

A Socialist Program for Minneapolis

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Why We Need a Platform

As capitalism drags society into a slow-motion crisis with unprecedented inequality, alienating jobs, insecurity, and climate disasters, voters are rejecting establishment politics and seeking alternatives.

Minneapolis allows candidates to self-identify on the ballot with their preferred political affiliation, such as “Democratic Socialist” or “Independent Democratic Socialist.” Omar Fateh announced he is running for mayor as a “DFL” candidate who also identifies as a socialist. In 2025 there is a real possibility that socialists could win the mayor’s seat and/or increase our influence on the City Council. Taking over the executive branch and/or gaining more influence on City Council presents very exciting opportunities for socialists, but also major challenges and dangers. All the social problems caused by capitalism (poverty, crime, inflation, immigration) will be blamed on a socialist mayor and/or city council by the mass media. The mayor is ultimately in charge of the police – how long would it be before the MPD kills another Black person like George Floyd? How would a socialist mayor handle such a crisis? When the capitalist economy inevitably slumps – increasing unemployment, homelessness, and crime – socialists in power will be blamed.

There are tremendous, stressful pressures on elected officials from many powerful forces – the capitalist class, the DFL establishment, the mass media, moderate union and progressive leaders, non-profits, and capitalist-influenced public opinion. Under pressure from her constituents, City Council Member Aurin Chowdhury, endorsed by TCDSA, voted for the Minneapolis police contract, which raised police salaries to among the highest in the nation without [any robust accountability reforms](#). To hold our officials accountable, they need clear expectations and pressure from TCDSA and the working class.

If our elected officials continue pushing for only modest reforms, and/or if they make compromises, it will not stop the ruling class from attacking elected socialists. It would only disappoint and demobilize our working-class base if their lives remain fundamentally unchanged and deeply frustrating.

The best way to avoid mass confusion and set-backs, especially if we win control of the executive branch, is to go all in on the class struggle. Political reforms can help, but by themselves they will not uproot the debt and insecurity afflicting working families. We must politically prepare ourselves, DSA nationwide, and the working class for the full democratic socialist transformation of society. Gaining political power can backfire unless we are able to educate and organize unions and the working class to remove the billionaire class from power and take the big corporations into public ownership under democratic workers’ control. Establishing a world with working-class control over the economy rather than the failed market system is the only realistic way to uproot inequality, crime, misinformation, and divisions within the working class along ethnic, gender, and geographic lines.

We believe that TCDSA and especially the broader working class are not yet ready politically to overthrow capitalism in Minneapolis at this time, much less to spread socialism throughout the country

and the world. We must educate ourselves about the [challenges faced by socialists in power](#), commit to the historic tasks that the situation calls for, and work out our political program based on these unavoidable realities. On this basis, we should prioritize running DSA candidates who best represent us and we should communicate our expectations to socialist or progressive candidates who seek our endorsement.

Having a platform can set higher, and clearer, standards for our candidates and all our members active in social movement. A platform is a clearly written document that the chapter will debate, edit/amend, and adopt, and then we ask all comrades to fight for the demands in the platform, especially comrades in leadership positions in social movements and political office. Adopting a platform will not necessarily push away candidates who do not meet these expectations. Our chapter will still choose whether to support those candidates' campaigns, or not, on a case-by-case basis. In general, we should **prioritize** candidates who publicly advocate and fight to implement the policies in our platform.

If we *do* choose to support a candidates' campaign who does not meet these expectations, we should do so on a *principled* basis. We should fight for socialist class-struggle ideas within the candidates' campaign, offer voters and volunteers independent DSA pamphlets/flyers, and set a target to recruit DSA members from the campaign. Whether the progressive candidate wins or loses the election, we should make sure that TCDSA's membership and influence grows and, crucially, that we convince more Minneapolis residents of socialist ideas.

Some of the ideas in this draft below are borrowed from Seattle DSA's 2021 platform and were used successfully to elect the socialist Kshama Sawant to Seattle City Council in 2013 and re-elect her 3 times. We ask the Steering Committee, Electoral Committee, and all committees, working groups, and chapter members to discuss and propose amendments to the platform in preparation for a chapter meeting where this program can be debated and voted on.

Platform:

1. No Corporate Cash

- a. Left-wing candidates must be 100% on the side of working people and marginalized communities. Candidates must reject cash from corporations and big landlords. (Personal contributions from small business owners are welcome).

2. Working-Class Power

- a. Our efforts will not succeed with a narrow traditional electoral strategy that limits the struggle to negotiations within City Hall. We must organize our own *independent* base of power in the working class and mobilize mass movements of workers in the streets, workplaces, and communities. We urge candidates to:
 - i. Prioritize actively building and giving voice to labor and social movements
 - ii. Meet voters where they are at, and also actively raise their consciousness and popularize socialist ideas
 - iii. Identify as "Democratic Socialist," preferably "independent Democratic Socialist" like Robin Wonsley and avoid the "DFL" label in their campaign literature
 - iv. Critique the DFL as controlled by corporations and billionaires in campaign literature

- v. Urge supporters to join DSA as a step toward forming an independent party
- vi. Endorse all other candidates endorsed by TCDSA

3. Make Minneapolis Affordable and Inclusive For All

- a. The most impactful aspect of City government is how it spends its budget. Left-wing representatives should not vote for any business-as-usual budget and instead fight for a *fundamentally* different budget that truly meets the needs of the working class and marginalized communities.
- b. No increasing the bloated police budget. No expansion of the police or police raises without robust accountability reforms

4. Affordable Housing for All

- a. The private, profit-driven, capitalist market has failed to provide affordable housing for working people. We need public socialist solutions to the housing crisis:
 - i. We need rent control!
 - ii. Build 50,000 high quality homes within 10 years that are City-owned and maintained. These union-built, environmentally sustainable, renter-controlled housing units should counter gentrification and racist redlining practices.
 - iii. End homeless encampment sweeps. Emergency housing and social services for all, paid for by taxing corporations and the super-rich
 - iv. Municipal (publicly owned) broadband to provide high-speed Internet for all

5. Strong Labor Movement

- a. Support every effort to improve workers' wages, benefits, and rights
- b. \$25/hour minimum wage
- c. Defend workers' right to unionize

6. Green New Deal

- a. Massively expand bus and light rail service to create a world-class public transit system, including 24-hour free mass transit to reduce congestion and carbon emissions
- b. Launch a mass program to retrofit homes to improve insulation and heating systems, massively subsidized by the City
- c. Carbon-free heating for residential buildings owned by large landlords within 5 years
- d. Pressure Hennepin County to shut down the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center by 2026 and guarantee a just transition for any displaced workers
- e. Pressure MNDOT to replace I-94 with an at-grade boulevard, with transit alternatives and reclaimed land for housing and other social priorities; guarantee a just transition for any displaced workers.
- f. Massively invest in Minneapolis Public Schools to reduce class sizes and meet strong environmental standards

7. Fight Trump and Racism

- a. Make Minneapolis a sanctuary city – Direct all city authorities not to collaborate with federal agents attempting deportations; organize mass protests against deportations
- b. Free Palestine: Sever all City contracts with companies profiting from human rights violations

- c. End the school-to-prison pipeline. Fully fund wraparound social services for students, especially low-income students and students of color
- d. Establish a democratically elected community oversight board with full powers over the police, including department policies and procedures. Demilitarize police forces; ban tear gas.
- e. Tax corporations and the super-rich to fund reparations for Minneapolis's Black and Indigenous communities under the leadership of these communities

8. Fight for the Rights of Women and LGBTQ+ People

- a. Defend access to abortion care, birth control, and gender-affirming care, as part of a single-payer universal healthcare system
- b. Emergency housing and social services for women and gender non-conforming people impacted by oppression and violence
- c. End the gender pay gap
- d. Universal, high quality, safe childcare, free at the point of use
- e. Improve wages and working conditions of care workers, who are disproportionately women and people of color. We need a transformative reallocation of resources to recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work.

9. Tax the Super-Rich

- a. Tax millionaires and corporations, not workers and small businesses, to fund all these policies.
- b. Build a mass working-class movement to overcome legal obstacles to taxing the rich.

10. Accountability

- a. We expect elected DSA representatives to:
 - i. Accept only the wage of a skilled worker in Minneapolis and donate the rest of their salary to building social justice movements.
 - ii. Organize quarterly town hall meetings with the community
 - iii. Consistently attend Socialists In Office meetings
 - iv. If an elected socialist believes that special circumstances require exemptions from any of the expectations above, TCDSA expects the elected official to notify the TCDSA Steering Committee and the wider community as soon as possible and prioritize meeting with TCDSA to discuss it. (This may be a meeting with the SC, a chapter membership meeting, a public town hall, or other format deemed appropriate by the SC and chapter membership.) The elected socialist should give DSA time for a meaningful discussion and vote on the issue so that DSA can communicate our expectations to the elected official as early as possible before the vote.