

2021 Chapter & Bylaws Reconstruction

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The 2020 DSA-LA Steering Committee created the [Bylaws Editing Commission](#) to edit the Chapter bylaws. The Commission recommended the Steering Committee be restructured to resemble something like the [Executive Committee of Chicago DSA](#). The commission did not restructure the DSA-LA Steering Committee in the 2020 BEC Bylaws on the belief that the Local should have further discussion and debate on such a sweeping change. However another bylaw proposal submitted at the 2020 Convention called for the creation of an almost identical restructuring of the Steering Committee that was very well received by the Local. Tensions over these two versions of the bylaws prevented the authors of either to adopt the structure both sought and thus, no change to the leadership body was made. The 2021 Bylaw Reconstruction is the proposal of the creation of that larger leadership body.

Despite several previous attempts to address our siloing problem, it continues to persist. The Local has been unable to develop a steady stream of members willing to take on leadership positions, with sublocal groups, including Branches, rarely having all of the required leadership positions occupied. This has caused a domino effect that over-burdens leadership and in turn, makes being in leadership unappealing to the membership. A culture of tension between the leadership and the membership has developed and threatens our work as a Chapter. The creation of this expanded Steering Committee brings leadership from across the Chapter to work together, in more defined roles and responsibilities to solve that challenge. Creating paths to leadership, sharing duties more broadly, creating additional transparency, and assessing viability of projects and groups will go a long way to meet the challenges our Local faces in its core operations.

The 2021 Bylaw Reconstruction also takes the 2021 Steering Committee recommendation that the Local Convention be moved from its current scheduling in October and moved to May, roughly as it was scheduled prior to the mid-year Steering Election that was necessary in 2019. This may require flexibility with the Convention needing to happen later in 2022 but the ultimate goal is a permanent May Convention. These proposed bylaw changes also moves and condenses the December “Officer Elections” where the Steering Committee and Branch Coordinators are elected and the January “Sub-Local Officer Elections” where committee leadership is elected, into one

election, held in April. Because of this change, it is recommended that the final act of the outgoing Steering Committee moving forward be the planning and execution of the Local Convention in May, where the transfer of duties will be made official and the new Steering Committee charged with carrying out the decisions made at the Local Convention for the year. There is an Appendix A included with this bylaw package that should these bylaws be passed, would serve as a timeline for that transition to occur. The 2020 BEC Bylaws called for the creation of a styles commission to combine the BEC Bylaws updates and the pre-existing bylaws into a cohesive document, free of contradiction. This to date has not come to fruition and the 2021 Bylaw Reconstruction incorporates that recommendation.

Outline of Major Changes

1. Convention - Moved from September/October to May. Floor Amendments are prohibited and all proposed Convention business must be amended and debated in advance of voting at Convention. A longer timeline has been imposed to make engagement and debate easier for membership. Bylaw amendments can only be made at Convention
2. The elimination of “at-large officers.” These positions have resulted in an uneven distribution of work amongst the Steering Committee and the attention of the Steering Committee writ-large scattered, leaving tasks undone and unattended to. By having specific roles, with their primary duties laid out, there is improved accountability to the membership as well as a less overburdened Steering Committee.
3. The addition of two co-chairs to the Steering Committee. These co-chairs will assume the duties of several positions, be responsible for tasks that have been until now rotated among the Steering Committee, and will serve as the main point of contact for the Local to the Steering Committee, creating additional accountability to the Local and easing burden on other members of the Steering Committee. This means that when a member emails the Steering Committee, they know they should expect a timely response from one of the co-chairs.
4. The role of the Communications Director has been split into multiple positions. The role of the Communications Director has been an ongoing problem where the position has been largely left to interpretation and has carried considerably more authority than the other members of the

Steering Committee despite there being no mandate given by the Local or the Bylaws. Additionally the Local has yet to establish a public relations presence outside of social media and interactions with local media being underdeveloped. The Communications Director role is broken up into two positions: The Social Media Coordinator and the Public Relations Coordinator, with each role focusing on those respective aspects of the Communications Committee. The duties regarding internal communications of the Chapter will be carried out by the co-chairs, who will send out all Local emails, post bulletins to the DSA-LA website, and member portal.

5. Term limits have been added. No one person can stay in any leadership role for more than three consecutive terms. There are some allowances made in the event an appointment becomes necessary for the operation of the Local.
6. The Nominations Committee is elected annually and oversees all Chapter-wide elections and voting, removing another unassigned burden from the Steering Committee, and making unscheduled elections easier for the Local to execute without having a new Nominations Committee elected for each election.
7. Active Membership - Because there is such a disparity between our total membership and how many members are active in the Local, the attendance of the Local Convention will be used to determine what our active membership is. In some instances, but not all, this number will be the base on which quorum or other percentages mentioned in the bylaws come from. This is to make sure that our bylaws do not need to be continuously updated as the size of the Chapter changes from year to year.
8. An annual anonymous census is to be taken each year to measure how reflective the Local is of Los Angeles County.
9. Caucuses - Language has been added to increase visibility of caucuses in the chapter.
10. Grievances - Elected officers with an active grievance are automatically recused from deliberation or voting on any grievance matters, including those regarding the Crisis Resolution Team or the Harm and Grievance Officers.

Outline of Minor Changes

1. Membership guidelines changed to open criteria for membership, but limit it to being physically located within the Local's jurisdiction.
2. Various signature thresholds raised to reflect Chapter growth between 2020-2021.
3. Addition of various town halls to increase member participation in Local votes.
4. Requirement of one Steering Committee meeting per month be open to the Local.
5. Requirement that the Finance and Fundraising Committee must have three members appointed to it in addition to the elected Treasurer.
6. Organizational Priorities and Priority Resolutions redefined.
7. Standing Rules of the Local amended to list procedural rules of Local operations.
8. Definitions of grounds for dissolution and process of creation of Branches and Committees clarified.
9. Definitions of malfeasance, nonfeasance, and gross negligence are defined as well as stipulation that such charges must be provable for removal or censure.
10. Ability for a consent agenda use at Local Convention added.
11. Appointment deadlines for open positions required.
12. Required elections and appointments for working groups or committee subsidiary bodies.
13. Various requirements of information being posted and kept current on the membership portal.
14. Requirement of ten members of the Steering Committee be trained in Robert's Rules of Order or other parliamentary process adopted by the Chapter.
15. Local meeting schedule must be decided upon and posted 45 days within the Steering Committee taking office.

Linked Documents

- [Breakdown comparison of current language, vs proposed language with individual motivation.](#)
- [Provisional timeline of leadership elections and Local Convention.](#)
- [Provisional illustration of proposed Local Convention deadlines.](#)
- [Fully edited bylaws.](#)
Changes in policy or language that changes policy are highlighted in yellow.
Stylistic changes are highlighted in green.
- [Summation of all edits.](#)