



Onward Slate

Advancing Toward a Socialist Future

2023 Metro DC DSA Convention Delegate Slate

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Over the past several years, our chapter has grown into a significant political force in our region. We have won ballot initiatives, elected socialists to office, organized to keep people in their homes, supported workers' unionization drives and contract fights, fought to protect the right to abortion, and mobilized against abuses by the police. Yet our current political moment marks a critical inflection point for the left: even under a Democratic administration in the post-Trump era, we face an ever-narrowing window for climate action, a hostile judiciary, the entrenchment of minority rule, and an emboldened right wing terrorizing marginalized communities. As we contest for power across multiple terrains, we must be prepared to mobilize anywhere and everywhere that people's rights are under attack. This means engaging in the essential groundwork of building our base, developing leaders, fundraising to sustain our work for the long term, and continuing to wage strategic fights against landlords, bosses, and corporate interests. We cannot defeat capital alone, but an organized working class can.

Winning a livable, socialist future will require building a mass movement of the multiracial working class throughout the United States. We are running as delegates to the 2023

National Convention because we firmly believe in the potential for DSA to lead this fight for years to come. Our diverse slate comprises individuals who have been involved in DSA for decades and newer members who joined in the past year; organizers involved in campaigns across the chapter, including electoral, tenant organizing, labor, public power, internationalism, reproductive justice, and Defund MPD; and members living across the DC metropolitan region. This August, we hope to forge relationships with organizers from across the country, bring back lessons from other chapters' successes and challenges, and help shape the direction of our national organization. We are committed to supporting resolutions and bylaws amendments oriented toward mass action and a strong national DSA capable of moving us closer to our vision for a better world.

CONTESTING FOR POWER

Build a Militant, Vibrant Labor Movement

We recognize that the workplace is the central site of struggle for the socialist movement and have been inspired by the significant rise in public support for unions, recent strike activity and major contract victories, and waves of new organizing in various sectors. Several of our chapter members—including members of our slate—have successfully organized their own workplaces, led contract negotiations, and supported workers in the region through our labor priority campaign. DSA must take advantage of this groundswell of worker power across the country by committing to a strategy that connects our whole national membership to labor struggles. We believe in the importance of organizing our members *as workers* and preparing them to organize and lead change in their workplaces. We need to train our members to build militant, participatory, and democratic unions that will stand up to the boss on the shop floor and fight for the working class writ large.

- Further invest in our labor efforts by expanding the capacity of the National Labor Commission and deepening chapter-level mentorship for labor campaigns. We need to create a clear work plan for NLC staff and ensure that the NPC liaison to the committee has a clear portfolio of responsibilities.
- Train and empower DSA members to organize everywhere. One of the most direct ways to combat the decline in US union density is to support our 90,000 members in organizing where they are. The wealth of labor experience within our organization positions DSA as a valuable resource for people seeking to organize new shops, build capacity in existing unions, or enter strategic sectors that are hotbeds of union activity.

- Through the National Labor Commission, maintain the momentum of the Strike Ready campaign beyond this summer by encouraging chapters to establish standing Strike Ready committees and work with fellow DSA members and labor unions to support strike actions.
- Seek out and support new organizing, building on National Labor Commission and Emergency Workplace Organizing Committee successes from the past two years.
- Build and continue to strengthen our relationships with aligned unions, with the goal of moving beyond a relationship of passive support. We envision a genuine left-labor partnership, where DSA and union members—and DSA members in their own unions—can work collectively on campaigns to wage class struggle and fight for our communities.

Organize Where We Live

In the aftermath of the pandemic emergency, we have seen elected leaders roll back eviction moratoriums and other critical tenant protections that kept people housed during an unprecedented and devastating public health and economic crisis. Today, with worsening inflation and skyrocketing rents across the country, we face a deepening housing crisis driven by landlord and developer greed. Safe, livable, and dignified housing is a fundamental human right, and we believe that organizing tenants and their families around this demand is a vital site of conflict. We recognize that the path forward for housing justice isn't through council meetings and nonprofit roundtables, but rather in the streets with the tenants we organize. DSA should invest in trainings and resources for local chapters to engage in this work, encourage active recruitment and tenant leadership development, and integrate housing justice into other areas of struggle.

- Strengthen connections between the national Housing Justice Commission and local chapters, especially those with relatively new tenant organizing campaigns. Connect more established tenant organizing projects with nascent chapters in their state or region and facilitate more opportunities for national trainings and skill shares.
- Encourage and empower DSA members to organize their own buildings, support tenants' demands for safe and quality housing, and engage with local electeds to advance legislation around good cause, rent control, and strengthening tenants' rights.
- Emphasize the importance of forming durable, long-term tenant associations in buildings as well as citywide, statewide, or regional tenants unions. In these efforts, DSA should strive for working class independence by building organizations that are

fully funded and run by tenants.

- Focus on organizing people and building tenant power, not land use and zoning disputes that tend to be fights between different factions of capital.
- Support efforts to integrate utility justice into housing justice campaigns; support community demands for reasonable and stable utility bills from green and sustainable sources; and engage with local electeds to support legislation ending utility shutoffs, phasing out fossil fuel energy use, and bringing local utility systems under municipal control.

Win Elections and Wield Power

We cannot build socialism in our lifetimes by focusing on the ballot box alone, but electoral organizing has played a significant role in growing our membership and delivering concrete, material wins for millions of working people. For the vast majority of people living in the United States, the extent of their political engagement is through elections, and our steady successes prove that socialism is a winning message. Contesting and winning elections allows us to recruit new members to DSA, develop strong leaders and organizers within our chapter, and partner with electeds in office to ensure that they advance socialist demands through legislation and fight back against policies that harm our communities. We believe DSA should invest in building greater capacity at the national level to support chapters' electoral organizing; sharpen our organization-wide approach to identifying strategic, winnable races and recruiting candidates; and formalize our long-term legislative strategy and engagement with electeds in office.

- Prioritize state and local races where chapters can run cadre candidates and win, as well as strategic ballot initiative campaigns aligned with socialist values. In coordination with the National Electoral Committee, DSA should continue to provide chapters with guidance on how to navigate the endorsement process, develop strong democratic decision-making processes at the chapter and statewide organization levels, and manage relationships with candidates and electeds after endorsement, including through structures similar to the Political Engagement Committee we developed in our chapter.
- Develop a socialist training program for members who are interested in running for office or working as campaign or legislative staffers. Formalize a socialist policy shop that can serve as a resource for chapters developing their legislative strategies.

- Ensure that DSA national electoral staff can effectively build and professionalize our electoral program and support chapters—both those with significant electoral experience and those that have never engaged in electoral work—in mounting successful campaigns.
- Maintain and expand relationships with our endorsed electeds through a robust Socialists in Office program at the national level.

Mobilize Against the Far-Right

Although Donald Trump was defeated in 2020, revanchist, anti-democratic policies, backed by the billionaires who dominate our economic system and the political sphere, remain an existential threat to our class. Much of the discussion around combating the right's ascendancy has focused on the 2024 presidential election, federal races, and the Supreme Court. But the right is increasingly mobilizing at the state and local levels, and DSA chapters across the country must organize collectively in turn to confront racist, anti-choice, and anti-trans agendas.

- Stop the right-wing assault on the trans community by continuing to build power at the state and local levels to defeat laws that criminalize, marginalize, and punish trans people.
- Develop a national strategy to prevent conservative takeovers of local school boards, with coordination between national and local DSA leadership and teachers' unions.
- Oppose all efforts to ban or restrict abortion and continue to fight for access to reproductive health care for all.

BUILDING A STRONG ORGANIZATION

Prioritize Intentional Recruitment, Retention, and Leadership Development

National DSA membership has fallen from its high point following the 2021 membership drive, and the trend in our chapter has been no different. At the same time, our chapter has excelled at engaging and mobilizing our existing members, especially when it comes to developing new leaders and organizers who have taken on urgent work across our formations. We have strengthened our internal democracy by allocating resources to democratically chosen priorities; invested in inspiring and transformative campaigns that have built power in our region; and developed administrative structures that make our work

sustainable. We are a far more experienced organization now than we were in 2017, but we continue to face challenges around retention and organizational longevity. Based on lessons learned in our own chapter, we believe we can address these challenges through serious investment in our membership and a commitment to running strategic campaigns.

- Support annual recommitment drives in every chapter that not only prioritize membership growth but also focus on deepening and broadening member engagement. Working toward a membership that more closely reflects the composition of the US working class—and providing chapter leaders with effective tools and strategies to do so—should be a priority across the organization.
- Develop standardized membership onboarding processes across the organization so that every new member feels welcomed and valued and can easily get involved. Share best practices with chapters on how to develop ladders of engagement throughout all their campaigns.
- Continue to invest in leadership development structures, such as the national Multiracial Organizing Committee and Growth and Development Committee, which focus on recruitment, retention, and development of leaders of color.
- Task the Growth and Development Committee with proactively developing trans members to lead and participate in national campaigns, particularly those related to fighting back against anti-trans legislation.
- Membership and dues drives, leadership trainings, and chapter development should be a top priority across the national organization.

Invest in Staff to Sustain Our Successes

DSA is the largest socialist organization in the country. We have won significant victories in recent years, both in the DMV and nationally, but we must meaningfully grow our capacity and infrastructure to become a mass organization capable of winning socialism in our lifetimes. Given the enormous responsibilities of managing DSA's finances, ensuring legal compliance across chapters and campaigns, maintaining and expanding our operational tools, developing effective communications strategies, and more, we need to invest in hiring more staff who can support our volunteers and keep our organization running for the next several decades.

- Expand our field organizing department so DSA can provide chapters with more intentional support. Currently, each DSA staff organizer works with 30 to 40 chapters in addition to supporting national committees—a large, unsustainable

portfolio. Growing our finances so we can hire more staff will strengthen chapters' capacity in the long term.

- Provide guidance and resources for large chapters to hire staff and secure office space. Staff members hired at the chapter level should still be employed by the national organization and be members of the staff union.
- Prioritize emerging chapters for field organizer attention and other national development resources. While large chapters like ours benefit from field organizers' resources and expertise, newer and smaller chapters—many of which are struggling to organize on far less friendly terrain—likely need greater support.

Unite Around Our Priorities

DSA's big tent and multitendency nature is one of our organization's greatest strengths, allowing us to engage in multiple areas of work, modify strategies based on unique local conditions, and learn from different strategies and theories of change. Yet we often struggle to direct our extremely limited resources in a strategic way, given the myriad competing projects and goals across the organization. Rather than continuing a model of ad hoc resource distribution, we should recognize that we are at our strongest and most effective when we act collectively. In the same way that we developed a priority campaigns model in our chapter, DSA should advance and follow through on our democratically chosen priorities from convention. We believe both structural solutions at the national level and efforts to meaningfully cohere chapters and our full membership around a shared vision can help us address capacity and engagement challenges.

- Invest in in-person organizing through strategy-focused convenings; chapter visits by field staff, NPC leaders, and national working group leaders; and regional and national conferences. Several members of our chapter have attended organizing conferences including the 2022 Autonomous Tenants Union Network Convention, 2022 Multiracial Organizing Convening, Labor Notes, and 2023 DSA Electoral and Labor Conferences. These opportunities have helped us form relationships with organizers throughout the country and deeply strengthened our local work.
- Prioritize national-level campaigns that unite us across chapters. Tactics such as collective days of action, easily accessible phone banks, and coordinated local campaigns under a national umbrella can build organization-wide solidarity and a sense that all our members are working collectively toward a shared project.
- Encourage the NPC to provide clear and consistent political direction to staff and chapters. Create an NPC-to-field liaison program to better connect national leadership with chapter leaders and the membership at large.