive saviors of a moribund state party, and veteran Democratic activists, who see the Reichies as sad-sack malcontents and annoying interlopers.

The party stalwarts got the best of things last weekend. Post-Lowell, last-minute registration for the local caucuses that determine the make-up of the Massachusetts Democratic Party's gubernatorial nominating convention is no longer possible; now, candidates need to register as Democrats by December 2005 rather than by September 2006. Furthermore, the balance of power between the Democratic State Committee (DSC) and the party's annual conventions — which gave progressive insurgents a regular chance to push their agenda — has been reversed: while state conventions formerly trumped the dictates of the DSC, the latter now reigns supreme.

There's more. Pre-Lowell, the state party was barred from supporting any Democrat who — instead of backing the Democratic nominee for a given office — supported another Democrat candidate. That prohibition is now gone. (If this sounds complicated, consider the case of Representative Carl Sciortino, who ousted incumbent Vincent Ciampa in the Democratic primary last fall and then fended him off again in the general election, in which Ciampa ran as an independent. Under the old rules, colleagues of Ciampa who supported him in his second run would have burned their bridges with the state party; under the new rules, that's no longer the case.) Furthermore, the elected members of the DSC now serve for four years, not two. Finally, pre-Lowell, any DSC meeting was open to the public. Now, some are automatically closed to the public, and others can be closed by a two-thirds vote.

At the convention, the Reichies and their progressive cohorts seemed not to realize what was happening until the very last

original commentary and about 30 responses.

[DemocraticStateCommittee.com](#)

This Web site is *not* affiliated with the Massachusetts Democratic State Committee. Instead, it provides critical commentary on the committee and its activities from the party's progressive-left contingent. Currently features numerous postings about what transpired at this year's convention in Lowell.

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minute. Once they did, they tried to trigger debate about the changes using a parliamentary maneuver; after this failed, something approaching pandemonium ensued, with a segment of disgruntled delegates launching a loud chorus of boos and the chair demanding (unsuccessfully) that the dissidents "show some respect."

Afterward, Jesse Gordon — a Cambridge delegate and city-council candidate who's become a kind of professional thorn in the side of the state-party apparatus — hinted darkly at a coming progressive revolt. "We choose to follow the rules, and then they choose to change the rules," Gordon complained. "We've got big stuff planned to fight this. People are saying we should declare open war on the party. I don't know. But I can tell you they pissed off a lot of people." For her part, Jane Lane, the state party's spokesperson, dismissed Gordon's suggestion that the charter changes were aimed at preventing future Reich-esque candidacies. "Jesse Gordon is wrong as usual," Lane retorted. "The fact of the matter is, Jesse Gordon doesn't like the Democratic Party. He's trying to change the rules and skirt the rules in order to change them to his liking. Well, that's not going to happen."

In terms of sheer drama, this spat — coming at the tail end of a remarkably uneventful convention — was a welcome development. But as far as the overall health of the Massachusetts Democratic Party goes, it did not bode well. For the Democrats to retake the corner office next fall, the candidate, whoever he or she is, will need to squeeze every vote possible out of an electorate with a demonstrated affinity for Republican governors. If frustration prompts the Democratic left wing to lose interest — or to look to a third-party candidate, as happened with the Greens' Jill Stein in 2002 — only the Republicans will benefit.

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