

## Authors and Title

“Hybrid Format for DSA Conventions” by Brandon Hull of Central Jersey DSA and Brynne Olsen of Akron DSA

## Resolve

**Therefore, be it resolved**, that DSA commits to hold all future National DSA Conventions (hereafter “the Conventions” or “Convention”) in a hybrid format, with a virtual option, in instances where an in-person aspect will be utilized, making the Conventions more accessible to a greater number of member delegates, striving to be more representative of DSA membership as a whole;

**Be it further resolved**, in instances where the organizers of the Conventions believe the complexity, cost, or any other factor, would make it too prohibitive to make hybrid feasible, a fully-virtual convention may alternatively be held;

**Be it further resolved**, DSA National Political Committee (NPC) and staff must thoroughly research and locate vendors and pricing options for a hybrid Convention, as opposed to making ballpark estimates.

## Background Information

**Whereas**, the DSA Convention is the highest decision-making body, which meets once every two years for the purpose of democratic debate, decision-making to set priority work, and electing leadership for the organization, toward guiding all dues-paying members’ organizing efforts, and;

**Whereas**, DSA holding a hybrid Convention would bolster the organization’s strategic ability to pivot to a virtual option if necessary to avoid a reactionary convention organizing standard, considering the ongoing crises of Covid, global capitalism, and climate change, by utilizing the technological innovations of pandemic organizing. In addition, canceling a hybrid Convention and reverting to virtual-only if needed is easier and more cost-effective than adding in hybrid capabilities last minute, and;

**Whereas**, COVID and future pandemics are unpredictable, surges of infection have occurred in the summertime when Conventions are held, and these surges are expected to reoccur, and;

**Whereas**, DSA is a member-funded organization, and this method of funding and Convention participation should benefit all members instead of a limited number, and;

**Whereas**, a hybrid Convention model would save the organization money otherwise spent on fundraising to cover travel, lodging, and food costs. Providing scholarships so some members

can attend in person still limits a significant number of members who cannot attend in person, exacerbating inequity, and;

**Whereas**, DSA purports to be building the largest multi-racial working-class movement in the United States, recognizing that this goal benefits from intersectional organizing strategies. A hybrid Convention would accommodate perspectives and voices from marginalized communities which include:

- People with disabilities
- Those who are institutionalized
- The rapidly growing numbers of people disabled by Long Covid, or those who are immunocompromised, and thus at even greater risk in crowded settings
- Individuals requiring ongoing access to medical care, daily services, and treatment, including but not limited to psychological services
- Queer comrades, especially those who are trans thereby experiencing greater barriers to safe travel
- Those who are pregnant or may become pregnant, and are struggling in oppressive anti-abortion states
- Parents and other individuals with caregiving obligations to children, immunocompromised people, elderly relatives, or community members who can't take time away from these duties
- Students or teachers in educational institutions or trade schools with atypical semester schedules
- Those who do not get vacation time off from work and those who do receive vacation time but can't take time off from employment to travel
- Shift workers who benefit from the high differential pay rates for working overnights and weekends
- Those who are unionizing and face scheduling discrimination and retaliation for requesting time off related to travel
- Those living abroad
- Those who are surviving poverty
- Those who require language interpretation and/or spoken translation, and;

**Whereas**, having in-person only conventions undermines the effort of building a broad multi-racial working-class movement, by limiting the participation access of member delegates, and;

**Whereas**, we are facing pandemic employment insecurity and are in the midst of an unprecedented economic inflation crisis made more precarious by the growing number of disabled individuals due to the effects of long COVID, the high mortality rate of reinfections, and inaccessible healthcare for pre-existing conditions, and;

**Whereas**, the material reality of many DSA members is one of financial disability, and having a hybrid convention would be more accessible to both medically and economically disabled member delegates who are unable to incur the cost of travel or other societal barriers, and;

**Whereas**, as evidence grows that repeat COVID infections cause cumulative harm, including damage to people's immune systems, DSA should protect its valued organizers, and should not require people to face unpredictable pandemic-era hazards in order to democratically participate, and;

**Whereas**, DSA is committed to fighting for ecosocialism, and having a hybrid option supports decreased fuel consumption and pollution from traveling, and because the United States has poor infrastructure that limits personal and mass transit options, making it difficult for some to travel in an environmentally responsible way, and;

**Whereas**, the DSA Convention must be in a hybrid format to be truly just, respectful, and democratic by granting access to the widest range of DSA members. A hybrid format will also encourage participants to develop more skilled and diverse organizational leaders, who can better recruit and mentor new DSA members, furthering militant organizational growth.

## **Budget Analysis**

Estimated to be around \$100,000 per convention event. This is an average figure for large-scale hybrid events, with multiple simultaneous sessions running concurrently.

The overall cost could vary widely, depending on a variety of factors. These factors include, but are not limited to, the availability of equipment at the convention venue; whether we need to hire an outside A/V vendor; whether or not we enlist assistance from the National Tech Committee and/or other volunteer DSA members; the duration spent organizing toward hybrid, whereas a shorter timeframe may make it more difficult and costly to put together; whether there is a need for additional staff; and whether we can intentionally fundraise toward covering the extra costs associated with organizing an accessible hybrid convention, as members may be willing to contribute toward the overall accessibility and technology associated with an inclusive hybrid convention.

Countless organizers have improved their skills, built-out infrastructure, and broken down communication silos online during the pandemic. Many of those organizers now stand ready to work with staff to help realize successful hybrid conventions going forward.

If we organize, from the start, with the aim of holding a hybrid convention, rather than retroactively attempting to alter the process that has already been in motion, we can incorporate this into our overall planning strategy for all conventions, thereby preventing the need for additional costs on a shorter time frame, and eliminate any costly backpedaling.

Additionally, utilizing a hybrid platform provides for a contingency if social conditions continue to devolve, so if a pivot to an all-virtual convention became necessary, costs would not be as significant due to the preparations already in place.