

Bylaws Amendment to Reduce Size of the LC, Clarify Working Group and Committee Structures, And Solidify Voting Mechanisms

Signatories:

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Rationale

LC Changes:

We often struggle to get nominations for elected positions.

It is difficult to schedule LC meetings with a larger group of people.

Many of the descriptions of LC positions are vague and thus difficult to implement.

Many of the roles of LC positions were described so broadly as to be impossible to achieve with the number of positions assigned to the role.

The current internal communications officer recommended the removal of the communications positions towards the suggested committee structure instead.

The vice chair position functions as a third chair in practice. Removing that position and increasing the number of chairs improves ranked choice voting and, ideally, makes it easier for members to run for those positions.

The external organizer positions imply that the LC will decide the political projects and campaigns our chapter will take on, but in practice this is something membership works towards themselves.

Committee Structures

The described method of internal organizers on the LC getting work done is not our current practice.

There are internal structures that work independently of the will of membership as a whole, with little guidance on how they should behave in support of membership.

A committee structure as described below will give a clearer path towards the LC getting work done beyond what is possible with just the elected positions.

An LC overseen committee structure will also make it easier for the LC to point members towards assistance with regular tasks, and to implement passed resolutions.

The committee structure can also facilitate transitions to new LCs after conventions by leaving some existing infrastructure for new LC members to plug in to.

Voting Changes:

Our bylaws have us using first past the post voting, which has known issues such as excluding minorities from fair representation and allowing a win with a plurality in spite of not having a majority of the vote.

Ranked choice voting methods allow members to vote more accurately to their opinions without worrying about wasted votes.

STV voting methods create proportional representation for positions with multiple winners, which can lead to more members having someone they know and trust in elected positions.

Our current bylaws make recommendations on diversity requirements inconsistently, and including them in all elections with multiple winners would be ideal, even if we don't meet them in all elections.

There were few recommendations for how elections in working groups and committees should be done.

Restricting members to only one elected position in our chapter encourages leadership to be spread and discourages anyone taking on more than they can handle.

The voting section on the bylaws referred to officers, but not all positions we elect are referred to as officers.

Working Group Changes

There is little guidance on what a working group actually entails, leading to groups with unclear direction.

The function and creation of working groups does not seem to match what is described in the bylaws, specifically that the LC creates and appoints chairs for new working groups.

By giving membership a clear means of creating structures to move forward socialist ideals and practices, we can reduce the size of the LC and give membership more control over our overall direction.

This reflects the current cultural practice of creating new working groups in SDSA, where members will form their own working groups which the LC merely signs off on.

Having membership sign off on new working groups will ensure no working group is formed that is at odds with our political direction as a group, and give new WGs the opportunity to present their perspective to membership as a whole.

Proposal

ARTICLE IV: ELECTIONS~~S-OF-OFFICERS~~

Section 1: Nominations. All ~~Officers~~ ~~members~~ 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. ~~No member shall be in more than one elected position, unless no other eligible candidate wishes to run, with the exception of national delegates.~~

Section ~~3~~2: 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.

Elections shall be held using ranked choice voting. For elections with a single winner San Francisco Instant Runoff Voting will be used. For elections with multiple winners, Scottish Single Transferable Vote will be used. In cases where diversity requirements are not met, we default to the member(s) who would meet the requirements that are ranked highest, and remove the member who does not meet any requirements who was ranked lowest. Those running may also choose to step aside.

Section 43: 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.

Section 4: Working Group and Committee Chair Elections. Working groups and committees may have elections via the same processes listed in this section by announcing an election of new chairs at least fourteen days in advance of an election meeting with a call for nominees. Nominees for chairs of working groups may not nominate themselves, but only need one other member to nominate them to be considered a nominee.

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.~~

The Local Council is the democratically elected leadership body. It serves as the second highest legislative and judicial body, below General Membership. The Local Council manages the day-to-day affairs of the Local between General Meetings. This includes handling finances, accounts, member data, as well as voting on resolutions as it sees fit.

Section 10: Composition. The Local Council shall consist of 9 ~~fifteen~~ elected Council Members: ~~five Officers, six elected Organizers, and four two At-Large Council Members.~~ ~~The Officers~~ There shall be three ~~two Co-Chairs, one Vice Chair,~~ one Secretary, one Treasurer, and four Elected Organizers, ~~one Internal Communications Officer, and one External Communications Officer.~~ ~~The six elected Organizers shall be three Internal~~

~~Organizers and three External Organizers. Of the At-Large Council Members, 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.~~

Of the co-chairs, no more than two shall be cis men and no less than one shall be black, indigenous, or a person of color. In addition, at the 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. If these conditions cannot be met by the candidates who are running, priority will be given based on meeting the most conditions possible.

~~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:

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2. The Secretary will assume the responsibilities of one of the Co-Chairs; ~~if both Co-Chairs and the Vice Chair is unable~~ if they are unable to do so.

e. Elected Organizers: The Elected Organizers shall be responsible for creating and maintaining Committee structures (see article VI: Committees). They shall act as liaisons to Committees and Working Groups, and work to support both groups.

The elected organizers will also be responsible for maintaining member data, developing the policies that determine how it gets used, and ensuring it stays secure.

Of the elected organizers, no more than two shall be cis men and no less than two shall be black, indigenous, or people of color, unless no other eligible candidates wish to run.

~~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 chairs of Committees 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 committees assigned to specific internal communications tasks, organize skill-building seminars as well as cultivating leadership.

~~i. External Communications Officer (ECO):~~ External Communications Officer shall work with the chairs of Committees 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 all 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 cultivating 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.

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 1: Definition and Structure. A committee is a substructure of the Local Council. Committees do primarily internal work that supports the work of other chapter structures, defined by a charter. Committees shall be responsible for recruiting members to do the work of the committee, reporting to the Local Council, and accomplishing the work set out in the charter of the committee. Committees are accountable to the Local Council, and more broadly the membership as a whole, such that their policies and priorities may be dictated by those bodies.

Section 2: Formation of Committees.

The Local Council may create a new committee by appointing one or more co-chair(s) and drafting a charter, which includes a statement of intent and other constraints as deemed necessary, such as but not limited to membership guidelines, sensitive data policy, and/or a dissolution deadline.

Section 3: Election of Chairs.

Unless the charter of the committee suggests otherwise, the future chair(s) of the committee are elected by members of the committee.

ARTICLE VII: WORKING GROUPS

Section 1: Definition and Purpose. A Working Group is a collection of members that engage in external political projects.

Section 2: Formation of Working Groups. A new working group may be formed by submitting a charter with the following information to the LC:

1. Name
2. Mission Statement and Rationale
3. At least one project with an outlined structure
4. A list of possible relevant projects
5. A list of five Seattle DSA members who are committed to participating in the work of this group, including two who are designated as co-chairs

After the LC ensures the proposal is in order, the proposed working group is then voted on at the next business meeting of membership.

Approved working groups must update and submit their charters to the LC annually to retain their status. The Secretary will let Working Groups know at least one month prior to the date their charter needs to be updated. Updates do not need to go through a business meeting.

Section 3: Co-Chairs. Every working group shall have two co-chairs, elected via a single transferable vote system. No more than one of the co-chairs shall be a cis man, and at least one shall be black, indigenous, or a person of color, unless no such candidates run for election. No co-chair shall chair any other committee or working group, unless no other eligible members wish to run.

Co-chairs shall be elected on a one year basis, and co-chairs shall not serve for more than two terms, unless no other members wish to run.

Co-chairs shall be responsible for acting as liaisons to the Local Council, running meetings, and serving as the body's points of contact to membership.