

Appendix I: Bylaws

BYLAWS OF THE SEATTLE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA

As adopted by the Seattle DSA General Membership on October 3rd, 2017

PREAMBLE

The Seattle Local of the Democratic Socialists of America seeks to facilitate the transition to a truly democratic and socialist society, one in which the means/resources of production are democratically and socially controlled.

DSA rejects an economic order based solely on private profit, alienated labor, gross inequalities of wealth and power, discrimination based on race and sex, and brutality and violence in defense of the status quo.

DSA envisions a humane social order based on popular control of resources and production, economic planning, equitable distribution, gender and racial equality, and non-oppressive relationships.

Our conception of socialism is a profoundly democratic one. It is rooted in the belief that human beings should be free to develop to their fullest potential, that public policies should be determined not by wealth but by popular participation, and that individual liberties should be carefully safeguarded. It is committed to a freedom of speech that does not recoil from dissent, to a freedom to organize independent trade unions, women's groups, political parties, and other formations — recognizing these as essential bulwarks against the dangers of an intrusive state. It is committed to a freedom of religion that acknowledges the rights of those for whom spiritual concerns are central.

We are socialists because we are developing a concrete strategy for achieving that vision. In the present, we are building a visible socialist presence within the broad democratic left. In the long run, we hope to build a majority movement capable of making democratic socialism a reality in the United States. Our strategy acknowledges the class structure of the U.S. society. This class structure means that there is a basic conflict of interest between those sectors with enormous economic power and the vast majority of the population.

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this organization shall be the Seattle Local of the Democratic Socialists of America, also known as Seattle DSA or SDSA, and referred to throughout this document as the Local.

ARTICLE II. BASIC ORGANIZATION AND CONVENTIONS

Section 1: General Membership. The General Membership of the Local, meeting in Convention, General or Special Meeting, shall be the highest legislative body of the organization. Between Conventions and Special Meetings, the Local Council shall be responsible for the administration of the organization and the implementation of policies formulated by the General Membership.

Section 2: Conventions. The Local shall meet in Convention annually during the month of March, with at least sixty days notice given to all members. Notice will include pertinent questions before the Local and all necessary instructions for participation. The Convention shall meet to elect officers, adopt an annual budget, and to debate and decide primarily, but not exclusively, Local issues, the political orientation of the organization, and program direction.

Section 3: Special Meetings. A Special Meeting of the Local shall be called by the Local Council or by ten percent of members, with at least five days' notice given to all members. The call to the Special Meeting shall specify the matters to be discussed therein and no other matter may be brought to the floor. The Local Council may designate a previously scheduled Informational Meeting as a special meeting with at least five days' notice given to all members.

Section 4: General Meetings. The Local will hold General Meetings at least four times annually, the time and place of which shall be set in a schedule published and distributed by the Local Council. The Local Council will set the agenda for General Meetings, subject to amendment and approval by the members present. If a General Meeting will have any voting items for the membership to decide upon (amendments to the bylaws, resolutions, endorsements, etc), then the chapter must email the text of those voting items to the general membership no later than 14 days prior to the General Meeting, before 11:59pm Pacific Time. The subject line of the email must mention that it contains voting items for the next General Meeting, or else it shall be considered to have failed the deadline.

Section 5: Informational Meetings. The Local Council may call additional Local-wide Informational Meetings for a variety of reasons but at which official business will not be conducted and policies will not be set. For the purposes of these bylaws, Local-wide Informational Meetings shall not be considered General Meetings.

Section 6: Rules. All resolutions, amendments, and officer reports presented to the Local's membership at the Convention will allow for a question and answer period to be followed by speakers wishing to voice their opinions. All other rules covering the conduct of the Convention, General or Special Meeting shall be set by the Local Council or a committee it appoints for that purpose, subject to amendment and approval by the members present.

Section 7: Electoral Endorsements. The General Membership in Convention, General or Special Meeting is the only body authorized with making electoral endorsements on behalf of the Local. In exceptional situations the Local Council may endorse candidates by three-quarters vote where time constraints forbid holding a Special Meeting. Unless otherwise authorized, members or committees of the Local are prohibited from campaigning as representatives of DSA for candidates or ballot measures that the Local has not officially endorsed. In order to be considered for an electoral endorsement, candidates must commit to refuse funding from all for-profit corporations and their corporate officers.

Section 8: Public Representation. Unless otherwise authorized, members, officers, or committees of the Local are prohibited from representing themselves as speaking on behalf of the Local on positions or policies that the Local has not officially endorsed.

Section 9: Quorums. Unless specified otherwise in these bylaws, a quorum of ten percent of the membership shall be required for valid meetings of the Convention, Special Meeting, or General Meeting.

ARTICLE III: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: Definition. Members in good standing will include all DSA members residing within the Local jurisdiction agreed upon by the National DSA and the Local, who have paid annual dues within the last year, have paid lifetime dues, or are current on their monthly dues, as verified by National DSA, and are not currently suspended or terminated from the Local. All Local members in good standing shall have full and equal rights of membership.

Section 2: Voting and Office. All Members in good standing shall be eligible to:

- a. Vote in all elections and matters, including policies and guidelines for the operation of the Local, brought before The General Membership, and
- b. Be elected as delegates from the Local to Regional, State, or National DSA convenings, after having been a Member for at least sixty days; and
- c. Be nominated or appointed to office in the Local, after having been a Member for at least ninety days.

Section 3: Proxy Voting. The Local Council will explore and may create a system for proxy voting at General Meetings. Prior to implementation, the Local must amend these bylaws outlining proxy voting rules.

Section 4: Grievances. The Local shall have an official grievance policy in accordance with national guidelines. When such guidelines are provided, the Local must amend these bylaws outlining the grievance procedure.

Section 5: Member Discipline, Suspension, and Expulsion. Pursuant to Article III, Section 4 of the National DSA constitution, the Local Council shall have the power to suspend or expel members from the Local. In order for such a finding to be made, another member must present written charges against the member in question to the Local Council. Members facing suspension or expulsion must receive written notice of charges against them at least fifteen days before a meeting of the Local Council and must be given the opportunity to be heard before the Local Council. A two-thirds vote is required to suspend or expel a member. The Local Council will only have the power to suspend or expel a member from the Local. Only the National organization shall have the power to suspend or expel a member from the National organization. Decisions on suspension or expulsion may be appealed at the Local Convention, General or Special Meeting, or to the National Political Committee of DSA.

Members may be disciplined:

- a. if they are found to have harassed or acted violently against another member; or
- b. if they are found to be in substantial disagreement with the principles or policies of the organization; or
- c. if they consistently engage in undemocratic, disruptive behavior; or
- d. if they are found to be engaged in coordinated entryist behavior on behalf of an outside Organization.

ARTICLE IV: ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Section 1: Nominations. All Officers of the Local Council shall be elected at the Local's annual Convention. Nominations to run for the Local Council may be submitted to the Elections Committee in advance of the Convention. Nominations from the floor of the Convention, with eight members who are eligible to vote seconding the nomination, are also allowed. Any member may nominate another member in good standing for elected position in the Local. No one may nominate themselves.

Section 3: Process. The elections process shall be fair, transparent, and democratic. There shall be a vote by secret ballot for each contested office at the Local Convention. The Local Council will be responsible for ensuring that elections are held, and shall appoint an Elections Committee to oversee the process at least ninety days prior to the Local Convention. The Elections Committee shall solicit and receive nominations for the positions to be elected, certify eligibility, conduct the election and certify the results. Members of the Elections Committee are ineligible for office. No candidate shall be involved in handling or counting ballots.

Section 4: Noticing of Elections. Along with notice of the Local's annual Convention (see Article II, section 2), the Local Council shall include the time and place of the election, qualifications for office, and the process for nominations.

ARTICLE V: LOCAL COUNCIL

Section 1: Purpose. The Seattle DSA Local Council serves as the democratically elected leadership of the Local and is the highest legislative and judicial body under the General Membership. The Local Council shall carry out actions which advance the principles, policies, strategies, and campaigns enumerated by the Membership in General Meetings. The Local Council shall manage the day-to-day affairs of the Local between General Meetings.

Section 2: Vacancies. In the event of a vacancy on the Local Council, the Local Council may appoint a replacement by majority vote to serve until the following election, subject to approval of the General Membership.

Section 3: Terms. Officers shall be elected at the annual convention and take office thirty days later. Their terms shall last until thirty days after the completion of the following annual convention, approximately one year later.

Section 4: Oversight. The Local Council will oversee all Committees and other official formations of the Local. See Article VI for more information on Committees.

Section 5: State of the Local. The Local Council is responsible for presenting a “State of the Local” address each year at the annual Local Convention.

Section 6: Conflict Resolution. The Local Council is responsible for fairly adjudicating disagreements between members or groups of members within the Local. This shall include developing and overseeing an accountable and fair mechanism of conflict resolution.

Section 7: Meetings and Voting. Unless stated otherwise in these bylaws, all elected and appointed members of the Local Council have full and equal voting rights for Local Council decisions. The Local Council shall hold official meetings no less than once every month, the time and place of which shall be set in a schedule published and distributed by the Local Council to the General Membership no less than seven days prior. Regular meetings of the Local Council may be attended by all members in good standing and minutes must be provided to the General Membership.

Section 8: Special Meetings. Special Meetings of the Local Council may be called by at least four of its members on at least five days’ notice to Local Council members and the General Membership when time constraints prohibit scheduling a regular meeting. The call to the Special Meeting shall specify the matters to be discussed therein and no other matter may be brought to the floor. Special Meetings of the Local Council may be attended by all members in good standing and minutes must be provided to the General Membership.

Section 9: Quorum. A quorum of fifty percent shall be required for a valid meeting of the Local Council.

Section 10: Composition. The Local Council shall consist of fifteen elected Council Members: seven Officers, six elected Organizers, and two At-Large Council Members. The Officers shall be two Co-Chairs, one Vice Chair, one Secretary, one Treasurer, one Internal Communications Officer, and one External Communications Officer. The six elected Organizers shall be three Internal Organizers and three External Organizers. Of the Internal and External Organizers, no more than three shall be cis-men and no less than three shall be national or racial minorities.

- a. Co-Chairs:** The Co-Chairs shall be the official public spokespersons for the Local and will initiate such actions and policies as the Local's general welfare may demand, in accordance with the decisions and policies of the Local Council and the General Membership. The Co-Chairs shall organize and preside over all official meetings of the organization and the Local Council. The Co-Chairs shall maintain consistent communication with all committee leaders and facilitate collaboration and coordination between them. Additionally:

 1. The Co-Chairs will also act as, or appoint, the official representatives of the Local to the National Organization and to other DSA Locals. This does not apply during official business at the National DSA Convention, when Local Delegates may act independently on behalf of the Local's membership.
 2. The Co-Chairs serve as executive officers of the Local, and they are listed on financial accounts along with the Treasurer. Expenditures over \$200 must be approved by the Treasurer and no less than one Co-Chair.
 3. Of the Co-Chairs, no more than one shall be a cis-man.
 4. At time of their election, at least one Co-Chair must be a person with a current annual income less than twice the City of Seattle minimum wage for large employers who pay towards medical benefits.
- b. Vice Chair:** The Vice Chair is responsible for assisting the Co-Chairs with all of their duties. If both Co-Chairs are unable to perform their duties, the Vice Chair shall perform all duties and assume all responsibilities of the Co-Chairs until such a time as one or both Co-Chairs are able to resume their posts.
- c. Secretary:** The Secretary is responsible for taking minutes of all General Membership and Local Council Meetings, and shall be responsible for publishing these minutes, as well as resolutions, reports, and other official records of the Local. The Secretary may appoint, but must oversee, a temporary proxy minutes-taker for any meeting. That proxy may not vote on behalf of the Secretary. Additionally:

 1. The Secretary shall transfer official records in good condition to their successor.
 2. The Secretary will assume the responsibilities of one of the Co-Chairs, if both Co-Chairs and the Vice Chair is unable to do so.

- d. Treasurer:** The Treasurer will be responsible for administration of funds, budget, and financial organization of the Local, including overseeing fundraising activities for the Local. All funds collected by the Local will be turned over to the Treasurer, who shall deposit them in a bank account under the name of the Local. The Treasurer will report to the Local Council on the financial status of the organization at each Local Council Meeting. The Treasurer will maintain transparent and open financial reports available to the entire membership upon request to a member of the Local Council. The Treasurer will be responsible for ensuring that membership dues are paid up-to-date. The Treasurer will prepare the annual Local budget, and deliver the Local financial report at General Meetings of the Local. The treasurer will prepare and post at least once a month, in a location accessible to the members of the Local Council, a written financial report that includes categorized income and expenditures, beginning and ending balances, and beginning and end dates for the time period encompassed by the report.
- e. Internal Organizers:** Internal Organizers will co-chair the Internal Organizing Committee (see Article VI), which is responsible for fostering a lively participatory and democratic culture within the Local through the development, education, mobilization, and recruitment of members. This includes the keeping of a database of members, conducting a census, driving diversity efforts, as well as any tasks assigned to the role by the Local Council. The Internal Organizing Committee is also charged with organizing General Meetings, Informational Meetings, and social, educational, and fundraising events. Under the direction of the Local Council, the Internal Organizing Committee shall develop and oversee a program of socialist cadre development that includes skills training and political education; and a system of Mobilizers (similar to union shop stewards) who will act as an active conduit of information and engagement between the General Membership and the Local Council.
- f. External Organizers:** External Organizers will co-chair the External Organizing Committee (see Article VI), which will lead the Local's fight for a socialist political agenda in the Seattle area and beyond. Under the direction of the Local Council and in order to realize the policies, priorities and campaigns set forth by the General Membership, the External Organizing Committee shall manage or execute all of the Local's issue and electoral campaigns, direct actions, rallies, and other activities expressly targeted at the general public for political purposes.
- g. At-Large Local Council Members:** At-Large Local Council Members will participate in Local Council decision-making, and are responsible for attending all relevant meetings and reading all relevant documents. At-Large Local Council members are also tasked with representing the views of the membership that elected them as well as helping to advance the goals of the Local generally.
- h. Internal Communications Officer (ICO):** Internal Communications Officer shall work with the Co-Chairs and any Working Groups created for the purpose of communications to oversee all member-facing communications (emails, internal newsletters, handbooks, educational materials, etc.) to ensure consistency with the overall mission, strategic vision and priorities of the Local, as established by the Local Council and the General Membership. The ICO shall have final editorial control over internal communications as well as the authority to appoint and dismiss members in

charge of specific communications tasks. Said members will be required to get authorization from the ICO for any communications that express a political position on behalf of the Local but not those that are purely informational, such as announcements of meetings or events. The ICO will manage and support individual members of Working Groups assigned to specific internal communications tasks, organize skill-building seminars as well as cultivate leadership.

- i. External Communications Officer (ECO):** External Communications Officer shall work with the Co-Chairs and any Working Groups created for the purpose of communications to oversee all public-facing communications (press releases, news advisories, social media, website copy, etc.) to ensure consistency with the overall mission, strategic vision and priorities of the Local, as established by the Local Council and the General Membership. In consultation with the Co-Chairs, the ECO will have the authority to designate official media contacts for externally facing workgroups. The ECO shall have final editorial control over external communications as well as the authority to appoint and dismiss members in charge of specific communications tasks, such as running the Local's Twitter account or other social media accounts. Said members will be required to get authorization from the ICO for any communications that express a political position on behalf of the Local but not those that are purely informational, such as announcements of meetings or events. The ECO is authorized to remove posts from social media at their discretion. For press releases and other statements intended for public consumption, content must be approved through consensus among the ECO and both co-chairs. The ECO will manage and support individual members of Working Groups assigned to specific external communications tasks, organize skill-building seminars as well as cultivate leadership.
- j.** The Local shall hold a special election for the offices of ICO and ECO on the date of the General Membership meeting in May 2021. The first general election for the offices of ICO and ECO shall take place at the 2022 Convention.

Section 11: Termination of Local Council Members. Termination of a Local Council Member may be initiated in two ways. First, the Local Council may vote to remove an Officer from the Local Council in the event that the member is unable or unwilling to perform their duties.

Removal of a Local Council member requires a three-quarters majority vote by the Local Council. The Local Council must notify the Officer in writing of the termination and they may request to appeal the decision at the next general membership meeting. Reinstatement of a terminated Officer requires a two-thirds majority vote of the membership present at a General Membership meeting.

Alternately, a petition to remove one or more Council Members, signed by no less than ten percent of the members, may be presented to the Local Council; the Local Council must then call a Special Meeting where by a two-thirds majority the membership may terminate the Local Council Member. Grounds for termination include but are not limited to:

- a. missing more than two Local Council meetings in succession or three meetings during the term without an acceptable excuse; or
- b. gross incompetence, witting mismanagement of funds, consistently acting or encouraging action in contravention of the best interests of the organization.

ARTICLE VI: COMMITTEES

Section 1: Standing Committees. There shall be two standing committees, the Internal Organizing Committee and the External Organizing Committee. See Article V, sec. 10 for more details on the responsibilities of these two committees.

After Internal and External Organizing Co-Chairs are elected, they shall nominate at least three additional Lead Organizers to be appointed by the Local Council so that each Organizing Committee has a leadership committee of at least six members, including the elected Organizing Co-Chairs. Appointed Lead Organizers will serve for a term of one year, during which time they may be dismissed by a two-thirds majority vote of the Local Council. Appointed Lead Organizers do not sit on the Local Council.

Section 2: Formation of Working Groups. Additional Committees or Working Groups shall be formed by the Local Council to address a specific operational need that cannot be addressed by any existing committee. Two Co-Chairs, appointed by the Local Council, shall lead each Working Group; these appointed Working Group Co-Chairs will sit as nonvoting members on the Local Council. The Local Council may dismiss one or both Co-Chairs as is necessary and may dissolve any Working Group that no longer serves the goals set by the General Membership; dissolution of a Working Group and the dismissal of a Working Group Chair both require a two-thirds majority vote by the Local Council.

Section 3: Jurisdiction. The Local Council shall adjudicate any jurisdictional disputes between committees, working groups, and Local Council Members.

ARTICLE VII: CAUCUSES

Section 1: Definition and Purpose. Caucuses are independent, unofficial formations of members within the Local. The Local encourages the formation of Caucuses to promote a vibrant democratic culture within the organization. With or without consent from or recognition by any official Local leadership or the Local itself, members may self-organize into temporary or permanent caucuses according to shared interests, affinities, and/or political goals. Caucuses may promote policies and actions for the Local to take on, and may challenge Local leadership and/or official Local policies.

Section 2: Official Recognition. A Caucus will be formally recognized by the Local in one or more official media if no less than five members in good standing sign a mission statement that includes the name and purpose of the Caucus. This mission statement must be reaffirmed annually to retain formal recognition. The Local Secretary will be responsible for ensuring proper recognition.

ARTICLE VIII. BRANCHES

Section 1: Definition and Purpose. Branches are geographical subgroups of the Local consisting of at least five full members in good standing. Branches may hold Informational Meetings, outreach events, and other gatherings where official business of the Local will not be conducted.

ARTICLE IX. DELEGATES

Section 1: Election. Delegates to National, Regional, and State bodies shall be elected by the General Membership at a Special or General Meeting within ninety days of the Convention or other gathering at which delegates are needed. When scheduling a delegate election, the Local Council should always aim to minimize the cost of travel for elected delegates. The delegate election process will conform to DSA National bylaws and the National Convention calendar.

ARTICLE X: DUES

Section 1. Pursuant to Article II, Section 5 of the National DSA Bylaws, the Local may institute, change, or abolish voluntary Local Dues by a majority vote of the Membership at a General Membership Meeting.

Section 2: Solidarity Fund. 10% of all Dues received by the local will be allocated to a Solidarity Fund. These funds will be reserved for bail payments, support for workplace organizing, and related needs, as approved by the Local Council.

ARTICLE XI. AMENDMENTS

Section 1: The Bylaws must be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of members present at the Local Convention, or a General Meeting. Furthermore, the bylaws voted on at the October 3rd, 2017 General Meeting will be provisional for one year, and must be revisited by the General Membership during the 2019 Local Convention.

Section 2: For consideration at the Local Convention, amendments must be submitted to the Local Council at least thirty days before the Local Convention, and may be submitted by any two members in good standing. The Local Council shall publish all proposed amendments to the membership at that time.

The Local Council shall appoint a bylaws committee which will review submitted amendments and make recommendations to the Local Convention.

Section 3: For consideration at a General Meeting, amendments may be submitted by any twenty members in good standing. Amendments must be submitted to the Local Council at least thirty days before the General Meeting. The Local Council shall publish all proposed amendments to the membership at that time. The Local Council will review submitted amendments and make recommendations at the General Meeting.

ARTICLE XII. RULES OF ORDER

Section 1: Adoption. Upon passage, these by-laws will go into effect at the 2018 annual Local Convention.

Section 2: Interpretation. These bylaws shall be interpreted by the Local Council, subject only to appeal to the Local Convention, General, or Special Meeting. The interpretation of the Local Convention, General, or Special Meeting shall be final.

Section 3: Majority Vote. Unless specified otherwise in these bylaws, decisions are made by a simple majority vote ("50% plus 1").

Section 4: Rusty's Rules. Unless specified otherwise in these bylaws, the Local Council and other bodies where official business is conducted shall operate by Rusty's Rules of Order. Any group or committee of Local members, including the Local Council, may decide by a two-thirds majority vote to adopt different rules for their body or for the duration of any specific meeting.