



# ‘Historic’ convention excites former state Democratic chairman

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The National Democratic Convention that begins today in Philadelphia will provide unique excitement. A woman will be nominated for the first time in our 240-year history.

Connecticut will be prominently represented with Gov. Dannel P. Malloy being a “major player” within the Hillary Clinton camp. Malloy certainly will have a speaking opportunity. So will U.S. Sens. Chris Murphy and Richard Blumenthal along with Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro and John Larson (now nationally known for helping to stage the gun control sit-in).

Bernie Sanders finally has endorsed Hillary, so it seems he is guaranteed a prime time speaking spot. I’m betting the convention will show a nearly united party. There will be a few hard core Sanders holdouts, but not enough to cause much of a stir.

For the rank and file delegates a Democratic convention is a mixture of fun, work, and by the end of the week, exhaustion in a

good sense, along with the feeling of having participated in history. This time, with a woman running for president, it will truly be historic. What better place for it to take place than Philadelphia, with its Liberty Bell and its integral part in our American Revolution.

This great country constantly changes. It is about time that we have a female president in a nation where anybody can aspire to hold the highest office.

I have attended numerous Democratic conventions including the one where John Kennedy was nominated. I was at the messy 1968 convention in Chicago and have been privileged to be chairman of the Democratic Delegation from Connecticut at conventions in 1992, 1996 and 2000.

Some of the “moments” that occurred at national conventions had a long standing impact on Connecticut politics.

For example, I was the state chairman of Washington Sen. Henry “Scoop” Jackson’s campaign. Gov. Ella Grasso supported Scoop. Peter Kelly, who I believe was then the Hartford Democratic chair, supported Jimmy Carter. By the time we got to the national convention, the Carter delegates far outnumbered the Jackson delegates. Kelly went on to be the treasurer of the Democratic National Committee’s Finance Committee.

In 1992, Kelly, who had been on the National Committee for some 16 years, was opposed by Anthony Avallone, who now is a Superior Court judge. I told Kelly, since I was then state chairman, that in the spirit of ’76 he had two days to devise a graceful way of getting out. Avallone became the next DNC member and stayed there until his recent appointment to the Superior Court. It was time for a change. Judge Avallone did a great job on the DNC.

I wish Nick Balleto, the Democratic state chairman, a smooth convention. It will not be easy for Nick, since Philadelphia is a short trip from Connecticut so the demand for floor passes will be overwhelming. Delegates hate to give up their seats to allow a floor pass holder to sit down. There are never enough seats. Tempers run short. I always used to tell the delegates that in five days it would be over, you no longer will be a delegate, and we all have to go back home and work together. Stay united.

I would have liked to go this year. Personal scheduling issues made it impossible. I will cheer Hillary on to victory watching from afar.

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